

3 *Wrong paths to right defining morality with or without a clear red line*

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The moral terrain of organizational life is often conceived as divided by a clear red line, with rightdoing on one side and wrongdoing on the other. Like highway markings, this line is bright and unambiguous, laid down by social control agents – mostly compliance officers or state officials – to ensure adherence to a specific order and to sanction definitions of right and wrong. Organizational actors may be drawn across the line for reasons of self-enrichment or competitive pressures. They may also find themselves on the wrong side by mistake (Vaughan 1999; Warren and Smith-Crowe 2008) (for instance, because they do not recognize what they are doing as having ethical implications (Bazerman and Gino 2012; Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe 2008)) or they may be lured across the line by social control agents looking to uncover and punish wrongdoing (Palmer 2012). Regardless of the reasons, once organizational actors find themselves on the wrong side of the line, the moral order perspective leaves little doubt that their actions will be labeled as wrongdoing (Greve, Palmer, and Pozner 2010: 56).

This vision of a clear and decisive moral order is at best incomplete, and we know that morality and immorality in organizations – defined as what a community deems right or wrong (Durkheim 1973; Mauss 1967) – are often more equivocal. For example, organizational actors frequently face moral dilemmas in which the right thing to do is unclear because different sets of moral prescriptions or principles conflict, or because their consciously reasoned moral response is contradicted by

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an emotional reaction about what “feels” wrong (Greene 2014; Walzer 1973; Winston 2015). These examples highlight a more general observation: the location of a line separating right from wrong is not a concrete absolute but something determined through people’s interactions and therefore relative, disputed, and dynamic. Indeed, many organizations intentionally avoid establishing an explicit definition of right and wrong, or at least one that is easily identifiable and applies to all members, and instead allow each individual to draw his or her own line.¹ We conceptualize such organizations as “moral pursuits” (Anteby 2013: 130–134), in which rightdoing involves an ongoing pursuit of personal morality and wrongdoing is in the eye of each individual beholder. We distinguish these from moral orders, in which rightdoing and wrongdoing are defined *ex ante* by social control agents.

Existing organizational literature has focused primarily on why organizations and their members cross the moral line and what managers, regulators, professional associations, and others might do to reduce the likelihood of unethical behavior (Litzky, Eddleston, and Kidder 2006; Martin and Cullen 2006; Tenbrunsel, Smith-Crowe, and Umphress 2003; Vaughan 1999; Weaver, Treviño, and Cochran 1999). Such a research stance implies the existence of a moral order. In this chapter, we take a different stance and ask a different set of questions: How is the line between right and wrong positioned, where is it drawn, by whom, and for whom? How does our (re)conceptualization of the line change our understanding of wrongdoing? These questions precede, analytically, the definition of an act as wrong or unethical, because an actor cannot cross a line that does not exist. They also point to a poorly understood dimension of organizational wrongdoing (that is, the process of drawing a red line) with important implications for management and organizational theory.

We are not the first organizational scholars to examine the process by which social actors delineate right from wrong. Sociologists have long been interested in how classifications of moral versus immoral can vary across social and historical contexts (Hitlin and Vaisey 2013). A few studies in organizational studies have looked at how the interests,

¹ An organization may also *unintentionally* lack a moral order, or have a weak, ill-defined, or inconsistent moral order. In such cases, some members may engage in moral pursuits, while others just pursue other goals. These unintentional cases do not meet our definition of a moral pursuit, and are not the focus of this chapter.

capabilities, and power of actors affect where the line is drawn, positing that state social control agents usually draw the line where it protects their own interests or those of constituents (Greve et al. 2010; Jackall 2010; Palmer 2012). These prior accounts give us important insight into some of the factors that determine where social control agents draw the line between right and wrong. However, they leave open the question of what strategies less powerful, rank-and-file organizational members may use to justify, for themselves or others, the nature and location of the line – or, in the case of moral pursuits, its absence. We are therefore indebted to the extensive literature on the psychology of moral judgments (e.g., Bazerman and Gino 2012; Greene 2014), but we seek to theorize around a different question: not how individuals decide between right and wrong, but how they explain that decision to themselves and others – that is, the accounts they use to define right and wrong and to justify drawing the line in a particular place.

This chapter makes several contributions to the organizational wrongdoing literature. First, we elaborate on the difference between moral orders and moral pursuits, and explore specifically how wrongdoing is defined in these contrasting contexts. Second, we identify several strategies by which individuals may strive to (re)define right and wrong – and pursue what they consider right – in ways that conflict with the expectations of their organizational setting. We focus on two broad categories of misaligned moral strategies, or what might be labeled “wrong paths to right”: when individuals aim for moral pursuit from within a moral order and when they aim for moral order from within a moral pursuit. We suggest that their efforts to pursue right-doing will often entail what other members of their community see as wrongdoing. By exploring cases of actors who are “out-of-sync” with their setting (Warren and Smith-Crowe 2008: 85), we cast light on some of the ways members define and enact right and wrong inside organizations.

Wrongdoing in moral orders versus moral pursuits

Rightdoing and wrongdoing have very different meanings in moral orders and in moral pursuits, as summarized in Table 3.1. In moral orders, the line between right and wrong is drawn by those actors who “exert social control over organizations and organizational participants” and are “responsible for monitoring and controlling wrongful

Table 3.1 *Contrasted views of wrongdoing*

	Definition of right and wrong	What constitutes wrongdoing?
Moral order	Clear line drawn ex ante by powerful social control agents Definition applies across organizational actors	Crossing the line Breaking the rules May include behavior perceived as moral in another context
Moral pursuit	Not defined ex ante Pursued by all organizational actors according to their own moral perspectives	Failing to reflect and/or pursue one's own version of morality Aiming to stabilize the moral pursuit by drawing a clear line between right and wrong

behavior” (Palmer 2012: 29, 34). For organizations, the most obvious social control agents are representatives of the state – those responsible for establishing and enforcing laws and regulations – and these actors are the focus of much of the past research on wrongdoing in organizations. Here we define social control agents more broadly, to include individuals at all levels, regardless of whether they are officially entrusted with control, who might take it upon themselves to define and enforce a moral order in their setting. This conceptualization is consistent with sociological literature that views all individuals as potential agents of social control, who can and do use a range of strategies – not only punishment, but also scandal, gossip, demands for compensation, or expressions of disapproval – to define and enforce moral standards (Black 1993).

