

September 2020 – Newsletter from ERiA

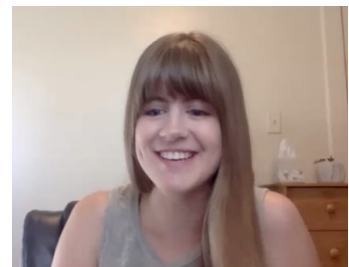
*Fall greetings, friends and colleagues of Ethical Reasoning in Action!*

Below are updates and stories from ERiA that you may find encouraging in the midst of these challenging and uncertain times. The newsletter is intended to bring attention to the good teaching, scholarship, and work being done at JMU and elsewhere. Exceptionally difficult ethical situations are being navigated daily, especially in educational contexts. How can the 8KQ help us perceive the ethical issues at stake more clearly and make the important decisions that we face more ethically?

## Ethical Reasoning in Action at JMU

### **1787 Orientation and It's Complicated**

Beginning August 21, Orientation hosted 1787 Weeks of Welcome. It would typically have included a faculty and staff-led ethical reasoning workshop – It's Complicated – but this is not a typical year. Instead, First year Orientation Guides, or FROGs, facilitated an ethical reasoning exercise for all incoming students using prompts relating to what is happening in the country and all over the world. Recognizing that current times have placed us in new situations in which we have to make tough ethical decisions, students were asked to *identify* an ethical issue that they have faced or imagine that they are likely to face and *use* the 8KQ to help think through what they should do. FROGs shared their own experiences using the 8KQ to help students understand how applicable they could be. Many students reflected on what they should do in response to overhearing a racist remark or noticing a fellow student who was not wearing a mask. They asked ethical questions such as... What does it say about my *character* if I let a racist remark pass? And... Whose *responsibility* is it to ensure that masks are worn at social gatherings? Some groups struggled with how best to ask and answer the 8KQ in a given situation, and other groups experienced open and thoughtful conversations that continued throughout 1787 Weeks of Welcome. Ethical reasoning isn't always easy; often...well...It's Complicated. Thank you to the 1787 Orientation team Sarah Sunde, Casey Ouren, Alex Van Meter, Mollie Zenz, the FROGs, and student assistants for helping to organize the sessions for First Year and Transfer students. Special thanks to the 40 It's Complicated facilitators who volunteered to read through the ethical reasoning worksheets from incoming students!



Abby Wallen ('21) was one of five students giving advice to incoming First Year students on using the 8KQ.

## 8KQ Song

ERiA is thrilled to announce that after much creative and collaborative work, a new 8KQ song is available! It comes with a rather catchy tune, which you can enjoy [here](#). The 8KQ song results from Susan Ferguson's (School of Accounting) innovative idea to create an 8KQ "earworm." After much work and many logistical challenges (it takes a lot to create a hit song!) Ms. Ferguson laid plans for a campus wide contest, one with small cash prizes and awards. From the many submissions, several were identified as potentially "earworm" worthy. With much work, from many places and persons across campus (see the credits at the end of the video) a final product has been released! A huge THANK YOU goes to all who participated in the original submissions and all those who have worked so hard to bring the 8KQ song to the airwaves. Special thanks to Susan Ferguson for such an innovative use of 8KQ ethical reasoning!



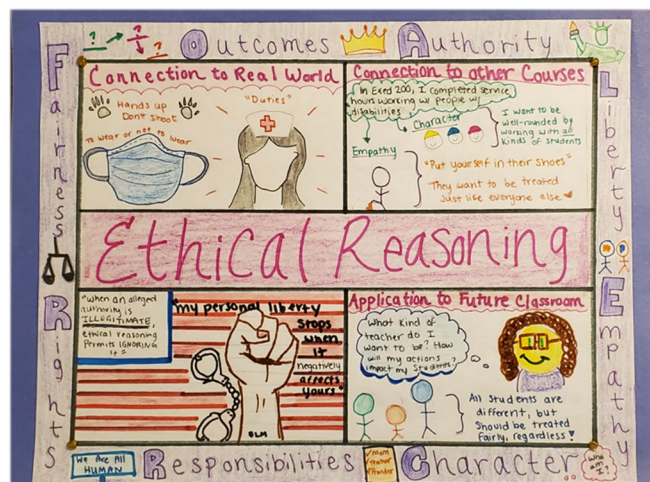
## Using the Creative One Pager

Dr. Kara Kavanagh (College of Education)

Virtual learning opportunities and assessment can be fun and meaningful for both students and teachers. I have used the "Creative One Pager" for two years as an optional response to weekly readings. The Creative One Pager is inspired by Allan Paivio's Dual Coding Theory of memory and learning, which asserts that by having students provide both text and imagery to represent the key concepts of a reading or lecture, they are storing the learning in two independent systems of mental representation and storage (Paivio, 1971).

