

Excellence through Ethics™

Session 14

Temptation Junction



Middle School



Junior Achievement®



Excellence through Ethics

Middle Grades

Session 14

Temptation Junction

Content: Ethics and Varied Professional Ethics

Methods: Scenarios

JA Foundational Pillars: Ethics, Work Readiness, and Entrepreneurship

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Acknowledgements

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Temptation Junction

Overview

This activity introduces the area of professional ethics and how various careers and professions have unique core values and ethics mandates. As students begin to consider career choices in light of ethics as well as economics, the question emerges, “How can I prepare myself to be an ethical and exemplary professional as I participate in our economy?”

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the main ideals and core values of various professions.
- Express the responsibility to behave with honesty and integrity in all professions and fields by studying specific examples.
- Examine the various kinds of pressures and temptations that certain professionals face as they attempt to live up to high ethical standards.
- Apply their best ethical reasoning to scenarios involving ethics conflicts on the job.

Preparation

Review the activity. Prepare the necessary copies and session materials.

Group work is incorporated into this session. You may consult with the teacher to determine how best to form the groups.

Post Key Terms and definitions in a visible place.

- **Ethics:** The standards that help determine what is good, right, and proper.

Obtain a copy of the mission and core values statement or code of ethics from an organization or professional group.

Refer to the Glossary for working definitions of key ethics terms such as accountability, commitment, character, social responsibility, integrity, courage, disclosure, cynicism, due diligence, greed, and enlightened self-interest.

Recommended Time

This session typically takes 45 minutes to complete. Ask the teacher to help you keep track of time.

Materials

- Temptation Junction Scenarios (1 packet per group)
- Flip chart or board, and markers
- Mission statement, core values, or code of ethics

Presentation

Introduction (5 minutes)

Greet the students. Introduce today’s topic by discussing the following definition of “disclosure” with the students:

Disclosure - Most businesses, based on legal and ethical requirements, must periodically share certain facts about their business with customers, investors, or the government. The facts disclosed make it possible to make informed decisions regarding the purchase of products offered by the business, investment in the business, and regulation of the business.

Activity

Professional Values and Ideals (15 minutes)

Ask students, “How many of you are fairly sure of your choice of a career or profession at this point in your life?” Be sure to say it’s okay if some have not.

Allow some students to share their career choices and reasons for their choices. Write these on the flip chart or board. Don’t show surprise or judgment if you often hear, “to make lots of money.” Put a \$ sign next to those careers. Try to draw out the other things they find appealing about a profession.

Individuals choose their careers for different reasons. Earning money is an important component of every career. Some fields pay better than others. In some cases, the pay has little to do with the value of the service contributed to others.

One set of reasons a young person might be attracted to a particular career field is its mission, high ideals, and core values. Examples:

- Most careers in the medical field involve the role of healer, so individuals may seek this career because they want to heal diseases and restore people’s health.
- Careers in the arts have to do with creativity, and the beauty and joyfulness of artistic expression. Chefs, for example, bring their artistry to cooking and create a sense of joyfulness with great food.

What are some of the ideals and principal values of other professions?

- Architects—building attractive, safe buildings
- Law enforcement—making the community safe for everyone
- Naturalist—protecting outdoor beauty and the environment
- Journalist—keeping the public well informed through honest reporting
- Teacher—inspiring young people and adults to learn
- Psychologist—helping people overcome or adjust to their challenges
- Entrepreneurs—providing useful, valuable products and services
- Scientist—uncovering new knowledge
- Meteorologist—keeping people informed about the weather

Ideals and core values are the “positive ethics” that call forth the best from people. Various professions assert these in their mission statements, visions, values, and codes of ethics/conduct.

Introduce the mission statement and guiding principles (code of ethics) example you brought, and highlight the mission and idealism it contains.

When faced with ethical dilemmas or difficult choices, you should ask yourself the following questions before you act:

- Are my actions illegal or unethical?
- Am I being fair and honest?
- Would I be unwilling or embarrassed to tell my family, friends, or co-workers?
- Would the company's reputation be harmed if the action were revealed in the newspapers?
- Am I personally uncomfortable about the course of action?
- Could someone's life, health, safety, or reputation be endangered by my action?
- Could the intended action appear inappropriate to a third party?