In a moral order, the line that social control agents draw between right and wrong applies, in principle, across organizational actors, though it is likely drawn where the most powerful want it drawn (Anteby 2008; Greve et al. 2010; Jackall 2010; Palmer 2012). The norms that constitute a moral order need not be formally codified and may instead be implied or taken-for-granted. Neither is it necessary for organizational actors to fully understand or agree with the moral order for it to exist; indeed, there may be considerable confusion or disagreement about the location of the line or the practices that fall on

either side (Flynn and Wiltermuth 2010). Regardless of this uncertainty or of the reasons that organizational actors cross the line, their behavior will likely be considered wrong if labeled as such by the relevant social control agents.

Wrongdoing in a moral order is defined by crossing the line and breaking rules written and enforced by control agents. However, those same actions that constitute wrongdoing in one moral order may be considered rightdoing in another order. For instance, British and German lawyers both operate in their respective firms under strict (well-defined) moral orders, but these orders are quite distinct, with British lawyers taught to use the law to serve their clients' interests and German lawyers focused on serving justice in a more neutral way (Smets, Morris, and Greenwood 2012). In other words, the line can be clear and explicit but contingent on its social context. Similarly, some doctors working in poor African countries at the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic chose to violate laws prohibiting importation of cheap generic AIDS drugs (Heimer 2010). To justify violating the moral order represented by these laws, they invoked two moral principles: to save lives and to confront global inequities. As such, an act that crossed the line into the realm of wrongdoing according to one moral order was justified as rightdoing according to the principles governing the individual's own moral pursuit.

A moral pursuit is characterized by the absence of an *ex ante* definition of right and wrong. Morality in this context is instead an intentional pursuit involving personal reflection, with each individual drawing her own line based on the moral principles with which she is familiar or on her own sense of right and wrong. Wrongdoing in a moral pursuit is relative, ambiguous, and disputed: what one person considers immoral may be considered righteous by someone else. A moral pursuit is also dynamic, involving a process of reflection and striving, rather than a static categorization of wrongdoing. The Harvard Business School's approach to morality exemplifies such an approach (Anteby 2013). While the School prides itself in aiming for higher business standards, never are these standards made explicit. Instead, an ideology of non-ideology permeates the school's daily operations, and silence pervades on where the red line should be drawn. Another example of a moral pursuit is the Jesuits' early relation to administrative accounting practices (Quattrone 2009, 2015). Balancing books for a Jesuit community amounted to listing on one

side all credits received and on the other all debits owed. The goal was not, however, to simply balance the books but to lay bare the situation of a community and reflect on whether these movements of debits and credits lived up to the community's moral aspirations. Put otherwise, accounting was seen as a dynamic practice to uncover what was right or wrong, rather than a rulebook that explicitly told administrators what to do or which accounts to settle.

Given this, how might we conceptualize wrongdoing in a moral pursuit? While prior research tends to see wrongdoing as a deviation from an established order (e.g., violation of a state law or professional code), we posit that "wrongdoing" can also be applied to the processes by which moral orders are negotiated within an organization. We argue that there are at least two distinct categories of behavior that would constitute wrongdoing in such a setting: first, failing to consider, reflect upon, or uphold one's own version of morality; and second, aiming to stabilize the community's view of morality by, for instance, imposing one's views on others. In the first category, an individual fails to live up to her own moral aspirations. As an illustration, a natural grocery's "idealist" employee – one who feels strongly about sustainability – may feel she has failed to live up to her own moral standards if she neglects to ask a customer whether he needs a bag before giving one out (Besharov 2014). The second category may capture behaviors that would be defined as rightdoing in a moral order and by the individual himself but are considered wrong in the context of a pursuit. As an example, consider the recent efforts to promote gender equity at the Harvard Business School, which triggered a debate on female faculty representation (Kantor 2013). Resistance to these efforts may have emerged not because of disagreement over the goal (here, gender equity) but because a majority of organizational members perceived the initiative as an attempt by the organization's leaders to impose their worldview on others. Their resistance, in other words, may have reflected their distaste over being told what is right or wrong.

Relationships between moral orders and moral pursuits

Although a given setting – be it a single organization, a sub-organizational unit, or a supra-organizational field – is likely characterized primarily as either a moral order or a moral pursuit, it is also situated within a broader, complex moral landscape (Fourcade and Healy 2007;

Vaughan 1999).² For instance, individuals engaged in a moral pursuit are also embedded in, or at least familiar with, various moral orders – such as religious faith, workplace codes of conduct, or legal regulations – and will often draw upon these orders when engaged in moral deliberation (Sonenshein 2007; Trevino 1986; Winston 2015). Often, moral pursuits are nested explicitly within moral orders, and those orders delineate the boundaries of acceptable behavior, within which there is freedom for a more customized moral pursuit. For instance, an intentionally pluralistic setting may encourage members to pursue their own notions of right and wrong according to their personal or cultural beliefs, as long as such pursuits do not infringe on the rights of others to behave accordingly (Abend 2014).

