

Code of Ethics in Practice: A Look at the World Bank Group

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Code of Ethics (COE): A Review

What is a Code of Ethics?

A general framework for individuals within a group?

A collection of ideals? (guidance)

A legally binding agreement? (policy)

A PR stunt?

Purpose

“Codes of ethics are controversial documents. Some writers have suggested that codes of professional ethics are pointless and unnecessary. Many others believe that codes are useful and important, but disagree about why.”

- Source: Illinois Institute of Technology Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions,
<http://ethics.iit.edu/index1.php/Programs/Codes%20of%20Ethics/Introduction>

Purposes of codes of ethics

John Ladd	Heinz Luegenbiehl	Harris et al.
Ethics are meant to be open-ended & reflective	Codes of ethics have sociological value; acknowledges group obligation beyond self-interest	Professionals value their codes of ethics even if they do not regularly consult it
Ethics should not be confused with laws	Codes of ethics create moral problems without resolving them	Codes of ethics are considerations, not hard rules
Professionals have no obligations separate from being a moral person	Codes of ethics conflict with moral autonomy	Individuals still retain autonomy and it's this autonomy that allows them to jointly agree on a code of ethics
Codes of ethics are pointless and pernicious	Are rarely used in practice?	

Source: Illinois Institute of Technology Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions, <http://ethics.iit.edu/index1.php/Programs/Codes%20of%20Ethics/Introduction>

Purposes of codes of ethics

Michael Davis	Stephen Unger
Codes of ethics are binding, conventions	Collective recognition of the group's responsibilities
Decrease the peer pressure to take advantage of other's poor (e.g. corrupt) conduct	Establish norms for ethical behavior
Controls competition & encourages coordination	Creating & revising a code of ethics develops focus, solidarity, & discussion topics
A code of ethics is what defines a profession	Signal to the public that the group pursues, moral, responsible conduct

COE: A look at the World Bank Group (WBG)

The World Bank Group

“Corruption is the greatest obstacle...
...to reducing poverty.

It distorts the rule of law, weakens a nation's institutional foundation, and severely affects the poor who are already the most disadvantaged members of our society... It is important to go beyond the symptoms of corruption to tackle it in a sustainable manner...”

- Source: World Bank. “Anticorruption.”

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPUBLICSECTORANDGOVERNANCE/EXTANTICORRUPTION/0,,menuPK:384461~pagePK:149018~piPK:149093~theSitePK:384455,00.html>

