Elementary School Assistant Principals’ Decision Making Analyzed Through Four Ethical Frameworks of Justice, Critique, Care, and the Profession

by

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated in honor of my parents, Ocie and Willodean Minor, my first teachers, who set the example of ethical behavior, by being the most ethical people I know, who never wavered in their support during this experience.

To my son and daughter-in-law, Matthew and Katrina Troy, for always encouraging me and being so sure I would do this.

To my precious granddaughter, Violet, may you achieve your own dreams and journeys.

To my sister and best friend, Debbie Davis, who repeatedly stated she was so glad it was me and not her doing this.

This paper is dedicated in memory of my husband, Jim, who was so proud of my accomplishments. Sweet Baboo, your Snoopy did it!
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Elementary School Assistant Principals’ Decision Making Analyzed Through Four Ethical Frameworks of Justice, Critique, Care, and the Profession

Brenda Troy

ABSTRACT

This study examined the conceptual framework of ethical reasoning of public elementary school assistant principals during decision-making. An ethical framework not only provides a descriptive way of thinking during ethical decision-making, but also provides a rationale for decisions. The purpose of this study was to determine which ethical reasoning framework, including the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession, elementary school assistant principals’ use during decision-making. Additionally, the study determined other resources assistant principals’ consult during decision-making.

This study incorporated descriptive survey research through purposeful sampling with specific participant criteria. A researcher-developed survey of hypothetical dilemmas was deployed electronically to public elementary school assistant principals. Thirty-seven participants responded to four hypothetical scenarios, involving either staff or students, through a Likert scale and open response questions. Each hypothetical scenario included one of the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, or the profession embedded in one of four potential solutions. The findings suggest that
elementary school assistant principals use an ethical framework during decision-making, whether they refer to the framework specifically by name or not. The data suggest the assistant principals in this study most frequently selected the ethic of care framework for their decision-making. Lastly, the evidence in this study suggests the most frequently consulted resource during decision-making by the assistant principals in this study was that of their principal.

There is much research on ethics, teachers, and school leaders, but there are few studies on ethics and the assistant principal. Additionally, there are few studies on the assistant principal and ethical decision-making. The literature suggested that the assistant principalship is a stepping-stone to the principalship. If the assistant principalship is truly a stepping-stone for future principals, assistant principals need to have developed their personal and professional code of ethics, as well as, have an understanding of the ethical reasoning frameworks for implementation during ethical decision-making.
Chapter One

Introduction

“Always do right-This will gratify some and astonish the rest.”
(Mark Twain, 1901)

Organization of Chapter One

This chapter presented the problem and purpose of the study. This chapter was organized into a statement of the research problem, an overview of the study, the conceptual framework, the background of the study, the research questions, definitions of terms, the significance of the study, the assumptions, delimitations and limitations of the study, and lastly an overview of the chapters that followed.

Statement of the Research Problem

This study addressed public elementary school assistant principals’ decision-making analyzed through an ethical framework including the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). The assistant principal’s (AP’s) workday is filled with a multitude of decisions. School administrators rely on personal values and morals when dealing with ethical dilemmas, or right versus right decisions, all the while struggling to make decisions reflecting the best interests of the student.
School administrators have ethical responsibilities. They must be knowledgeable and able to use and make moral judgments and decisions with the dignity of each person in mind, while promoting equality in all aspects of education (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007; Denig & Quinn, 2001; Lashway, 1996; Rebore, 2001; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 2004, 2005). School administrators may use an ethical reasoning framework when decision-making. Rebore (2001) wrote, “The use of frameworks for ethical reasoning in decision-making is an untapped resource and a relatively recent phenomenon in education” (p. 31).

