Virtue Ethics: Study Of My Personal Experience

To be honest, figuring out which ethical category I fall under, started out to be difficult, as I was not sure where I fell under. All I knew was that I couldn't pick which one I am a part of because my thoughts on different controversial topics differed from some of the ones in each area. So I looked back on my own experiences, regarding any trauma or hardships I've been through, and I looked at my own thoughts and views on different topics, as well and narrowed it down. I am a feminist care-based virtue ethicist. However, as a virtue ethicist, there are some characteristics that I need to work on. Virtue ethics is the idea that people should focus on the person themselves, not their actions. Essentially, their actions (good or bad) do not define them as a person. According to the PPCC Ethics textbook, William Lawhead defines virtue ethics as an "ethical theory that focuses on those character traits that make someone a good or admirable person rather than simply on the actions the person performs" (p. 149). Moreover, it is also described as the "quest to understand and live a life of moral character", and it can be described as one in which we "acquire virtue through practice" (ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu). Feminist care-based ethics, or better known as ethics of care, is an ethical theory that "seeks to maintain relationships by contextualizing and promoting the well-being of caregivers and care-receivers in a network of social relations" and is defined as a "practice or virtue rather than a theory as such, 'care' involves maintaining the world of, and meeting the needs of, ourself and others" (Staudt).

As a virtue ethicist, my parents taught my sister and I some of their Christain values growing up, which I still practice to this day, such as praying before every meal, counting blessings and attending church on Sundays. Since a young age, I have practiced some important virtues that have stuck with me to this day, including honesty, bravery and generosity. On the subject of care-based ethics, my parents taught me to be there for someone who needs it the most, as well as to show empathy, whenever I could. Therefore, as a kid, I was the type of person who would find other kids who were sitting by themselves during recess at school and I would offer to play with them. Growing up and as an adult now, I believe in giving people another chance. I believe in forgiving them after a mistake because we're all human and have said or did things we regret. Looking back on small experiences like this, I have come to understand why I chose the ethical theories that I did.

During my senior year of high school, I got into a car accident when driving to a final exam study session for a class I was concurrently enrolled in with PPCC. I ended up with some significant injuries, some including my pelvis being fractured in four places and two vertebrae in my neck is broken, resulting in me needing to use a wheelchair to get around for twelve weeks, as well as needing a cervical collar for sixteen weeks. I spent two weeks in the hospital where I was admitted and then about two more in another for rehabilitation, where I did speech, occupational and physical therapy each day. In the hospitals and for some time at home afterward, I felt like I needed someone to blame because I was unhappy with all the help I needed and my limitations because of my injuries, as well as any pain or discomfort I felt, so I blamed the other driver and held a strong dislike towards him for that time. However, as time passed and I began focusing more on my recovery, the resentment I felt towards the other driver dissipated. The real turning point though was a few weeks before my court date, about a month and a half later, regarding the car accident. I had not given it much thought before, but one night, I had come to an

important realization. I was not (and I am still not to this day) holding onto any more anger towards the other driver who caused my car accident. I had forgiven him without knowing it. Anyone would think that my first reaction to hearing the other driver's name would be that I hate him, but I don't. I understand that he made a mistake while driving and I do not define him by his bad actions. I found that forgiving him has put me at a peaceful state of mind.

I also found that this trauma has helped me to open up more and has taught me so much about empathy. If someone else has been in a car accident or some other kind of trauma or is experiencing feelings I have been through, I found that I'm able to connect with people more easily than I was before the car accident. Personally, I have some other friends who had been in car accidents themselves, so I am able to connect with them in so many ways. Empathy is a huge part of feminist care-based ethics and it plays a vital role in maintaining relationships. This helps me to understand others on a deeper level and to be able to let people in.

Over the course of this semester, I have learned about the ethical theories in my ethics class. What caught the majority of my attention was the lectures on virtue ethics. As said before, virtue ethics is essentially the idea that an individual should focus on characteristics that make someone good at heart and on the individual themselves, rather than their actions. After the lesson on virtue ethics, I began to rethink many things that have happened in my life and how I have handled things in the past. I held resentment towards certain people for reasons of my own, maybe after ending a friendship with them or maybe the other person was just an acquaintance who I didn't click well with. But I after I began to reflect, I realized that some of the reasons I was choosing to dislike those people were silly and immature. Looking back, I realize that some of this behavior may have been influenced by the way my dad handles things because he is sometimes is quick to judge people based on things they have said or done. On the other hand, my mom is the type who can let things go whenever necessary and give people the benefit of the doubt. I have nothing against my dad, but I'll admit, I could have followed my mom's example growing up instead most of the time. After the lectures on virtue ethics, I stopped holding onto anger or resentment towards different people and let it go instead, using this as a way to better myself and to be a better Christian. I realized that I want to change so I can see more of the good in everyone, as well as love unconditionally. Essentially, I don't want to solely judge someone's character based on their actions because even if an individual does something that their friends and family look down on them for, I want to believe that there is still some good in them.