The existence of multiple moral orders may also require actors to choose between systems or exercise discernment in applying the order appropriately. Orders may operate in parallel, as in systems characterized by legal pluralism, in which multiple distinct legal codes and justice institutions coexist (Heimer 2010). Actions that violate one order may be permissible or even prescribed by another, and organizational actors may select among these orders in deciding which to follow or apply in a given circumstance. Alternatively, moral orders may be nested hierarchically within one another, as when the human resource codes and practices of a given organization operate within and draw upon, but do not exactly replicate, the relevant legal regulations. In such cases, an individual may violate the moral order of her organization without violating the law, but not vice versa, because the organizational order is nested within the legal order. Finally, moral orders may be contested or their lines may be ill-defined and in flux, in which case it may not be clear whether a given act should be considered right or wrong (Anteby 2010; Becker 1973; Chan 2009; Zelizer 1979; Zilber 2002).

The coexistence of moral orders and moral pursuits is even more complicated when the two come into conflict. For instance, an individual operating within a moral order may find that prescriptions set forth by the order (e.g., disregarding ethnicity as an admission criterion) violate

² We use the term setting to be deliberately neutral about the appropriate level of analysis, because we believe our framework applies across levels. As illustrated by the vignettes introduced later, some organizations may be best understood as a single moral system – be it a moral order or a moral pursuit – while others are better understood as comprising multiple distinct moral orders or pursuits. The same is true at the level of an industry or field.

her own personal sense of right and wrong (e.g., corrective racial justice) and thus contradict what she would strive for in a moral pursuit (e.g., affirmative action policies). This realization can be an emotional one (Haidt 2003; Smith-Crowe and Warren 2014; Turner and Stets 2006; Warren and Smith-Crowe 2008). The experience may cause her to question the legitimacy of the social control agents, and even to disregard the moral order in favor of higher principles (Palmer 2012). An individual operating within a moral pursuit, in turn, may feel discomfort at the level of ambiguity inherent to the pursuit (e.g., selectively endorsing gender equity), or with some of the behaviors of others, or herself, that are deemed moral by others but seem to her to be wrong (e.g., tolerating female under-representation). In either context, the experience of one's moral identity coming into conflict with the organizational setting can be quite distressing (Stets 2010).

Given the coexistence of multiple moral orders and moral pursuits, the potential for friction between and among them, and the strong emotions this friction can produce, it is not surprising that individuals may strive to (re)define right and wrong in ways that conflict with the expectations of their organizational setting. However, existing literature tells us little about what forms this striving might take, or what strategies organizational members, particularly those with relatively little power, might deploy to distinguish rightdoing from wrongdoing.

In the next section, we focus on two broad categories of misaligned moral strategies, or what might be better labeled "wrong paths to right": first, those involved when individuals aim for moral pursuit from within a moral order, and second, when they aim for moral order from within a moral pursuit. We describe six illustrative cases of moral actions that are "out-of-sync" with the organizational setting (Warren and Smith-Crowe 2008: 85), and in which organizational actors use a range of strategies to (re)define and pursue rightdoing along paths that are likely considered wrong by their respective communities. We derive these examples of misaligned moral action from two sources: some are examples from published scholarship, while in others we draw on previously unpublished empirical data. Because the published studies were originally conducted to investigate other research questions, our interpretation and categorization of those studies should be understood not as conclusive evidence, but as an effort to illustrate concepts, advance theory, and spur future research (Weick and Quinn 1999). By presenting these examples of "wrong paths to right," we

hope to inspire other scholars to pay closer attention to the various ways rightdoing and wrongdoing may be delineated within organizations and to make salient the key role played by context (particularly moral order vs. pursuit) in that delineation.

Moral pursuits from within a moral order

Some organizational actors in moral orders might feel uncomfortable with where and how the line between right and wrong is drawn. Those who find themselves too often on the wrong side of a red line might test creative ways to reposition, reconfigure, or blur the line to achieve a more personally gratifying moral outcome – in essence, striving to follow a moral pursuit within the confines of a moral order. These acts of creativity may help the actors successfully pursue what they consider right, but if discovered these are likely to be seen by others in the moral order as acts of defiance or deviance.

By surveying various fields, we identify three main strategies used to strive for moral pursuits within moral orders: *moral hijacking*, *moral assembling*, and *moral blurring*. These strategies are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. Individuals may, and sometimes do, employ more than one strategy simultaneously or sequentially, and there are likely other strategies beyond these three. That said, we believe these strategies capture the diversity of ways in which organizational actors might engage in misaligned moral behavior in a moral order. Through these misaligned actions, they also seek to change *who* draws the line between right and wrong (from often external control agents to rank-and-file organizational insiders) and *to whom* that line applies (from all or most organizational actors to just the individual herself).

Moral hijacking

We define the first strategy, moral hijacking, as using the viewpoint(s) of external moral order(s) to justify a pursuit that the person doing the hijacking considers morally right but that the moral order in their own setting would define as unacceptable.³ In this way, moral hijacking

³ Moral hijacking echoes the strategy employed by actors in the U.S. drug courts described by McPherson and Sauder (2013) who are aligned with a given logic but flip and rely on another logic to achieve their goals.

enables actors to reposition the line between right and wrong – not necessarily for everyone in their organization, but for themselves – and to engage in a moral pursuit, charting their own personal moral path. We illustrate and probe deeper into this strategy with a vignette taken from the commerce of human cadavers for medical research and education.

Procuring sufficient cadavers to educate medical students, affiliated health professionals, and practicing physicians can prove problematic because the supply is limited. Moreover, academic researchers and private firms (such as medical device makers or pharmaceutical companies) also need cadavers in their endeavors. Historically, cadavers were obtained by medical schools and then redistributed to faculty members. Increasingly, however, independent ventures have emerged in the United States to become the dominant “brokers” in this field (Anteby 2010; Anteby and Hyman 2008). To secure donations either directly from donors (prior to death) or from family members (after the donor’s death), these ventures need to advertise their services and reach out to potential donors and their families.