What is not known is whether the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, and the profession are included as part of the reasoning process of assistant principals when faced with an ethical dilemma (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). Additionally, it is not known whether the ethical frameworks help assistant principals make decisions that are both fair and just during specific dilemmas, or if assistant principals use other resources such as their own principals, other assistant principals, or if they rely solely on district policies for their ethical decision-making. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine public elementary school assistant principals’ decision-making as manifested through hypothetical scenarios analyzed through the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, and the profession to gain insight into their ethical decision-making (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994).
Overview of the Study

In the 21st century in which we live, the world has become one of cultural diversity, financial crisis, global warming, public scandals, and war. Each aforementioned factor is affecting schools today. Furthermore, schools and school leaders face accountability, high-stakes testing, and demands for a highly qualified teaching force to educate students in a pluralistic society. Educational administrators of 21st century schools will need to have developed their own personal and professional code of ethics to be prepared to lead schools that are not only accountable, but are also tolerant of a demographically diverse community (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005).

As leaders, school administrators make many decisions. When an ethical situation arises requiring a decision between a right versus a right decision, school administrators face an ethical dilemma. Ethical dilemmas, now a part of everyday life in public schools, often test the personal, professional, and ethical values of school administrators as they struggle to do or say the right thing. Yet the literature regarding school administrators’ preparation to make ethical decisions leaves one concerned with a perceived lack of training in this area.

School administrators face busy days filled with decisions, which cause stressful days and sleepless nights filled with anguish. Cranston, Erich, and Kimber (2006) suggested ethical dilemmas so common in schools now that they have become the “bread and butter” of educational leaders’ lives (p. 106). Begley and Stefkovich (2004) affirmed that value conflicts have always been present in school administration to some extent,
“however, value conflicts now seem to have become a defining characteristic of the school leadership role” (p. 134).

The pathway to becoming a school leader or principal usually includes a period of time as an assistant principal. Assistant principals are often unaware and unprepared for the growing number of ethical dilemmas faced on a daily basis (Cranston et al., 2003; O’Neill, 2002). Many universities offer preparation programs to train individuals to become principals, but few universities offer training specifically for one to become an assistant principal. Most assistant principals began their careers as classroom teachers. Likewise, most principals began their administrative careers as an assistant principal, a position viewed by many as a stepping-stone to the principalship (Barker, 1997; Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Marshall, 1993).

There is much research on ethics and teachers, ethics and principals. However, there are few studies on ethics and assistant principals and their ethical decision-making. This study identified which ethical framework, including the ethics of justice, care, critique, and the profession, selected public elementary school assistant principals’ use during ethical decision-making (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). This study also identified whether public elementary school assistant principals seek input from other resources, such as their principal, other assistant principals, district officials, or district policies during decision-making.
School administrators may rely on personal values and morals when dealing with ethical dilemmas. School administrators have ethical responsibilities and must be knowledgeable of ethical behavior. The literature suggests that educational preparation programs do not adequately prepare school administrators for their jobs (Fossey & Shoho, 2006; Lauder, 2000; Levine, 2005; Normore, 2004; Petzko, 2008). Many professions, such as law, medicine, and business, require their students to take at least one ethics course. The field of educational administration currently has few if any such requirements. There is a professional code of ethics for school administrators (AASA, 2007). However, unlike the ethics committees that regulate lawyers and doctors, the American Association of School Administrators does not have an ethics committee. Additionally, codes of ethics are only guideposts for the profession and are limited in the day-to-day responsiveness needed for dilemmas (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). Appendix A includes Code of Ethics for School Administrators.

Ethical knowledge should provide the framework for the educator’s professional learning. School administrators may use an ethical reasoning framework when decision-making. Rebore (2001) wrote, “The use of frameworks for ethical reasoning in decision-making is an untapped resource and a relatively recent phenomenon in education” (p. 31). Supporting that thought, Shapiro and Stefkovich, (2005) acknowledged, “Viewing ethics through different paradigms is a relatively recent phenomenon” (p.xii). However, in a prior study, Kirby, Paradise, and Protti (1992) established that educational “practitioners
needed an ethical framework because it allowed them to weigh judgments against desirable norms of behavior when dealing with ethical dilemmas” (p. 30).

Normore (2004) suggested a critical need to design or redesign ethics courses for leadership preparation with the focus on the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, the profession, and the community for guiding decision-making. Begley and Stefkovich (2007) suggested that although current leadership development programs emphasized the importance of ethics, most school administrators only employ ethics as a guide when confronted with situations of high stakes urgency when consensus is impossible. School administrators need to give critical thought to the legal and moral responsibilities of their professional roles, especially during dilemmas involving students.