As a virtue ethicist, there is another aspect that I need to work on. The virtue ethics theory elaborates on the idea of having no regrets because essentially, someone's actions do not define their character. I need to work on not defining myself by my actions because whenever I do or say something I wish I could take back or I embarrass myself somehow, I find myself overthinking these incidences. Spending a lot of my time overthinking, especially things that happened months or years ago that I know I've been forgiven for, can get pretty tiring. Even if I probably have not been forgiven for something I said or did in the past, I want to be able to let those things go and instead, use them as lessons that I have grown from or could grow from for future experiences to come. Being able to live without regrets would put me more at peace.

One issue that may be faced by anyone in general, and may be a topic of conversation for many more years to come, is whether or not abortion is morally ethical. As a virtue ethicist, I believe that if a woman terminates her pregnancy, she is taking away a baby's future opportunity to complete his or herself one day. As a feminist care-based ethicist, I believe that it

is not a caring choice to get an abortion. My virtue ethics and feminist care-based ethics go hand-in-hand with this issue because I personally believe that there are better options than being forced into motherhood or terminating the pregnancy. I believe that the media should encourage adoption rather than abortion. However, my ethics are tested when it comes to the topic of if the pregnancy was a result of rape or incest. Personally, I would not be able to have my rapists' baby if I was in that situation. I would want to be able to terminate the pregnancy in that case and I would not wish this kind of trauma on any other woman. As previously stated, I will continue to face this controversy as news stories continue to surface and many people continue to debate, wherever I go in life.

Another controversial issue (regarding the media) that has been the topic of conversation for years and will be for more years to come is whether or not the media is successful in its portrayal of teen suicide. However, for the past two years, within this subject, the topic of conversation has mainly been how the show 13 Reasons Why portrays teen suicide. As a virtue ethicist, I believe that the show is not a good portrayal of teen suicide, nor does it send good messages. The main character, Hannah Baker, blames a number of people for her suicide by saying at the beginning, "if you're listening to this tape, you're one of the reasons why" (13 Reasons Why). In reality, it would not anyone else's fault because the reasons for an individual deciding to commit suicide are psychological. It is also not anyone else's fault because these teens might have been cruel to Hannah, but their actions do not define their character. The show is also inaccurate by depicting that bullying is the only reason for suicide, when other factors, such as depression, could be an underlying cause. It also seems that Hannah treats her suicide as revenge against all the people she left behind, such as family and friends, along with society in general, even though her suicide was not anyone else's fault. As a feminist or care-based ethicist, I personally believe that the way teen suicide is portrayed in the show is not a caring approach towards the audience who watches this show because a scene in one episode graphically depicts this event. By brutally depicting it this way, the show is not helping vulnerable teens. Instead, it is encouraging suicide. The writers are also guilty in glorifying suicide by sending out a message that suicide is the answer if all is going horribly. The show also only depicts that bullying is the only reason for suicide, which isn't true because there are other factors that could cause it. The show also lacks a caring or empathetic aspect because the show doesn't reach out to this young audience and tell them how they could prevent someone from taking their own life. I believe that the media is not always accurate in its depiction of teen suicide and there is no way to tell if it can help or harm someone because everyone is different.

I might face controversy about how the media portrays such a topic, either going out in society or in my chosen profession. I might face this in my chosen profession because I am currently majoring in psychology and my chosen profession will possibly be a psychologist. I may deal with young teenagers going through mental health struggles related to suicide and the media's portrayal of suicide may contribute to this issue for some of my patients.

Figuring out which category I fall under ethically has begun to help me figure out how I would handle different issues and scenarios either with close family and friends or going out into society. If I have learned anything, both from my own experience and learning about ethics, it's that I am going to treat everyone with care and as anyone would say, "kill people with kindness." Figuring out which ethical theories I fall under has helped me grow as a person and realize what I need to change about myself to continue to grow in the best ways possible. I am learning how to forgive others, as well as to not be quick to judge them based on their actions.

Life is too short to waste time looking down on other people for their actions. Instead, I will try to help other people as much as I can, much like I plan to with my chosen career in the psychology field when I am all done with my schooling. I am at a more peaceful state of mind right now, as I continue to grow as a person and learn.