Students watch [Dr. Bill Hawk's video](#), which introduces students to the 8KQ framework and they read the [ERiA Handbook](#). They also have the option to watch a [video](#) showing JMU students discussing moral moments and utilizing the 8KQ. Following these videos and readings, students create a Creative One Pager response by hand or by taking advantage of the [free image resources](#) provided by JMU. Students appreciate a different approach from written reflections to their weekly reading, and I enjoy seeing their creative responses.

I keep the high impact strategy of real-world application in their weekly responses. This assignment provides the foundation for processing our first ethical reasoning case and set students up for their major project of utilizing the 8KQ to process a current educational event or dilemma that is rooted in educational injustice.



## Who Am I Now? Reflecting on Our Responses to Global Crises

Dr. Vesna Hart, Taryn Roberts, and Jennifer Wiley (Center for Global Engagement)

The global pandemic and racial unrest in the U.S. presented a transformative learning opportunity for Honors College students in a summer course titled, *Who Am I Now? Reflecting on Our Responses to Global Crises*. Focused primarily on Character, students engaged in a continuous reflection about their responses and reasoning about ethical dilemmas, which they encountered daily during the mandated stay-at-home orders, as well as ethical dilemmas leaders and essential workers were facing when making decisions about health services and re-opening businesses.

Students created a *Hero's Journey* narrative about themselves. They imagined being on a journey embarking from the ordinary world through the underworld of pandemic, with all the trials and dilemmas they faced, and finally emerging out as the new self, transformed as a result of this experience. During the virtual exchange dialogues about gender roles, supply chain disruption, and role of government in a crisis with peers from around the world, JMU students actively worked through the meaning-making process and re-evaluation about their own thoughts, thinking process, and behaviors regarding the ethical dilemmas during the pandemic from global perspectives.

The 8KQ became one of the new frameworks helping to make sense of the pandemic and more eagerly engage in the task of ethical reasoning. This new-found understanding and relevance of the 8KQ is well exemplified in one student's reflection, "I used to engage with ethical reasoning from a place of fear and dread. Now I engage with ethical reasoning with curiosity and an informed perspective." As a demonstration of learning outcomes from the course, students produced multimedia presentations.

See a sample [here](#).



## Ethical Reasoning in Action beyond JMU

### National 8KQ "Ethics Slam" during the COVID-19 Pandemic

#### No Masks Required

Tim Ruebke, executive director of the [Fairfield Center](#), worked with David Specht, [Specht Consulting](#), Massachusetts, on a FEMA project in Puerto Rico. In their off-time conversations the two talked about Tim's experience hosting 8KQ "ethics slams" in Harrisonburg. From their resulting innovative ideas came the first 8KQ virtual ethics slam on May 21. In the ethical reasoning competition, facilitated by Tim, David, and ERiA, teams assembled by Specht from all over the country and others, mostly JMU 8KQ alums, similarly separated by geography, took on

complicated, specially crafted COVID-19 [ethical dilemmas](#). It didn't take long to realize that the fictional scenarios were very similar to real world problems encountered by some on the various teams. Also, a lesson learned involved the practical value of using the 8KQ ethical reasoning strategy to navigate work and everyday ethical problems. Participants expressed excitement about the activity, the 8KQ strategy, and the opportunity to escape virtually from social isolation.