Medical school procurement programs have long been supervised and often run by clinical anatomists with fairly clear viewpoints on what constitutes right or wrong specimen usage. In many schools, the proper order of usage is explicitly spelled out and specimens go first to physicians in training. In this way, a clear moral order is constructed and reproduced across programs in the United States. By contrast, independent ventures follow their own rules for allocating supply. While the cadavers acquired by medical schools are mainly targeted toward (only) medical education, those acquired by ventures are allocated for multiple uses, generally by for-profit companies (i.e., the torsos are separated from the limbs and each “part” is sent to a different user). The independent ventures use these practices because they allow them to more intensively “exploit” each donation’s potential, which is something they consider a moral obligation under the terms of their moral pursuit. However, because these practices might prove off-putting to some donors and their families, the ventures employ moral hijacking to justify their actions.

A review of whole-body donation program descriptions shows that few independent ventures advertise that they dissect a cadaver prior to use, even though they consider this morally right according to their moral pursuit, because it allows them to maximize the utility of donations. Instead, they tend to heavily advertise their goals as being “the advancement of science” – a moral order long promoted by clinical anatomists and attractive to donors and families, but more closely associated with medical schools than with for-profit companies – as a way to justify and legitimize their novel presence in the field and help them secure donations.

By hijacking the moral order established by medical schools, these ventures are able to rely on an established order, subvert it to what they see as an ethical mission to precisely and efficiently match anatomical resources to (multiple) user needs, and thereby carve out an alternate moral niche within a broader order. They do so despite the fact that clinical anatomists, whom they see as guardians of the field's moral order, would strongly object to distributing human remains without giving prior consideration to medical students' training. In other words, moral hijacking allows the ventures to advance a moral pursuit (extensive use of specimens) from within the existing moral order.

Moral assembling

We define the second strategy, moral assembling, as selectively drawing elements from multiple distinct and coexisting moral orders and reassembling them to justify a moral pursuit that the established order in their own setting would deem unacceptable. As such, moral assembling represents an effort to reconfigure the line between right and wrong. Assembling – which is similar to the concept of bricolage (Lévi-Strauss 1966) – resembles hijacking, in that it represents an effort to change who gets to draw the red line. However, it differs from hijacking because when individuals engage in assembling, they not only bring in elements from another order but recombine them with each other and with elements of the existing order. In short, they form something new rather than relying on previously tested justifications. In the vignette below, we provide an illustration of moral assembling that occurred in the West African nation of Sierra Leone, and more specifically in an organization called Timap (“Stand Up”) for Justice, hereafter referred to as Timap. This organization provides free justice services through a network of paralegals based in communities around the country (Dale 2009; Maru 2006).

Sierra Leone's justice system is typified by legal pluralism, in which formal justice institutions based on statutes passed in Freetown and British-style common law coexist with customary legal and governance institutions (Manning 2009). Timap trains and encourages its paralegals to engage in a moral pursuit to further the “principles of justice” and of human rights (Maru 2006: 456), while still operating within the prevailing customary and legal moral orders. Paralegals are given

considerable discretion not only to decide how best to pursue justice but also to “define what is just” (Dale 2009: 20–21).

In their pursuit of a just outcome, paralegals often navigate strategically the ambiguity created by legal pluralism by “selecting and applying the legal principle most likely to achieve an acceptable outcome” (Dale 2009: 19). For example, Timap paralegals use customary law to negotiate child support payments much higher than the maximum allowed under outdated formal statutes (Maru 2006). In other cases, they use the formal system to develop justifications for opposing practices sanctioned by the customary moral order but that the paralegals consider unjust. Often, as in this example, the paralegals’ efforts involve moral assembling.

In 2006, Timap paralegals received a complaint from a woman whose four-year-old daughter had been taken without her permission to be initiated into one of Sierra Leone’s traditional secret societies. The girl had already undergone genital circumcision, a key step in initiation, but her mother wanted Timap’s help in securing the girl’s release and an exemption from paying the initiation fees usually demanded by the secret society (Maru 2006: 463).

Given cultural prohibitions against non-initiates discussing society matters (Richards, Bah, and Vincent 2004), the paralegals decided to proceed using customary rather than formal justice institutions. To do so, they first approached the local paramount chief, the highest official in the chiefdom governance system (Manning 2009). In their case to the chief, they drew selectively from the customary moral order and argued that the society heads had violated customary law by initiating a young child without her family’s permission. Although the chief did not oppose female circumcision and regularly subsidized initiations, he agreed with the paralegals’ argument, issued a fine against the society heads, and declared they had acted without his authorization.

Armed with the chief’s decision, the paralegals approached the secret society heads. Societies are closely intertwined with the chieftaincy system, but operate according to their own moral order, enforcing their own definition of wrongdoing and sometimes serving as a check on the power of the chiefs (Fanthorpe 2007; Manning 2009). In assembling an argument to convince the society heads to return the girl and forgo the initiation fee they would usually demand from her family, the paralegals blended elements of customary law with their own understanding of the secret society’s moral order. For example, their arguments likely cited the fact that societies had traditionally initiated pubescent girls, and only began initiating very young girls in response to the disruption of war

(Fanthorpe 2007). Assembling this element of the secret society's moral order along with aspects of the chief's moral authority, the paralegals successfully argued the family's case.

Here, the Timap paralegals engaged in moral assembling in the context of a specific negotiation, recombining elements of multiple moral orders – those associated with customary law and with a secret society – to justify and achieve an outcome consistent with their own human rights-based moral pursuit. With their actions, they claimed from the traditional control agents (e.g., chiefs) the right to reconfigure the line between right and wrong. The paralegals' strategy in this case may not technically be labeled “wrongdoing” by the respective moral orders, in part because of the paralegals' skill in moral assembling, but the outcome could easily be objected to in each distinct moral order for legitimizing a moral pursuit the orders' representatives did not fully support. More generally, this case shows that by assembling elements from multiple moral orders, individuals can find ways to redraw the line between right and wrong and aim for a moral pursuit within the apparently strict boundaries of moral orders.