Ask, "How well do individuals in various professions live up to these high ideals?" Allow students to respond with recent examples of ethics infractions in the news.

Sadly, in every profession and career field, there are individuals who break laws and behave in ways that betray their professional values.

For example, police who take bribes or engage in criminal activity; financial planners who cheat or take advantage of their clients; researchers who make up or falsify their research findings; medical professionals who are negligent with patients; journalists who fabricate stories or characters.

Ask, "What happens when individuals betray the values and ideals of their career field or profession?" It causes a loss of trust and confidence in that career field.

Each of us has a choice as to the kind of ethics we will practice in our life's work. Being ethical in one's professional behavior requires commitment and moral courage.

Some ethics infractions happen because of an out-of-control urge to compete and win at any cost. Whether it's a game, a promotion or a big contract, a compelling need to win can cause individuals to break the rules and behave in ways that are contrary to their own higher values and those of their chosen profession.

Taking shortcuts is another big ethics temptation. This means to do what is faster and easier, rather than what is more difficult, but truly best. Shortcuts can be motivated by competition. Many times they are chosen because of stress and tight schedules. Often, it takes a conscious effort to do the right thing.

For example, a salesperson makes lots of promises to get a big contract, and then after the excitement of winning the contract passes, he/she neglects to follow through and inform others of all the commitments he/she has made to the client. The client then has to mount a big fight to get all that was promised, and the company ends up looking bad.

“Office politics” also play a role in ethics infractions. Office politics refers to the struggle for personal advantage among those connected to individuals in higher positions of power.

For example, Sheila is a reporter. She knows her editor dislikes a prominent local businessperson who is promoting building a new youth center. Sheila is assigned to report on the project. Thinking that it will please her boss, she goes to great lengths to find fault with the project rather than write a balanced article that also highlights its value and broad support in the community. Sheila thinks that exaggerating a little to get ahead on her job isn’t the same as lying.

Activity

Temptation Junction (20 minutes)

Organize the class into six groups. A spokesperson from each group will report the group’s decisions to the class.

Each of your discussions today will involve a professional person facing what appears to be an ethical dilemma. After discussing the situation, determine and report the following:

- The ideals and core values of the person’s industry or profession.
- The various temptations that apply to the situation.
- The group’s answer and reasons for its decisions.

After about 4-5 minutes of discussion, pass out the “information kickers” to groups A, C, and F, and instruct them to add that information to their discussions. Allow another 4-5 minutes of discussion before reconvening as a large group and reporting to the class.

Reporting and Debriefing

Much of the real “meat” of this activity is in the debriefing of the scenarios, since in many cases they involve the clash between personal ethics and professional practices. Listen carefully to the group reports, and make positive, supportive comments regarding the spectrum of students’ ethics reasoning. Use the explanations below to guide students’ understanding of the personal and professional ethics issues.

Summary and Review (5 minutes)

Briefly review the vocabulary introduced in the session.

High ideals and ethics are important considerations when thinking about future careers and professions. The public becomes mistrusting when professionals break the law or betray the ideals and values of their chosen field. There often is a clash between one’s personal ethics and job demands. It takes time, effort, and courage to confront and reflect on ethics dilemmas, then do the right thing.

Thank the students for participating.

Session Outline

Introduction

- Greet the students.
- Introduce today's topic.

Activity

- Ask, "How many of you are fairly sure of your choice of a career or profession at this point in your life?" Allow students to share reasons for their career choices.
- Introduce the mission and values statement (code of ethics) you brought, and review the ideals and values of a variety of careers.
- Ask, "How well do individuals in various professions live up to their high ideals?" Discuss ethical infractions in various professions and recent examples in the news.
- Explain the competitive urge, and the temptation to take shortcuts.
- Introduce the intrusion of "office politics" and the desire to please one's superiors at all costs, rather than summoning the courage to challenge wrong actions.
- Offer the questions to consider in making ethical choices.
- Conduct and debrief the Temptation Junction activity.