### Longwood University's "Civitae" Program

Longwood University recently added ethical reasoning as a student learning outcome to their innovative "Civitae" general education program. In an effort to more effectively teach and assess ethical reasoning, Longwood faculty participated in an ERiA led two-day virtual workshop (August 10 – 11) on the 8KQ strategy. Approximately 20 faculty learned the evidence basis for question asking, decision-science, the 8KQ, and pedagogical approaches to noticing ethical situations and ethical reasoning analysis. In addition, they practiced using the 8KQ on a scenario "to open Longwood to in-person instruction?" and several ethical issues that they plan to use in their Civitae courses. One participant commented, "I have completely revised how I teach the unit.... I now teach students about recognizing, reasoning (using 8KQ), and responding to moral and ethical dilemmas." Plans are to evaluate the effectiveness of 8KQ reasoning strategy instruction at the end of fall semester and perhaps continue the collaboration between Longwood "Civitae" and JMU ERiA, into next year. Thanks to Longwood University Drs. Derek Taylor, Melissa Rhotan, and Eric Moore.

### 8KQ Ethical Reasoning takes on School Opening Questions Educational Leaders from 40 Central and South American Countries Participate

During the second week of September, Dr. [Pilar Aguilar](#) presented an 8KQ ethical reasoning approach to 40 senior education planners from Central and South American countries. The educational leaders, gathered by [UNESCO](#) Latin America, were excited to use a new tool to address the baffling issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The confluence of health, education, political, economic, and social cultural forces makes decisions about schools extremely difficult. As a result of her talk Pilar was invited to another presentation for education leaders hosted by the Minister of Education for Chile. Based on this demonstrated interest in an ethical reasoning approach, a small team of humanitarian and development crisis preparedness professionals from Humanitarian Development Professionals International ([HDPI](#)) is submitting an ethical analysis brief to UNICEF, UNESCO, and the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). The 8KQ brief, recently translated into Spanish, explains how to use the 8KQ ethical reasoning strategy to address the school opening question. The cooperation between many international leaders addressing the pandemic and ERiA has been an exciting opportunity for JMU's global connections.



## Ethical Reasoning in Action Presentations and Publications

Drs. Fletcher Linder; Allison Ames, University of Arkansas; William Hawk; Lori Pyle; Keston Fulcher; and Christian Early published [“Teaching Ethical Reasoning: Program Design and Initial Outcomes of Ethical Reasoning in Action, a University-wide Ethical Reasoning Program,”](#) in [Teaching Ethics](#). The authors argue that ethical reasoning is a skill that can be both taught and assessed. In addition, they show that ERiA’s competency-targeted program and positive student learning outcomes offers a promising model for higher education ethics programs seeking to connect classroom learning in ethics to decision-making in professional and everyday life.

Drs. Kristen L. Smith (Macmillan Learning, JMU 2012, 2014, and 2017) and Sara J. Finney (CARS) published [“Elevating Program Theory and Implementation Fidelity in Higher Education: Modeling the Process via an Ethical Reasoning Curriculum”](#) in [Research & Practice in Assessment](#). Higher Education struggles to demonstrate learning improvement. Smith and Finney showcase an example in which student learning outcomes assessment benefitted from strong program theory and implementation fidelity data. They use ERiA’s 8KQ ethical reasoning strategy to show that after identifying improved ethical behavior as a goal, faculty and student affairs staff can teach an ethical reasoning strategy that helps to achieve that goal. Specifically, by articulating the ethical reasoning program theory, faculty were able to assess student ethical reasoning skill and their own pedagogical consistency and effectiveness in teaching it (i.e., implementation fidelity). Faculty could then identify what aspects of programming required changes to evidence learning improvement. Thus, the authors contend, program theory and implementation fidelity should be and, more importantly, can be prominent components of higher education outcomes assessment processes. They outline an effective remedy for Higher Education’s missing, empirically supported, learning improvement.

## Changes in the ERiA Office

### Reflections on my ERiA Journey

#### Dr. Lori Pyle

I often introduce myself in workshops as the person who can provide living testimony to the idea that you don’t have to be a philosopher or ethicist to practice and teach the Eight Key Questions. In fact, I remember during the planning days (2012 timeframe) of what is now Ethical Reasoning in Action, we were discussing what we should call the program and I bristled at the word ‘ethics.’ I thought others would react or respond in a similar way and immediately close themselves off to the wide-open cognitive spaces we aimed to create. Fortunately, I’ve been wrong about that most of the time. From the beginning, it has been my goal to help others connect ethics and ethical reasoning in a meaningful way; to partner



with faculty, staff, and students in creating a thoughtful, accessible, and practical program that helps us see beyond our quick reactions and opinions to a more empathetic and kinder way of thinking and being.