**Background of the Study**

The education reform movements of the 1980s are underway to improve the quality of teachers and the conditions of teaching. However, only recently has the focus for accountability and quality aimed at school administrators. With the recent emphasis on accountability, high-stakes testing, and highly qualified ethical educators, school administrators face dilemmas more than ever.

Most school administrators began their careers as teachers. A brief review of the literature on the importance of ethics in teacher education coursework indicated overwhelming support for ethical knowledge (Cummings, Harlow, & Maddux, 2007; Howe, 1986; Lee, 2006; Luckowski, 1997; Nash, 1991; Soltis, 1986; Watson, 2008). Yet,
the literature suggested one of the most neglected aspects of professional knowledge in teacher preparedness was ethical knowledge (Blair, 1977; Campbell, 2003; Dempster, Freakley, & Parry, 2002; Fullan, 2003; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005).

Most states require school administrators to have training in educational administration from state-approved programs, which often leads to an advanced degree in educational administration. These programs have come under harsh criticism after the release of Levine’s (2005) scathing report, “Educating School Leaders,” in which he denounced universities engaged in a “race to the bottom” (p. 1). Levine argued there was no typical school of education, that educational administration was the weakest of all programs offered at education schools, and that the course of study for principals did little to prepare one for the principalship.

As leaders, school administrators are held to higher moral standards than the public in general, simply for the fact they work with children. School administrators are expected to be of good character and behave in an ethical manner as a part of the educator’s guiding credo (Beckner, 2004; Begley, 2001; Fullan, 2003). Numerous authors have suggested that ethics and school leadership inextricably intertwined (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Normore, 2004; Rebore, 2001; Starratt, 2004). Rebore (2001) wrote that educational leaders needed to study ethics because it provided a framework for ethical decision-making through a disciplined way of thinking as decisions were analyzed through the question of why rather than the management thinking of how or what.
Ethical Decision-making

There was much research on ethics, teachers, and school leaders. There were few studies on school administrators and their dealings with dilemmas in their daily work environment (Blase & Blase, 2003; Cummings et al., 2007; Harris & Lowery, 2004; Howe, 1986; Mahoney, 2006; Marshall, 1993; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). Noted authors have determined that the school administrator’s own race, ethnicity, religion, social class, gender, age, as well as personal beliefs, value system, and ethics influenced the outcome of each situation (Cummings et al., 2007; Dempster et al., 2002; Harris & Lowery, 2004; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005).

Lashway (1996) acknowledged there was no “ethical cookbook” with directions for ethical decision-making. However, the author suggested perspectives for decision-making, described by Kidder (1995) in his book How Good People Make Tough Choices, as anticipating the consequences of each choice, using moral rules, emphasizing the Golden Rule, and caring. In a review of The Keirsey Temperament Model, Mills (2006) questioned whether education administrators could be taught to use ethical decision-making models. She further determined that, although expected to make ethical decisions, school administrators are not always prepared or prone to do so.

Assistant principals are often unaware and unprepared for the growing number of daily ethical dilemmas. Stefkovich and Begley (2007) granted that situations in schools were difficult and found that school administrators sought refuge in ethics when confronted with social issues. Marshall (1993) found that despite a lack of training,
school administrators attested to having a precise set of ethical values. On the other hand, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) declared that most school administrators did not have a defined ethical reasoning framework used when making an ethical decision. Shapiro and Stefkovich acknowledged resurgence in the importance of ethics for educators in the past few years as they stressed the significance of training in the ethics of justice, care, and critique.

School administrators develop personal and professional values that reflect a code of ethics. According to Dempster et al. (2002), school administrators determined the right thing based upon personal ethics and values. Dempster and colleagues concluded conflicts over issues concerned with the best interests of the student often led to ethical dilemmas among school administrators, teachers, and parents. School administrators reached decisions that were right, fair, just, and good while dealing with competing demands and values characteristic of contemporary pluralistic societies.