Summary and Review

- Review the Key Terms for the session.
- Behaving ethically is everyone's responsibility. The betrayal of professional ideals and values causes a loss of trust. Sometimes, it's more difficult to do the right thing. All professions welcome young people with fresh energy, idealism, and ethical values.
- Thank the students for their participation.

Possible Scenario Responses

Scenario A

The issue: To serve as a compassionate healer of children’s illnesses.

- A. There are no professional ethics temptations in this scenario. Presumably, LaMont would be the same excellent doctor for children in either position.
- B. The only clash here would be to his own personal ideals as a young doctor first entering into medical practice. One is allowed a “mid-life course correction” when personal economics clash with idealism. It could be effectively argued that, coming from his background and experience working in a poor neighborhood clinic, he would be in a better position to influence how the hospital serves very poor children.

Scenario B

The issue: Natural beauty, protection of the environment, and preserving wildlife by preventing development and home building in open space areas.

- A. Her superiors’ betrayal of the ideals and stated values of the organization. Rochelle’s temptations would involve dishonesty with donors and placing her own self-interests first by keeping quiet to keep her job. Also, “office politics” in pleasing her boss, who surely must know of this arrangement.
- B. She could report a wrongdoing and give the company an opportunity to correct the situation.
- C. She could resign her position in protest of this action.

Scenario C

The issue: Creating effective, artistic promotional materials for clients in legitimate businesses.

- A. There are no professional ethics temptations in this scenario. The ad business and the tobacco industry are both legitimate enterprises. Advertisers and manufacturers are not responsible for personal choices made by the products’ consumers.
- B. The ethics clash here is with her own personal convictions. If she did not work on the promotional piece, presumably someone else would, and the effect would be the same. The “kicker” would resolve the personal conflict and ease her conscience on this score. Various court settlements with the tobacco industry have required cigarette manufacturers to create youth non-smoking campaigns.

Scenario D

The issue: To construct safe, long-lasting, and aesthetically attractive buildings. The company’s reputation is to go the second mile and do more than is required.

- A. Competitive urge—to win at any cost. This may look like taking a shortcut, but Roland will still be building to industry standards, so he is not putting the public at risk, as he would be if his decision involved constructing a substandard building. He’s only risking harm to his company’s long-term reputation by barely surpassing standards.
- B. Either answer can be defended. A building built to code with no shortcuts is still a very good building. Professionally, he would be choosing to perhaps put his company’s reputation at risk. If he goes ahead, Roland would still be meeting the code requirements. It could be argued that

since his people are accustomed to providing high-quality workmanship, even with less-expensive materials, the quality of his workmanship and the overall result would still be superior to that of another contractor. The counter-argument is that to meet the low budget, he perhaps would have to hire cheaper, less-skilled craftsmen and sub-contractors.

Scenario E

The issue: Good and faithful service while responsible for the children she is babysitting.

- A. Trust. She would be doing this without the Smith family's knowledge and permission. She agreed to watch the children, and hanging out with her friends will take her attention away from her responsibility. Additionally, if one of her friends damaged something in the house, the Smiths would likely be upset and not want to hire Collette again.
- B. Since her primary responsibility is to take care of the children, she should tell her friends she will see them later, after she has finished babysitting.

Scenario F

The issue: To offer goods and services in an attractive setting, using friendly, service-oriented sales and management personnel.

- A. "Office Politics" to please the boss. Shortcuts, doing what is easier rather than what is truly right and best by taking this matter to a higher level of management in the company. Self-interest, keeping the peace, and keeping one's job rather than having the courage to do what is truly best for Charlotte, the store, and the company.
- B. Promote Charlotte. It's highly unethical and also illegal to discriminate in hiring and promotions. It should make no difference as to which race Gary's boss favors or censures.

Temptation Junction Scenarios



Scenario A

LaMont is a pediatrician who was first attracted to the medical profession because of a childhood friend who was physically challenged. His entire professional life, he has worked for a neighborhood clinic serving very poor people. His pay is much less than he could earn elsewhere, but his biggest “paycheck” is the satisfaction that he is helping children and families who otherwise would probably not receive medical attention.

LaMont has been approached by a large, for-profit hospital that has offered him a job as head of their pediatrics department, at a salary more than twice what he currently earns. LaMont’s children are in high school, and he will need money to put them through college. Also, he hasn’t saved much money for his retirement. What should LaMont do?



