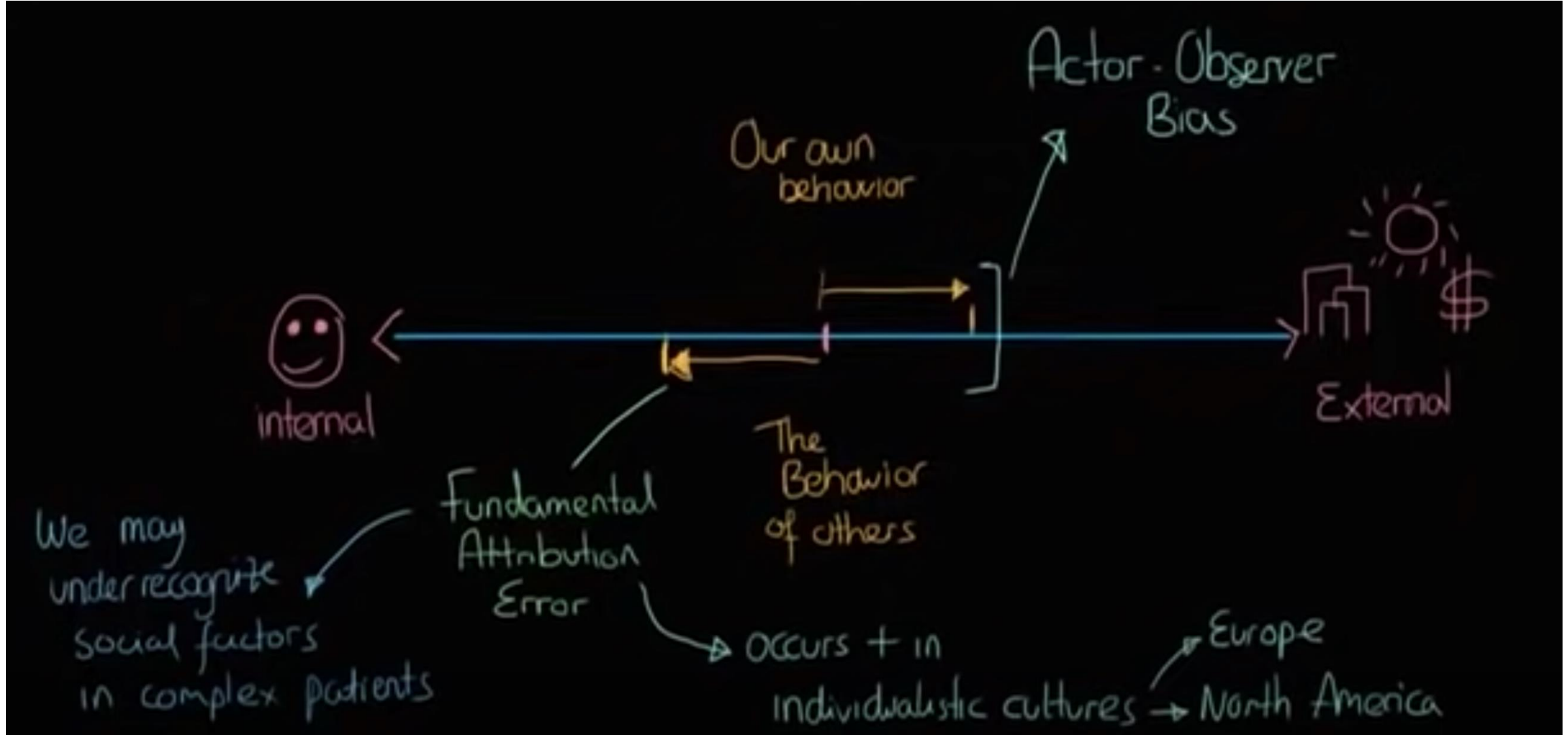




Ethics for the Professional Safety Leader

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 - National Capital Chapter President
 - ASSP Advisory Group
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Ground Rules

- Variation is not necessarily "bad"
- Seek learning and understanding
- Be open to new perspectives
- Seek to understand why, not judge outcomes



Road Map

Explore	Summarize	Synthesize and Evaluate
What constitutes ethics	Professional and Organizational contexts of ethics and professional and organizational codes of conduct.	Situations in the context of professional ethics and acceptable risk



What is Ethics?

What is Ethics Anyway?