Moral blurring

A third strategy to promote a moral pursuit within a moral order is by engaging in moral blurring, which we define as using prohibited practices that mimic authorized ones but are intended to achieve a moral pursuit that the moral order in their setting clearly defines as unacceptable. By mimicking behavior that the moral order considers acceptable, those involved in moral blurring are able to avoid being “caught” deviating from or challenging the moral order. Unlike hijacking and assembling, individuals engaged in moral blurring do not openly assert an alternate morality to justify (re)defining right and wrong, but rather they quietly blur the line in pursuit of what they consider morally right.

For an illustration, we move from communities to health facilities, and specifically to the pediatric wards of two government hospitals in Sierra Leone (Manning 2014). Nurses in these hospitals are trained to operate within a specific moral order, with clearly articulated rules and procedures for how to treat patients and interact with their family members. This moral order is drilled into nurses during training and socialization and is reinforced by cultural objects such as prominent

notices posted around the wards extolling professionalism and compassionate care. Despite this prominent, explicit expression of the moral order, it is weakly enforced, in part because supervisors in these extremely resource-constrained hospitals are few in number, rarely spend time on the wards, and (due to inflexible civil service rules) have virtually no power to fire, suspend, or otherwise significantly punish or reward nurses.

As a result, the nurses in these hospitals confront considerable moral ambiguity in their day-to-day practice. Sometimes, when they find that their own sense of right and wrong contradicts the rules laid out by the hospital's moral order, or that the hospital's rules fail to account for reality, they find ways to blur the line and pursue what they consider right. A telling example involves how nurses manage the bodies of young patients who die on the wards.

Although the vast majority of patients on the pediatric wards suffer from largely preventable and treatable conditions (like malaria and diarrhea), the mortality rates among hospital inpatients are high. In 2012 nearly 13% of children admitted to one of these hospitals did not survive. As a result, nurses regularly presided over the death of their young charges, and handled their dead bodies.⁴ The training and protocol for this, which nurses called "last offices," was clear: a medicalized, dispassionate, but also ritualized process for preparing a child's body to be taken away by family members. Nurses first removed any tubes or bandages, then wiped the face clean, and finally wrapped the body in fabric provided by the family, usually the same cotton used to carry the child on arrival. As one nurse said, "When a person dies, you clean them up, you do the last offices, you write, you wrap him, you label him."

Occasionally, however, nurses skipped this process – in clear contravention of the hospital's moral order – and instead sent the child away in a loose fabric wrap or tied to a mother's back, in the same way she would carry a living child. In talking with nurses and observing their interactions with parents, it became clear that this omission, though counter to protocol, was actually intended to help impoverished families. Those traveling by bus or shared taxi would otherwise be charged a premium for transporting a dead

⁴ This vignette draws on fieldwork conducted by the first author several years prior to the 2014 Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in the region. At the time, infection prevention was likely one rationale underlying the protocol for handling dead bodies, but was not a particularly salient concern for nurses – who regularly touched patients, alive and dead, without wearing protective gloves – or for families and visitors.

body, and might find it difficult to convince drivers to take them on as passengers. By not wrapping the child, the nurses allowed family members to pretend the child was simply asleep. In one case a mother was sent away with her dead child tied to her back and instructed by the staff to “hold your heart until you reach” home and “don’t cry out.” In a small way, this blurring of the line eased the parents’ journey home during a tremendously difficult time.

Nurses who blurred the hospitals’ rules for how to prepare a body for transport did so because their understanding of their core moral pursuit – providing compassionate care – required that they not put an extra burden on parents after the death of their child. They experienced the hospital’s moral order as conflicting with their desired moral pursuit, thereby presenting a moral dilemma, and they found a way to redraw the line for themselves in a new place. In so doing, they blurred the moral order in order to justify what they considered a more just outcome. Their actions, however, would still be technically labeled “wrongdoing” by the representatives of the hospital’s moral order.

Moral blurring is not unique to the Sierra Leonean context, or to organizations with poor enforcement of the moral order. One doctor’s experience in a top US academic medical center recently launched him into a debate over selectively blurring moral codes. In an opinion piece, the doctor recounted his experience with one patient: “After 2 hours on the telephone trying (and failing) to get her insurance plan to pay for her medication refill, I reached into my pocket and handed the patient \$30 so she could fill the prescription.” He continued, “It seemed both kinder and more honest than sending her away saying, ‘I’m sorry I can’t help you’” (Schiff 2013: 1233).

Deciding to pay for his patient’s prescription was, for this doctor, an act of generosity and caregiving, consistent both with his personal sense of morality – that is, with his personal moral pursuit – and with his understanding of his profession’s core principles. As he pointed out, the code of medical ethics from the American Medical Association calls the practice of medicine “fundamentally a moral activity that arises from the imperative to care for patients and to alleviate suffering” (Schiff 2013: 1233–1234). However, his act was considered a violation by the guardians of his hospital’s moral order, and the doctor found himself “being reprimanded for [his] ‘unprofessional boundary-crossing behavior’” (Schiff 2013: 1233). Without explicitly saying he would blur the hospital’s moral order again, he took issue with where and how the line

was drawn and argued that strict adherence to a particular code may violate larger moral principles. As another doctor described it, this revealed a fundamental disagreement among physicians about where to draw the line between right and wrong (Zuger 2013).

The above strategies of moral hijacking, moral assembling, and moral blurring make clear that “wrongdoing” in moral orders can include well-intentioned attempts by organizational actors to destabilize the red line between right and wrong in pursuit of what they consider just. Under such circumstances, wrongdoing can be conceptualized as a “wrong path to right.” We next consider strategies employed by individuals who have a similar desire to change or deviate from established norms, but this time in contexts characterized as moral pursuits.