Scenario B

Rochelle raises funds for an environmental organization that uses the money to purchase large tracts of land to keep intact as open space and to prevent development of subdivisions. This allows people living in densely populated areas to enjoy open space with wildlife and the natural beauty of the countryside.

Rochelle has uncovered some secret documents that show how the organization is quietly selling select homesites to build summer homes on some of the land for members of its board of directors. These sites are mainly in secluded areas, not readily visible to hikers and individuals who enjoy the open space. What should Rochelle do?



Scenario C

Susan is the artistic director at a small, but high-quality advertising agency. The agency has just won a big account with a cigarette manufacturer. Susan is personally opposed to the sale and use of all tobacco products. The whole agency works as a team, and Susan would be expected to work on this account. What should Susan do?



Scenario D

Roland inherited a small construction company from his father, who established a tradition of using superior materials and top craftsmen. The company has a long-term reputation for maintaining high standards that are above the building code requirements.

Business has been slow recently, and Roland has the opportunity to bid on a project to construct a large building. To get this contract, he would have to lower his company’s traditional high standards to just meet the minimum code requirements. What should Roland do?



Scenario E

Collette is a teenager and often babysits for her neighbors to earn money to supplement her allowance. One Friday night while she is babysitting for her neighbors the Smiths, she gets a phone call from a friend who wants to come over and hang out. Collette feels a bit uneasy about this, since it is not her house, and she is responsible for the children she is babysitting. However, she tells her friend to come over. Her friend shows up with a group of kids from school that she knows only slightly. What should Collette do?



Scenario F

Gary is a retail-operations manager responsible for hiring sales clerks and department heads for the store he works for. His boss, the new store manager, has hinted rather strongly that he's against hiring or promoting any more people of "certain racial groups" because of his bad experiences with them.

Charlotte is one of the best salespeople in the department, and a member of one of the racial groups the new store manager doesn't like. There's an opening for a department head, and Gary knows Charlotte is the best-qualified person for this position. It would be simpler to pass over Charlotte and instead promote Stephen, because Gary knows the new boss would approve. What should Gary do?



Additional Scenario "Information Kickers"



Scenario A Kicker: How would it affect your decision if LaMont has heard that the neighborhood clinic is facing a big loss of funding and will have to start cutting back hours and possibly laying off doctors?



Scenario C Kicker: How would it affect your decision if the focus of this promotion's project is to create a campaign to discourage young people from smoking?



Scenario F Kicker: How would it affect your decision if the new boss was African American, as are Gary and Stephen, and those "certain racial groups" included anybody not African American?



Appendix

Welcome to Junior Achievement's *Excellence through Ethics*

As a Junior Achievement (JA) volunteer or teacher, you are joining other teachers and volunteers from across the United States in providing students with a unique educational experience. Junior Achievement's *Excellence through Ethics* offers students learning opportunities to share knowledge and information regarding ethics in business. JA strives to show students how business works, and to better evaluate organizations that conduct their operations in the right way.

Excellence through Ethics is designed to equip volunteers and teachers with supplemental, ethics-based activities for use with JA in-class programs for grades four through twelve. All these activities provide students with current and essential information about business ethics.

These activities are designed to reinforce students' knowledge and skills, teach them how to make ethical decisions, assist them in learning to think critically, and help them to be better problem-solvers. All the activities are hands-on, interactive, and group-focused to present the material to students with the best instructional methods.

Within these supplements, you will find sections to help you effectively implement the activities in your volunteer experience. Materials include: (a) an introductory discussion of business ethics, marketplace integrity, and the growing capacity of students for ethical decision-making; (b) activities and student materials that connect to and expand current classroom-based Junior Achievement programs; and (c) a functional glossary of terms relating to a wide spectrum of ethics, quality, service, and social responsibility considerations in business.

JA greatly appreciates your support of these important and exciting activities. If you have comments about the *Excellence through Ethics* program content, curriculum, and/or instruction, please access <http://studentcenter.ja.org.aspx/LearnEthics/> and choose the “*Excellence through Ethics* Survey” link located in the middle of the page.

