For two decades, the Pinto case has been the “landmark narrative” used to support the construction of amoral corporate behavior. We argue that critical flaws in this narrative flow from a misplaced emphasis on “decision-
makers” in a single organization, and from ignoring organizational, industry, and legal/regulatory contexts. Using original documents and recent interviews, we argue that there never was a “decision” to market an unsafe vehicle. Instead, the Pinto is better understood as a routine outcome of distinct organizational subunits, embedded in a larger network of interorganizational relationships. We conclude that attention to the network level of analysis can help explain other cases of “sensible bloodshed” that derive from the routine workings of social institutions.


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