Moral order from within a moral pursuit

Organizational actors in a setting characterized as a moral pursuit may find themselves uncomfortable with the contextual ambiguity inherent to such settings. They may see this ambiguity as moral relativism, the idea that “answers to moral questions . . . can be true or false for one particular group, community, society, culture, and even person, yet not true for others” (Abend 2014: 48). They may object to where others draw the moral line and may even feel disgust or contempt for behaviors that others consider moral. In response, they may strive for greater stability and clarity in the definition of right and wrong, seeking to draw a stark red line where none exists. Put otherwise, they may pursue the establishment of a moral order from within a moral pursuit. Other members of their moral pursuit, however, are likely to interpret this imposition of order – though intended to promote rightdoing – as a form of wrongdoing.

We identify three typical strategies for achieving moral orders within moral pursuits: *moral circumscribing*, *moral spotlighting*, and *moral seceding*. Like the strategies for achieving a moral pursuit within a moral order, these strategies are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, but we believe they capture the many potentially powerful ways that actors can claim agency and authority to define and impose that line on others, despite the fact that this imposition would be seen as wrong by others in that organizational setting.

Moral circumscribing

We label the first strategy for pursuing order in a moral pursuit as moral circumscribing and define it as imposing limits on the extent of a moral pursuit by specifying what behaviors fall outside the boundary of acceptable behavior. Circumscribing does not eliminate the moral pursuit nor transform a context characterized by moral pursuit into one characterized by order. Rather, it draws a particular kind of moral line: a boundary. Inside this boundary, actors are free to engage in moral pursuits, but behaviors that fall outside will be considered unacceptable. To elaborate, we turn to the ancient but hotly contested moral pursuit of parenting.

Efforts to define the right and wrong sort of parenting are longstanding and widespread, from social workers and judges distinguishing fit from unfit parents (Campion 1995; Wallace and Pruitt 2012) to professional bodies like the American Academy of Pediatrics weighing in on appropriate and inappropriate caregiving practices, to strangers in restaurants or playgrounds openly judging one another's parenting styles. Even though parenting is usually, and perhaps inevitably, a moral pursuit – parents must decide for themselves the right way to rear their children, and their striving for morality is a process that evolves over time – there have long been outside actors who seek to impose limits on that pursuit.

One example of an effort to circumscribe the moral pursuit of parenting can be seen in Heimer and Staffen's study (1995) of a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), a hospital ward that cares for very sick newborn children. Staff engage in moral circumscribing, bounding what they consider morally right behavior by their patients' parents. As the authors note, "although parents are generally free to raise their children as they see fit, when infants are critically ill the range of behavior that constitutes 'good enough parenting' shrinks, and questions about the quality of care loom larger" (637). The process described next, by which NICU staff delineate the pursuit of good parenting and thereby define bad parenting, has implications for clinical decisions, staff–parent interactions, and even child custody.

A "dominant feature of the social organization of the NICU" is the staff's labeling of parents, and particularly the use of terms such as "'appropriate' or 'inappropriate,' 'good' or 'bad'" (1995: 637). In other words, without

recasting the parents' role within a fully settled moral order, nurses and doctors on the NICU impose various constraints on the range of parenting behavior they will consider appropriate. In some cases, these boundaries are explicit and transparent, as with rules that require parents to wear hospital gowns and scrub their hands before entering the unit. In others, they retain significant ambiguity, while nonetheless bounding the range of appropriate behavior. For example, parents are told to "bond" with their infants, but are not given explicit instructions regarding what that bonding should entail. NICU staff nonetheless assess the parents' actions, and whether they are displaying what staff members consider sufficient commitment and connection to their critically ill children.

Parents who fall outside of this circumscribed moral pursuit – e.g., because they are seen to visit the ward too infrequently or do not seem sufficiently engaged in their child's care – may be labeled "inappropriate." In extreme cases, the staff will delay or avoid discharging patients into the care of parents who repeatedly fall outside the boundaries of appropriate behavior, and may even involve law enforcement and child protection officials to pursue termination of parental rights.

Overall, NICU staff engage in moral circumscribing by delimiting the bounds of appropriate parenting and thereby justifying restrictions on the moral pursuit of parenting within the hospital context. Although the imposition of moral order based on the staff members' definition of good and bad parenting likely violates the principles of a moral pursuit – in which parents must engage in a personal and reflective pursuit of how best to raise their children – the NICU staff see this imposition to protect very vulnerable children as a form of rightdoing. This strategy of moral circumscribing exemplifies one type of "wrong path to right" used for achieving moral order within a moral pursuit.

Moral spotlighting

We define the second strategy to promote order within a pursuit, moral spotlighting, as selecting from among the elements of a moral pursuit and imposing a subset of them as necessary for behavior to be considered moral. In contrast to moral circumscribing, which defines what behaviors *do not* fall within the boundaries of acceptable moral pursuit, moral spotlighting defines what behaviors *are required* for a pursuit to be moral. Spotlighting prescribes what must be attended to, rather than ruling out what should not be done.

To better understand the strategy of moral spotlighting, we return to the Sierra Leonean hospitals discussed earlier and examine the nurses' attempts to justify their imposition of order on family members' caregiving on the wards (a moral pursuit). This example also showcases how moral domains can be nested. Here, one workplace harbors both moral orders (hospital rules) and moral pursuits (caregiving).

The moral pursuit involved in caregiving is complex and multifaceted. Caregivers of young children seek to protect them from harm, support their development, and promote their well-being. In a medical setting, the caregiver of a sick child may provide comfort, monitor their condition, learn more about their diagnosis, and advocate for the best possible care, among many other things. In the Sierra Leonean pediatric wards studied by the first author, nurses not only observed and assessed the caregivers of their patients but also intervened to "correct" perceived shortcomings, particularly to enforce certain behaviors they considered necessary for good caregiving in this setting. In so doing, they engaged in spotlighting: selecting from among the many dimensions of caregiving and highlighting one or a few of those dimensions as essential to the moral pursuit. Specifically, they sought to define good and bad caregiving narrowly, focusing on whether caregivers obeyed nurses' instructions (even about seemingly petty issues, such as dressing children in clothes that nurses considered too fancy) rather than on other dimensions of caregiving (such as advocating for the child's care). Based on this spotlighted definition, good caregiving requires that caregivers follow nurses' instructions without question or complaint, while other aspects of caregiving are seen as irrelevant or even problematic.