Sharing ethical reasoning and the 8KQ at JMU and other universities, and with local organizations and companies, has been my profession for the last seven years. Perhaps more importantly, the 8KQ have also become a steady and embodied personal resource. I continue to be amazed by the nuances and deep questions that can be generated when having a common framework to center in, whether talking to my husband about attending my 30-year high school class reunion in July during a pandemic or deciding what to do after I “bumped” a car parked behind me when no one was watching. I didn’t go to the reunion, and yes, I (eventually) wrote a note and left it on the car I bumped! Even after a few years of 8KQ under my belt, my rationalizing mind took over in an instant trying to convince me there wasn’t any damage to the car. Thankfully, I have continued to learn to notice my own quick reactions and slow down.

As I jump to my next lily pad in professional coaching, I leave with a full heart and remain forever grateful for the incredible people I’ve had the opportunity to meet and work with: It’s Complicated volunteer facilitators from every division and from the Harrisonburg community, bold and supportive colleagues in Student Affairs—especially our long-term partners in Orientation, dedicated ERiA fellows with bright ideas, faculty courageously including 8KQ in their classes for the first time, colleagues in CARS who continue to blow my mind with their creativity and statistical prowess, ethical reasoning student and faculty scholars who share new knowledge outside the university, local vendors, faculty from other universities, encouraging partners in HR and Talent Development, the fun and kind people in Mountain Hall who shared a joke or a picture of their granddaughter, the beautiful and dedicated students who served as ethical reasoning peer educators and student employees, and my faithful everyday colleagues, the Justice League. Thanks to each of you, I take with me many lessons about myself, about that “dreadful” word ethics, and about the beautiful people in the world. My last request of each of you reading: be kind to yourself and each other—and ask more questions!

One big THANK YOU to Dr. Lori Pyle. All the very best in your new ventures!

**NEW 8KQ icons!**

**Can you guess the Key Question?**

**(Easy-peasy...)**



## Contact Ethical Reasoning in Action

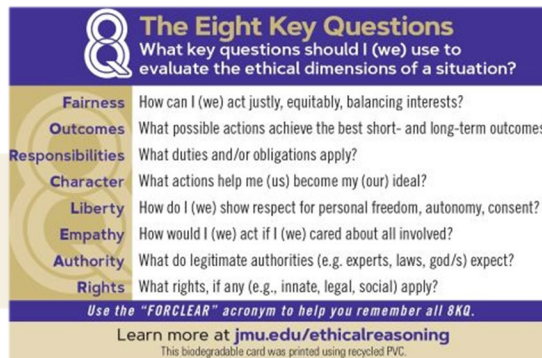
How are you using the 8KQ in your classes, programs, work, research and professional and daily life? Hearing your stories and, with your permission, reading them in an upcoming ERiA newsletter helps to nurture the JMU academic community into a culture where ethical reasoning flourishes! Send your experiences, ideas, and insights to [ethicalreasoning@jmu.edu](mailto:ethicalreasoning@jmu.edu).

All the very best,

Bill Hawk, Lori Pyle, and Christian Early

Ethical Reasoning in Action  
James Madison University  
[www.jmu.edu/ethicalreasoning](http://www.jmu.edu/ethicalreasoning)

ASK "FORCLEAR"  
<http://www.jmu.edu/ethicalreasoning>



The Eight Key Questions  
What key questions should I (we) use to evaluate the ethical dimensions of a situation?

Fairness	How can I (we) act justly, equitably, balancing interests?
Outcomes	What possible actions achieve the best short- and long-term outcomes?
Responsibilities	What duties and/or obligations apply?
Character	What actions help me (us) become my (our) ideal?
Liberty	How do I (we) show respect for personal freedom, autonomy, consent?
Empathy	How would I (we) act if I (we) cared about all involved?
Authority	What do legitimate authorities (e.g. experts, laws, god/s) expect?
Rights	What rights, if any (e.g., innate, legal, social) apply?

Use the "FORCLEAR" acronym to help you remember all 8KQ.

Learn more at [jmu.edu/ethicalreasoning](http://jmu.edu/ethicalreasoning)  
This biodegradable card was printed using recycled PVC.