Organizational Details

Founded 1945, emerged from the Bretton Woods agreements in 1944

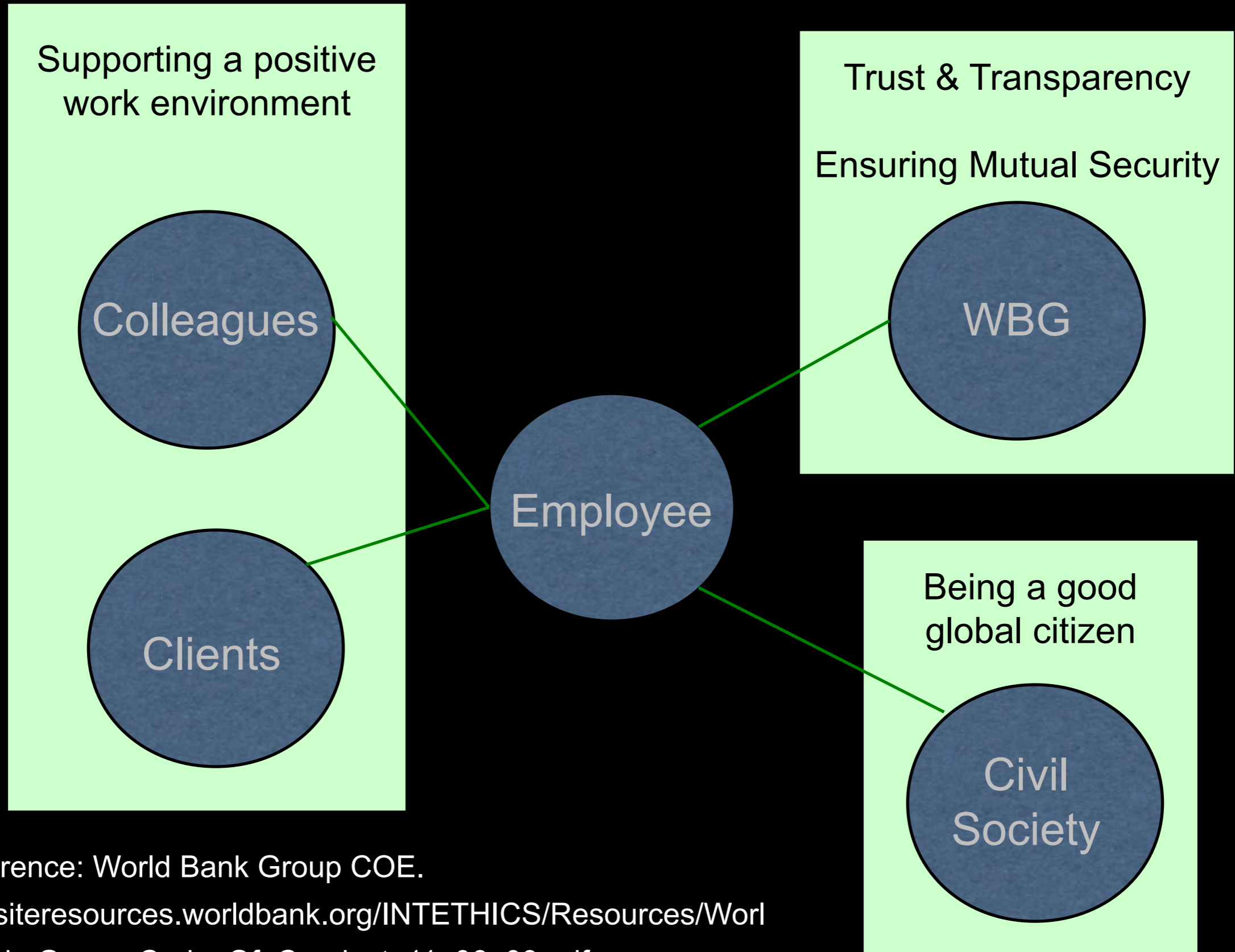
Intergovernmental organization with 185 members

International financial institution that provides loans to developed & developing countries with goals of economic development and poverty reduction

World Bank Group – parent organization with 5 agencies

World Bank – 2 agencies; loans to developing countries only with intent of poverty reduction

Structure of WBG COE



- Reference: World Bank Group COE.

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTETHICS/Resources/World_Bank_Group_Code_Of_Conduct_11_06_09.pdf

Procedures for raising concerns

L – Learn the facts

E – Evaluate the issue

A – Act Appropriately

D – Develop a plan for follow-up

- Reference: World Bank Group COE.

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTETHICS/Resources/World_Bank_Group_Code_Of_Conduct_11_06_09.pdf

WBG: An Analysis of their COE

Aspirational	Enforceable (at least in part)
Value diversity and inclusion in all decision making practices including career advancement, promotion, recruitment, compensation	Shall not engage in or accept harassment of any kind
Respect and encourage a healthy work-life balance	Maintain accurate books and records and follow controls
Actively contribute to the greater good	Disclose any personal business or financial interest that might relate to [one's] WBG work
Act with fairness, compassion, and impartiality	Fulfill my personal legal obligations

Their Code of Ethics in Practice

Unit: The Office of Ethics & Business Conduct (EBC)

Protection: Confidentiality, Retaliation, Whistleblowers

Enforcement & penalties

Info:

- Provides a 2 page pocket version of the code (English, Chinese, Japanese)
- Ethics Helpline (anonymous)
- N.B. Broken Website Links (Values, FAQ)

Discussion Questions

Whose view of the code of ethics is most convincing -Ladd's, Luegenbiehl's, Harris et al, or Davis?

Can a group of practitioners be “professionals” without a code of ethics?

What is the relationship between a mission statement, core values, and a code of ethics?

Are there different challenges to applying a code of ethics domestically vs. internationally?

How do you measure the impact & effectiveness of a code of ethics, especially since ethical advice is often confidential?

Do you remember the code of ethics for any job(s) that you have held? Was it ever mentioned or considered beyond employee orientation?