- Maybe start with what ethics is *not* (Velasquez et al., 2010)
 - Tied directly to feelings
 - Feelings can deviate
 - Tied directly to religion
 - Ethics apply to all people, not just those that are religious
 - Tied to following the law
 - Laws can deviate from what is ethical
 - Tied to following the majority
 - Societies can become morally corrupt

Definition of Ethics

A mutually agreed upon set of principles held by an individual or group that serves as the basis for situational reasoning and conduct

(As informed by Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 ASEM 614)

Occupation Vs. Profession



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09fa coWNfhg>

- Occupation (Weil, 2008)
 - Delivers services
 - “Committed” to “serving” the public
 - Has a special “relationship” with the public
- Occupations follow common and individual ethical standards (Weil, 2008)
- Profession (Weil, 2008)
 - Work is organized in a “morally permissible way”
- Professions follow professional ethical standards (Weil, 2008)
 - Go beyond law or ordinary morality
 - Some sort of covenant to follow the standards

Professional Ethics

- Standards set by a group meeting the definition of a profession that apply to how they will practice (Davis, 2003)
- Typically stated in a formal code (Bidez, nd.)
- Only apply to the profession who fall under the specific professional provisions and standards set (Davis, 2003)
- In professional capacity, outweigh personal morality (Bidez, nd).
- Focuses on what is important to the profession (Bidez, nd).

Organizational Ethics

- Principle Based Standards set by an organization that apply to how they will practice
- Typically stated in a formal code
- In organizational capacity, outweigh personal morality
- Focuses on what is important to the organization

What About Conduct? Rules?



Definition of Ethics


A mutually agreed upon set of principles held by an individual or group that serves as the basis for situational reasoning and conduct

(As informed by Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 ASEM 614)

Codes of Ethics Vs. Codes of Conduct

Code of Ethics	Code of Conduct
Principle Based - Aspirational	Rule Based - Directional
Set a baseline for principle-based decisions - judgement	Set a baseline for any behavioral actions - action
General to allow for multi-faceted application	Application to specific situations
Public	Internal
Short	Long


(Surbhi, 2017)



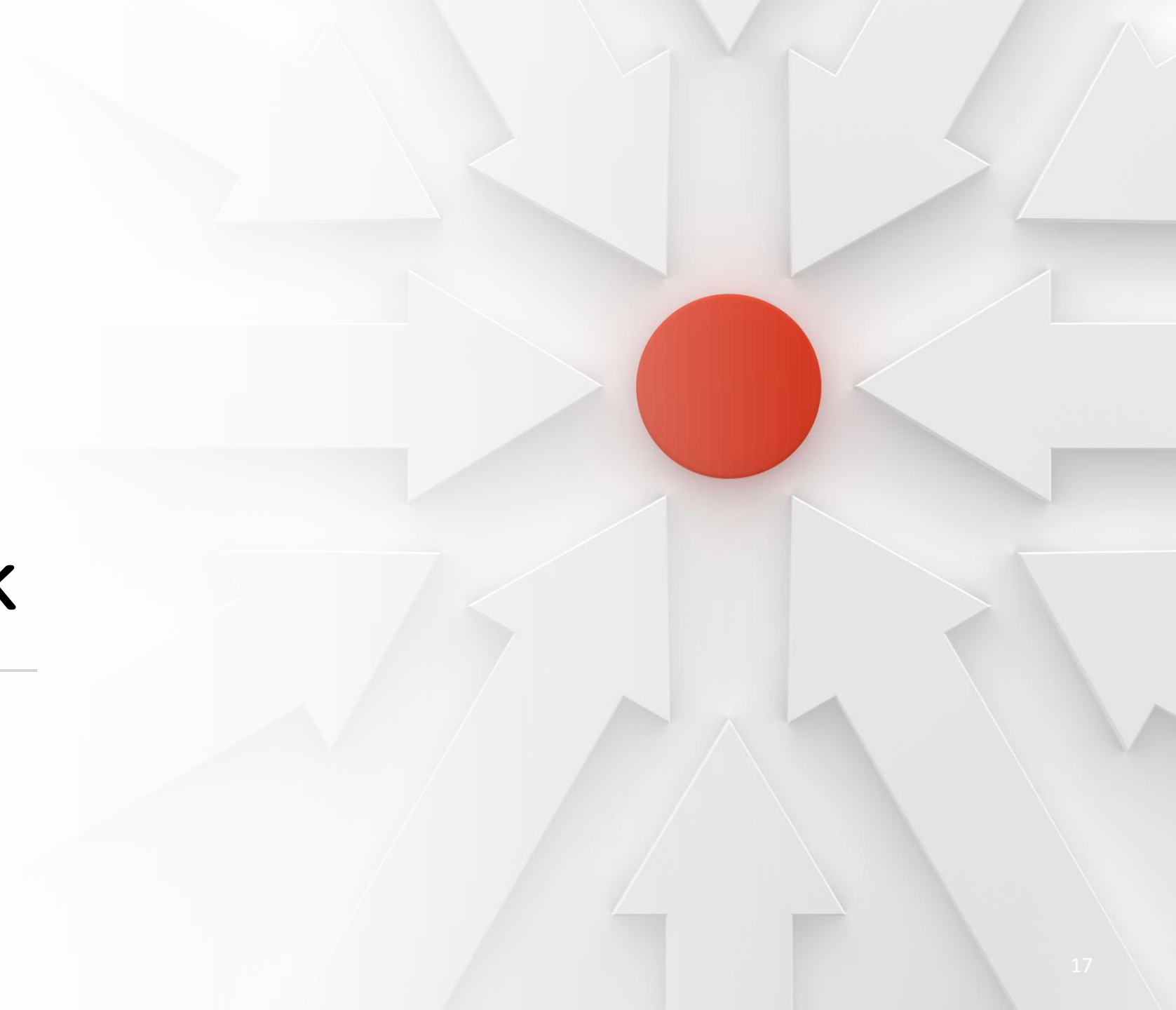
How do we
navigate overlap?