Appendix

Introduction and Overview

- *How do I do the right thing in this situation?*
- *Should I be completely honest, even if it puts others in jeopardy?*
- *What kind of community do we want to be?*
- *How do we do what's best for the long term?*
- *Who should cover the cost of "doing the right thing"?*

These are all questions having to do with business ethics. They are valid and necessary questions, and good business people have asked them for generations. They form the backdrop of vital discussions as business, community, and political leaders grapple with significant issues. Many students would ask these questions, even if Junior Achievement hadn't developed this ethics curriculum.

Business Ethics Discussions Are Here To Stay

Business ethics has been in the spotlight for much of the past decade, especially as examples of wrongdoing come to light in the media. New technologies and international competitive pressures cause a steady focus on the question, "Is it possible to be competitively successful in business today and still operate in an honest and ethical manner?" The past decade has seen individuals search for deeper personal meaning in the workplace, which has contributed to lively ethics discussions in the business realm. For these reasons, the discussion of business ethics is not a passing fad; it's here to stay.

Many graduate schools of business have either required ethics coursework or integrated ethics principles throughout all areas of study. That is commendable. We believe this vital area of exposure and instruction also should happen at earlier ages and continue throughout the students' educational journey. Many of today's students haven't had access to a well-rounded education in economics and free enterprise or have come to see these in a very negative light. They have limited awareness of the extent to which good business leaders engage in the challenging exercises of ethical decision-making amid heavy competitive pressures. As students learn the general principles of economics and business, it's critical that these be underpinned with a strong foundation in ethics. This will accentuate the best in American business traditions, while laying the groundwork for students' continued evolution into future generations of leaders.

Integrity in the Marketplace?

Many adults and young people choose to believe that the marketplace is driven only by greed. They view it as bringing out only the worst in human behavior, demoralizing the human spirit, and driving out any sense of idealism. While elements of greed and extreme self-interest among some individuals cannot be denied, solid research has shown time and again that companies with a long-term focus on ethics and a broad consideration of stakeholders' interests are much more profitable than those lacking such a focus.

James A. Autry, in his book *Love and Profit: The Art of Caring Leadership*, said it well: "I do not doubt the presence of greed in the marketplace because I do not doubt the presence of greed in people. But, I also do not doubt the ennobling aspects of work, of the workplace, of the community, of endeavor, of

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the marketplace. So I choose to believe that most of the marketplace is driven by people who want to do good work for others and for themselves.”

Excellence through Ethics accepts the challenge of educating youth in the basics of economics and business while establishing a positive balance on the side of well-informed, ethical business practice. This may appear to place a heavy burden on Junior Achievement volunteers, who are not trained ethics experts. The following informational pages will not turn you into an ethics expert. That’s not what we’re striving for here. What students need most is meaningful interaction with people who are willing to engage in a discussion of these vital issues.

Lively Practitioners Rather Than Dry Theorists

This program is more about day-to-day ethics practice than the nuances of ethics theory. Some believe that working in business requires a disconnect from one’s personal ethics. We do not believe this is the case. Students need to know that what they learn about fairness and honesty in general also applies to business. While business ethics may address some specific areas of business practice, it’s not a separate and distinct specialty to be set apart from the general ethical principles that apply in other areas of life. Young people need to encounter the wisdom of age and experience that volunteers bring to the classroom.

Students’ Growing Capacity for Ethical Decision-Making

Excellence through Ethics is designed to foster discussions at the appropriate level for each age group. The curriculum developers have designed the ethics activities with sensitivity to student’s mental maturity. At the late elementary and middle-grades levels, students’ capacities for ethical reasoning tend toward good personal behavior as determined by adult rules and authority. In relationships, personal trust, loyalty, and respect are of paramount importance. For these students, corporate ethical behavior is viewed in much the same light as their own personal behavior: it’s governed by rules.

As students advance into high school, their ethical decision-making moves into the larger arena of social contracts and systems that guide and govern societal and group behavior. Here the rationality and utility of laws are scrutinized, as students become more capable of higher-ordered, principled thinking. Students are increasingly aware of the diversity of values among different cultures and communities. At this level, students’ capacities for processing the complex, ethical dilemmas that may be encountered in business are greatly enhanced.