One of the most infuriating occurrences for nurses at these hospitals was when caregivers could not be located when the nurses needed them. This frequently happened during medication rounds, which should take place at designated times but in practice were often delayed for various reasons, including bottlenecks at the hospital pharmacy. For family members, particularly those who recently arrived in the hospital and may have received only a cursory introduction (if any) to the rules and rhythms of the ward, these rounds likely seemed utterly unpredictable.

On many occasions, family caregivers were scolded by nurses for not being readily available when their names were called. Their absence was deemed evidence of poor caregiving, because good caregiving had been defined as following the nurses' instructions and remaining available at all times during

their child's stay in the hospital. This was true even if their absence resulted from another act of caring for the child: e.g., going outside to feed or bathe them, or to buy clean water or medical supplies from nearby shops. In these hospitals, nurses had distilled the moral pursuit of caregiving to being available and obedient to health workers.

As with the earlier example of moral circumscribing, the nurses engaged in moral spotlighting impose on family members a kind of moral order: a particular definition of what makes for good and bad caregiving in hospital settings within the fuzzier moral pursuit of caregiving. Spotlighting differs from circumscribing because it does not just define which behaviors fall outside the boundary of acceptable behavior but proactively defines which behaviors are required for caregivers to do right. Put otherwise, spotlighting involves defining a necessary condition for morality to exist within a moral pursuit.

Moral seceding

The third and final strategy of moral ordering within a moral pursuit involves either secession or expulsion and is defined as withdrawing from a moral pursuit or expelling others from a moral pursuit to (re)instate a moral order. This strategy amounts to creating sub-populations within a wider group and distinguishing them along degrees of "purity" (Douglas 1966) with respect to a new or espoused line between right and wrong. Members are considered more pure if they adhere closely to the dictates asserted by those who seek to impose order and less pure if they continue to engage in a broader pursuit.

For an example of moral seceding, we look to the Presbyterian Church (USA; PCUSA), part of a group of progressive US Christian denominations that are collectively known as the Protestant mainline (Creed, DeJordy, and Lok 2010). Traditionally, the PCUSA was structured as a centralized moral order, in which key moral decisions – such as how to divide right from wrong on issues ranging from theology to the ordination of women – were made at higher levels of the hierarchy and handed down to local churches (Creed et al. 2010). However, in recent decades, the PCUSA's governing bodies and member congregations moved toward becoming more of a moral pursuit, by deciding, for instance, that individual congregations could determine for themselves whether or not to require that members called to PCUSA ministry have

literal belief in certain tenets of Christian theology (Longfield 2000; Quirk 1975). A subset of members of the PCUSA saw these changes as sanctioning behaviors that they considered morally wrong; they responded by seceding so they could reassert a moral order elsewhere. In the vignette below, we consider secessions that resulted from the PCUSA's changing stance toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) members.

Homosexuality has been a divisive issue in many Christian denominations in the United States, and the PCUSA has been mired since the 1990s in debates over the role of LGBT church members, their possible ordination as ministers, and the PCUSA's stance toward same-sex marriage (Goodstein 2014). Until recently, the denomination's governing constitution, the Book of Order, explicitly prohibited LGBT individuals from being ordained as ministers in the church and banned PCUSA ministers from presiding over same-sex marriages (Moon 2014).

Efforts to overturn these bans in favor of a more permissive moral pursuit – one that would allow individual ministers and congregations to define for themselves what they considered right and wrong regarding LGBT ministers and marriages – finally bore fruit in 2010, when the General Assembly voted to allow local ordaining bodies to choose whether or not to ordain openly gay members as church deacons or ministers (Moon 2014). This shifted the moral question of eligibility for ordination from a top-down moral order to a moral pursuit determined at the local or regional level (Young 2011).

Although church leaders claimed this change “reaffirm[ed]” a “long-held right and responsibility of ordaining bodies” (Young 2011: para. 4), some members found the change unacceptable. Following that decision, between 350 and 428 congregations (out of more than 10,000 nationwide, and including some of the largest) opted to secede from the church rather than accede to what they considered an immoral pursuit (Goodstein 2014; Moon 2014). Many of these formed or joined groups of more conservative former PCUSA members.

By seceding from what they considered to be the organization's increasingly permissive moral pursuit, these more conservative congregations were able to reinstate a moral order and draw a clear red line that justified prohibiting behaviors they considered wrong. Moral secession is not unique to religious contexts, and can occur wherever organizational actors disagree with aspects of a moral pursuit but have few options to impose order except by seceding themselves or expelling others. Other examples of moral secession include employees who choose to exit a firm whose practices they disagree with on moral

grounds, rather than exercising voice to change those practices (Withey and Cooper 1989).

In these three different strategies – moral circumscribing, spotlighting, and seceding – we see efforts to stabilize, sharpen, and illuminate a clear red line between right and wrong. This contrasts with the earlier examples of actors destabilizing and dimming red lines by pursuing moral pursuits from within moral orders. In the latter cases, the actors’ “wrong paths to right” involve imposing a (re)definition of right and wrong on other organizational members, thereby attempting to disrupt and constrain others’ diverse moral pursuits in favor of a singular moral order.