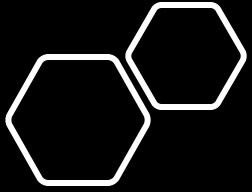
Irreversible Goal Conflicts & Creative Middle Way

- Conflicts between organizational and personal goals and values exist and are inherent
- A "creative middle-way" is a solution that satisfies the alternatives in a new or inventive way (National Academy of Engineering, 2004)
- The creative middle-way is an innovative compromise
- Requires that we recognize goal conflicts and try to discover new alternatives



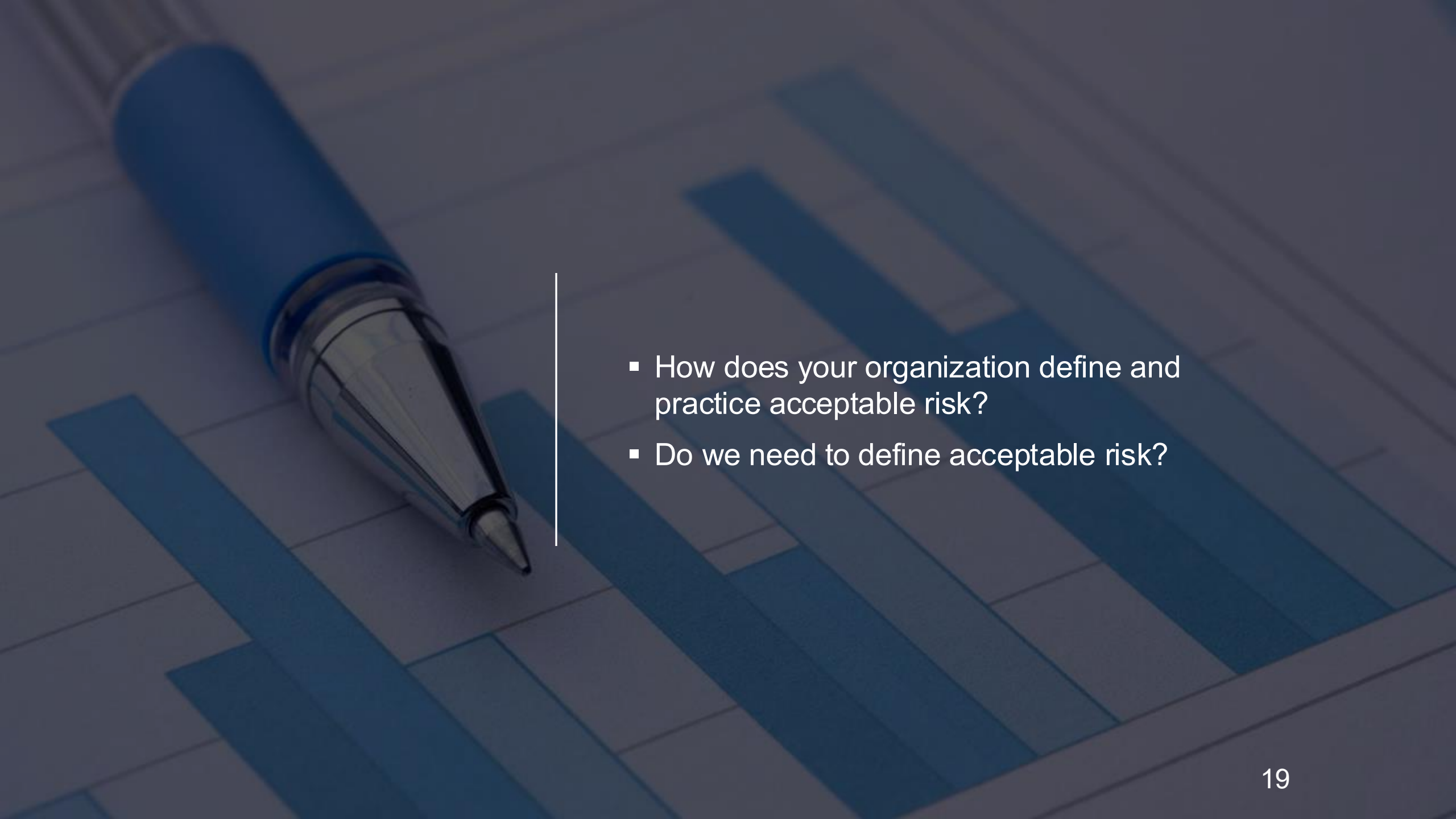
The intersection of Ethics and Acceptable Risk