What Ethical Leaders Do

An overview of research in ethics and school leadership revealed concern for ethical leaders and ethical leadership development. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which had its roots in the education reform initiatives of the 1980s, stressed high standards and accountability in teacher quality. Briefly mentioned in the NCLB Act, was that leadership demonstrated ethical behavior, but included no definition of that expectation.
As the leader of an ethical organization, administrators confront a variety of ethical dilemmas and challenges daily. How school administrators resolve ethical dilemmas depends upon the administrator’s training, values system, and approaches to moral decisions. Stefkovich and Begley (2007) indicated that school administrators employed ethics as a guide when confronted with situations of high-stakes urgency when consensus was impossible. School administrators faced with dilemmas and challenged to make complex decisions, justified those decisions as made in the best interests of the student (Shapiro, 2006; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007; Stefkovich & O’Brien, 2004).

According to Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), dilemmas in schools are complicated and naturally led to the use of a multiple lens of two or more paradigms to solve problems. Begley and Stefkovich (2007) recognized merit in ethical actions through ethical frameworks. Shapiro and Stefkovich determined the four paradigms to use during ethical situations are the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994).

**Ethical Frameworks**

An ethical framework is a basic assumption about beliefs, values, and principles used to guide choices (Starratt, 2004). As contemporary scholars began to write about justice, critique, and care, Starratt (1994) combined justice, critique, and care into the most recognized ethical framework in education, the tri-partite frameworks.
The Ethic of Justice

Justice served as the foundation for legal principles and ideals, rights and laws, fairness and equity in individual freedom (Shapiro & Gross, 2002; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994; Stefkovich & O’Brien, 2004). The ethic of justice requires treating others to a standard of justice applied in all relationships. According to Starratt, the idea of fairness and equal treatment became the core values of the ethic of justice. Shapiro and Gross affirmed that the ethic of justice continually raised questions about the justness and fairness of laws and policies. In addition, authors Strike, Holler, and Soltis (1998), as well as, Shapiro and Stefkovich, affirmed that the ethic of justice supported the principle of due process and protected the civil and human rights of all individuals.

The Ethic of Critique

Just as the ethic of justice is about fairness, the focus of the ethic of critique is about the barriers to fairness (Shapiro & Gross, 2008; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). School administrators were forced to confront moral issues through the ethic of critique, when schools disproportionately benefited some groups in society and failed others, through the equitable distribution of resources and application of rules (Furman, 2004; Starratt, 1994). The ethic of critique challenged the status quo by involving social discourse, which allowed the marginalized a voice and exposed inequities (Starratt, 1994). The ethic of critique focused school administrators on an awareness of inequities in society as it pursued appropriate measures to correct laws, policies, and regulations not consistent with sound educational practices (Shapiro &
Gross, 2008; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). The authors confirmed that the ethic of critique forced school administrators to rethink, redefine, and reframe concepts such as privilege, power, culture, and in particular, social injustice.

*The Ethic of Care*

A third ethical framework, the ethic of care, emerged out of the ethic of justice and shifted the focus from rights and laws to compassion and empathy. Furman (2004) noted the ethic of care balanced the ethic of justice and critique as it was less concerned with fairness and more concerned with caring for individuals as unique persons. The ethic of care required absolute regard for the dignity and intrinsic value of each person based on relationships and demanded care and respect in relationships with others (Noddings, 2003).

School administrators utilized the ethic of care through valued relationships and connections in the ethical decision-making process, as they tried to balance power with caring, nurturing, and encouraging students, rather than focusing on rules and techniques (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). School administrators who utilized the ethic of care considered how they could help an individual student meet his or her needs and desires before reaching an ethical decision.

*The Ethic of the Profession*

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) suggested that the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, and care needed expanding. The authors called for school leaders to consider professional codes and personal ethical principles, as well as standards of the profession,
and created a dynamic model that placed the best interests of the student at the heart of
the ethics of the educational profession (Stefkovich & Begley, 2007; Stefkovich &
O’Brien, 2004). Shapiro and Stefkovich noted, that the ethic of the profession often
meant codes, rules, and principles, all of which aligned with the traditional concepts of
justice, but they sustained their interpretation of the ethic of the profession took into
account other paradigms such as professional judgment and professional decision-
making.

