Is Business Bluffing Ethical?
A. Carr

- Corporate interests often compel executives to practice some form of deception.
- Deception in business is justified on the grounds that business has the character of a game.
- Deception in business ≠ Deception in private life
Poker Analogy

- Element of Chance
- Knowledge of the rules is essential for success
- Knowledge of the psychology of the players is essential
- Bold Front
- Self-discipline
Discarding the Golden Rule

- Private citizen → Business game player
- Change in Role = Change in ethical standards
- Business standards are markedly different from ordinary moral standards
Business Ethics

- Avoid telling malicious lies
- Following the letter of the law
- Business is not responsible for making the laws
- Business decisions are ultimately strategic decisions
Conflict between Business and Personal Morality

- “Is” vs. “Ought”
- Lying/Deception
- Political Commitments/Personal Integrity
“The Business of Ethics,” N. Gillespie

- Rejects Carr’s notion of business ethics.
- Offers a critique of Carr’s arguments.
- Argues that the Poker analogy is an inappropriate model for thinking about business ethics.
3 Positions of Carr’s Article
(Acc. to Gillespie)

1. If a business practice is not illegal, then it is morally permissible.
2. If a business does not take advantage of a legal opportunity, then others will.
3. If a practice is so widespread as to constitute the norm, everyone expects conformity.
Business Is Not a Game

- Poker analogy may well tell us how things are but not how they ought to be.
- More at stake in business than the “pot” of a game.
- People invest a portion of their lives into goods and services and have a right not to be deceived.
The Price of Duty

- What are the duties of those working in business?
- Are we obligated to do our duty even if everyone else isn’t doing their duty?
- Are there times when we are exempt from doing our duty?
When it is permissible to not do our duty:

- Moral cost of obeying a standard may be too high
- Cost of fulfilling the duty is too high for the individual
- “Morally desirable state of affairs can be produced only by everyone, or virtually everyone, doing his or her part” (p. 74)
Exception that Proves the Rule

- The three exceptions to doing one’s duty does not entail:
  - Ordinary rules of morality do not apply at all;
  - Business has its own distinctive set of moral rules
Conclusions

- Duties in business do not constitute a separate form of morality.
- Business executives should not use the excuse that business has its own set of standards to “thwart” reform.
- Certain moral dilemmas in business can be resolved by removing the circumstances the lead to the dilemma.