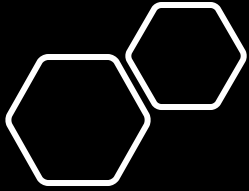




Acceptable Risk

ANSI Z10 - “The level of risk to workers, resulting from exposure to hazards or system deficiencies, that is tolerated by the organization.”

- 
- A blue pen with a silver tip is positioned diagonally across the frame, resting on a document. The document features a bar chart with several blue bars of varying heights. The background is a light blue grid. The pen is a ballpoint pen with a blue barrel and a silver-colored tip.
- How does your organization define and practice acceptable risk?
 - Do we need to define acceptable risk?



Value of a Statistical Life

“The value of a statistical life (VSL) is the local tradeoff rate between fatality risk and money. When the tradeoff values are derived from choices in market contexts the VSL serves as both a measure of the population’s willingness to pay for risk reduction and the marginal cost of enhancing safety. Given its fundamental economic role, policy analysts have adopted the VSL as the economically correct measure of the benefit individuals receive from enhancements to their health and safety” (Kniesner & Viscusi, 2019).

VSL Example

- Suppose a new food safety regulation reduces the annual risk of dying of a foodborne illness by 0.00001
- In a population of 100,000, the regulation is expected, in a statistical sense, to result in 1 fewer death from foodborne illness each year
- If each person in that population of 100,000 is willing to pay \$20 a year for the reduction in mortality risks, \$2 million is the total for an annual risk reduction that can be expected in the statistical sense to save one life
- In this case, \$2 million is said to be the value of a statistical life (VSL) (Kenkel, n.d.)

An Example

- Assume that it is impossible to protect the entire public. What then, is the segment of the public, which should receive priority attention? The most vulnerable to injury (e.g. children, the elderly, the obese)? The most frequently injured group (e.g. 50th percentile, adult males)? How much should we all be willing to pay to reduce someone else's risk of harm?

The Intersection of Ethics and Risk

- How does acceptable risk impact ethical decision making?
- Is it appropriate to use data regarding whether or not to make a safety improvement in engineering design?
- If not appropriate, what would you suggest as an alternative?
- Is this data driven approach currently used within society? If so, where?



Normalizing Deviance

- Enlarging of the boundaries of acceptable risk without sound engineering basis
- Prior success becomes the basis for allowing deviations outside specification
- Instead of proving a situation is safe, they are required to prove that it is unsafe
- Insufficient knowledge of the facts
- “With each successful landing, it appears that NASA Engineers and managers increasingly regarded the foam-shredding as inevitable, and as either unlikely to jeopardize safety or simply an acceptable risk.”



(Harris et al., 2019)

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Want More?

ASCE-200: Ethics for the EHS, OHS, and IH Leader

Course Offered:

January 1-December 31, 2025

Registration closes 11:59 PM CST on December 1, 2025.

[Register Now](#)

This course explores the economic, social, and political consequences of safety risk and considers provocative real-world dilemmas: What is acceptable risk? Are the fundamental canons of engineering ethics and safety professional ethics contrary to the concept of acceptable risk? What is the worth of human life? Students will conduct critical reviews of corporate safety and ethics policies from their own company comparing this to what research shows is world class. Real-world case studies provide the framework for exercises in exploring goal conflicts.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Assess various codes of ethics and conduct against ethical, professional ethical, and organizational ethical theory
- Apply Professional Codes of Ethics to real-world situations
- Assess the impact of Health, Safety, Environmental, and IH solutions in a global and societal context
- Analyze situations relative to acceptable risk and Professional Codes of Ethics

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Follow Up

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