You will gain confidence as you come to realize that conducting a robust, provocative discussion with students is more important than “having the right answer.” The activities have been designed to leave room for lively discussion and multiple points of view. Having the courage to share your own experiences is very valuable to students.

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You don't have to apologize for the excesses students may see in business. Don't assume responsibility for actions that are not your own, and do not try to defend the indefensible. While accentuating the fact that most businesses operate ethically, it's okay to scrutinize the unethical players in the marketplace who give business in general a bad name.

Continuing Education

Teaching this material to students will no doubt strengthen and enhance your own ethics awareness and continuing education. Some students will challenge your best reasoning capacities. Having your own support network of professional colleagues with whom you can share and discuss some of these issues is very valuable. It's also helpful to seek out colleagues with philosophical views that differ from your own. This serves as a valuable "cross-pollination" function because you will be able to understand and discuss a variety of views with students, as well as share students' perspectives with your colleagues. In this way, everyone learns.

Finally, please be assured that your contributions here have tremendous value to students and will serve to upgrade business ethics in the future. We're dealing with the future generation of leaders in their formative years. We can take pride in the fact that we've had a hand in shaping the very people who will be responsible for business ethics and social responsibility in the future.

Appendix

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Many educators, economists, businesspeople, and consultants have contributed to the development of *Excellence through Ethics*. We would like to acknowledge the following individuals and groups for their efforts, creative talents, and support in creating these materials:

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Appendix

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Appendix

Excellence through Ethics Evaluation

Junior Achievement has discontinued all paper versions of program surveys. However, we greatly appreciate your comments and feedback about *Excellence through Ethics*. Please help us improve the quality of *Excellence through Ethics* by sharing your comments through our new online survey process. The online survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

If you have comments about the *Excellence through Ethics* program content, curriculum, and/or instruction, please access <http://studentcenter.ja.org/aspx/LearnEthics/> and choose the *Excellence through Ethics* Survey link located in the middle of the page.

Thank you for participating in JA!



Excellence through Ethics Volunteer Survey

1. Including this session, how many individual sessions of Excellence through Ethics have you presented? _____

2. Do you feel that the students were engaged through this session?
 - A. Not at all
 - B. Somewhat engaged
 - C. Engaged
 - D. Very Engaged
 - E. Unsure

3. Do you feel the session was relevant to students?
 - A. Not relevant
 - B. Somewhat relevant
 - C. Relevant
 - D. Very relevant
 - E. Unsure

4. Do you feel students are more prepared to make ethical decisions after participating in this session?
 - A. Significantly more prepared
 - B. Somewhat more prepared
 - C. Somewhat less prepared
 - D. Significantly less prepared
 - E. Unsure

5. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being excellent), how would you rate the overall quality of the Excellence through Ethics session? _____

6. After this JA experience, how likely are you to volunteer for JA again?
 - A. More likely to volunteer
 - B. Less likely to volunteer
 - C. No more or less likely to volunteer
 - D. Unsure

7. What comments or suggestions do you have regarding the overall session (including format, content, etc.)?

Optional: City _____

State _____ Country _____

Email _____

Excellence through Ethics Student Survey

1. What grade are you in? _____

2. Please fill in the circle that best describes how you feel about the following statements.

There is no right or wrong answer.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This topic is very important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to apply what I learned in this session to the real world.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The activities were interesting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I learned something about ethics from this session.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Do you feel more prepared to make ethical decisions after participating in this session?

- A. Significantly more prepared
- B. Somewhat more prepared
- C. Somewhat less prepared
- D. Significantly less prepared
- E. Unsure

4. I saw someone at my job taking money from the cash register, I would:

- A. Ask someone I trust what I should
- B. Tell a supervisor
- C. Talk to the person taking the money
- D. Do nothing
- E. Not sure

5. To help us better understand who you are, please answer the following questions: How do you describe your ethnicity (family background)? (Fill in all that apply)

- A. African American
- B. Asian American
- C. Latino (a) or Chicano (a)
- D. European American (white)
- E. Native American
- F. Other – how do you identify yourself? _____

6. Do you have any additional comments regarding this session?

Optional: City _____ State _____ Country _____