In summary, organizational actors are motivated to employ various strategies to pursue what they believe to be right, but sometimes those strategies are misaligned with their respective settings. In both moral orders and moral pursuits, we see examples of actors seeking to (re)define the line between wrong and right in ways with which others in their setting disagree. These instances cast light on a previously understudied facet of morality in organizational life, thereby illuminating the importance of *how* wrongdoing is defined – where the line is drawn and by whom – and the resulting variety of wrongdoing in organizations.

Conclusion

Organizational members are also, inevitably, moral actors, and they must often navigate morally ambiguous terrain. In many cases, their own moral intuition or judgment about what constitutes right and wrong will diverge from where the line is drawn by others in their organizational setting. In this chapter, we discussed six ways in which organizational members might seek to (re)define wrongdoing and justify the pursuit of what they consider right but what others in their setting will likely label wrong. These contrasted strategies are summarized in Table 3.2. Three of the strategies involve pursuing moral order from within a context of moral pursuit, while the others involve aiming for moral pursuit in a context of moral order.

The six strategies described here are certainly not the only form of misaligned moral action. Actors may also engage in actions that are misaligned with the definition of right and wrong in their setting because they are uncertain about that definition (Wuthnow 1989) or they simply do not realize that their behavior violates a particular

Table 3.2 “Wrong paths to right” in moral orders versus moral pursuits

Moral pursuits from within a moral order		
<i>Moral hijacking</i>	<i>Moral assembling</i>	<i>Moral blurring</i>
Using the viewpoint(s) of external moral order(s) to justify a moral pursuit that the moral order in that setting would define as unacceptable	Selectively drawing elements from multiple distinct and coexisting moral orders and reassembling them to justify a moral pursuit that the moral order in that setting would define as unacceptable	Using prohibited practices that mimic authorized ones but are intended to achieve a moral pursuit that the moral order in that setting clearly defines as unacceptable
Moral order from within a moral pursuit		
<i>Moral circumscribing</i>	<i>Moral spotlighting</i>	<i>Moral seceding</i>
Imposing limits on the extent of a moral pursuit by specifying what behaviors fall outside the boundary of acceptable behavior	Selecting from among the elements of a moral pursuit and imposing a subset of them as necessary for behavior to be considered moral	Withdrawing from a moral pursuit or expelling others from the pursuit to (re)instate a moral order

moral order or moral pursuit (Green 2004; Warren and Smith-Crowe 2008). Alternatively, they may engage in behaviors that are considered moral in a broader context (e.g., whistleblowing) but are considered immoral within an organization (e.g., because they obstruct the organization’s corrupt practices) (Smith-Crowe and Warren 2014). Actors may also face moral dilemmas in which they must choose between violating a moral order to achieve what is best for the larger society – that is, doing “bad” in order to do “good” – or keeping their hands clean but missing the opportunity to achieve the greater moral good (Griffin 1995; Walzer 1973; Winston 2015). While acknowledging these other types of misaligned moral action, we believe the strategies defined in Table 3.2 are an important understudied aspect of organizational wrongdoing: the process by which individuals within organizations seek

to draw and redraw the line between right and wrong in order to justify the pursuit of what they consider morally right but their organizational setting considers morally wrong.

These insights have important implications for management and organizational theory, which has typically focused more on the reasons for unethical behavior in organizations and what might be done to minimize such misconduct and less on how or by whom wrongdoing gets defined. We build on scholarship emphasizing the role of power and interests in determining where social control agents draw the line between right and wrong (Anteby 2013; Greve et al. 2010; Jackall 2010; Palmer 2012) to emphasize the strategies that rank-and-file organizational members use to justify, for themselves or others, the nature and location of the line, and how those strategies vary across contexts (i.e., moral orders vs. pursuits). Future research could also examine how other moral outcomes, like whistleblowing (Miceli, Near, and Dworkin 2013; Morrison 2011), white-collar crime (Braithwaite 1985; Shapiro 1990), and corruption (Lange 2008; Smith-Crowe and Warren 2014), might vary across these contexts.

Obviously, separating moral orders from moral pursuits is not always as easy as we have assumed, and these two ideal types encompass a wide range of organizational forms and occasionally overlap. More research is needed to explore cases in which there is disagreement or confusion – either for scholars or among the organizational members themselves – over whether a given setting is a moral order or moral pursuit. These boundary cases may provide further insight into how organizational actors understand and respond to moral ambiguity and into the implications for their organizations and the broader society.

Moreover, future research is needed to explore the positive and negative implications of misaligned moral action. When nurses blur the lines of a hospital's moral order to justify doing what they consider right, does that undermine the hospital as an organization or does it paradoxically protect it from doing wrong by its patients and staff? When some member churches secede from a denomination that they believe has become an *immoral* pursuit, what are the implications for the secessionist churches and for those left behind? It may be that organizations benefit from having a balance between members who adhere to the expectations of the particular setting – be it a moral order or moral pursuit – and those who dim or sharpen those expectations through misaligned moral strategies, akin to the beneficial balance

brought by rule-benders and rule-enforcers (Canales 2014). In short, an organization may need a few people engaged in moral pursuits to challenge, change, and give flexibility to a moral order, while a few people striving for moral order may provide needed structure and boundaries to a moral pursuit. Future studies could examine the demography of morality within organizations, teasing out the proportion of members who need to follow a moral order or align with a moral pursuit for it to best be sustained; exploring how different members relate to each other; and understanding how these interactions affect outcomes (see, for example, Besharov 2014).

We hope that this chapter will inspire new theoretical and empirical insights into the ways in which organizational members can find themselves on the wrong path to right, and why understanding how lines are drawn and redrawn between right and wrong matters for a deeper grasp of organizational life. Studying how human cadavers in whole-body donation programs are used or intentionally “misused” or how deceased children in hospital wards are handled or purposely “mis-handled” illuminates not only how organizational actors in these contexts justify right and wrong but also the various strategies they might employ to ensure that their “wrong paths to right” yield outcomes they consider morally desirable.

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