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) best summarized the ethical frameworks as they
suggested the ethic of justice includes equality and equity, while the ethic of care
challenges impartiality and detachment and replaces it with compassion and equity. They
continued that the ethic of critique raises questions concerning the treatment of diverse
groups in society. Finally, they suggested that the ethic of the profession continually
questions equity and the evolving needs of students, and that a combination of both yields
the best interests of the student.

_Hypothetical Situations in Ethical Dilemmas_

When confronted with complex and moral dilemmas requiring an examination of
ethical alternatives, will the coursework and personal value system of the administrator
guide the decision-making process, or will the practice of the school district dictate the
response? Soltis (1986) asserted that education students needed an understanding of the
basic ethical philosophers and ethical theories to develop fully as ethical educators. Soltis
supported hypothetical ethical situations for teacher education discussions. He declared such situations required justification of one’s actions as a basis for a sincere commitment to ethical professional conduct.

The use of hypothetical situations allows students to discover their own ethical principles through a critical analysis and critical reflection of their choices (Howe, 1986; McQueeney, 2006; Soltis, 1986). Hypotheticals are “brief hypothetical scenarios which constitute an unobtrusive approximation of realistic situations which could elicit useful information about the participants’ thought processes” (Poulou, 2001, p. 50). The use of hypothetical situations allows participants to be objective, reduces the personal connections that can taint the facts, and more importantly provides standardized examples, all of which add to the validity of the study.

Summary of the Introduction

Overall, individuals who function as school administrators are expected to have a solid foundation of ethical values and moral reasoning. School administrators have an understood expectation of having flawless personal morals, values, and principles. As professionals, they also have an expectation for adopting and following a code of ethics for the profession. The literature revealed a lack of ethics in teacher education coursework, which raised concerns for future school administrators’ ethical preparedness (Cummings et al., 2007; Howe, 1986; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007; Soltis, 1986).
Ethical dilemmas are a part of everyday life in schools. Ethical dilemmas test the personal, professional, and ethical values of school administrators. School administrators, caught in the web of ethical decision-making, are required to make value judgments about doing or saying the right thing. Each situation causes the school administrator to draw from core values and personal beliefs to resolve the ethical dilemma.

How are assistant principals prepared for ethical challenges? What is known about assistant principals and ethical decision-making? The literature suggests assistant principals are unprepared for ethical challenges (Glanz, 2004; Harris & Lowery, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002). The literature also suggests that assistant principals are one of the least researched and discussed roles in educational leadership (Weller & Weller, 2002).

Many books flood the market on becoming a principal, but rarely does someone become a principal without first serving as an assistant or vice principal. Yet, “few if any books address the unique needs of prospective and practicing assistant principals” (Glanz, 2004, p. xv). Buser, Gorton, McIntyre, Nickerson, and Parker (1991) stated, “Very little was said about the AP’s job in university training programs and almost nothing was said about it in professional books or journals” (p. vi). Harris and Lowery (2004) affirmed the dearth of research in the area of the assistant principalship. Researchers continually seek to understand how principals carry out their responsibilities. Unfortunately, very little empirical work has been conducted in the area of the preparation of the assistant principal for the role of ethical leadership and decision-making.
It has been over ten years since scholars called for reform in principal preparation programs. Little changed during this time. The literature supported the view that educators are expected to behave ethically. The principal preparation research tends to be sporadic and responsive rather than innovative and evidential. This collective literature is still overwhelmingly descriptive instead of explanatory. The literature supported the view that while ethics in educational leadership education are deemed important, they are nevertheless neglected.

The literature is still more robust with argument and rationale than with evidence of the effects of reform in principal preparedness for ethical decision-making. Most of the existing research is limited to case study designs, small sample sizes, and self-reported methodologies. The large-scale quantitative studies that do exist in leadership are focused more on business leadership, not on assistant principals and their ethical decision-making.

The literature reveals a void in ethical coursework requirements for education majors. Evident is the need for careful study of ethics and ethical coursework for future school administrators. With the demands for schools to respond to increasing societal and cultural problems, demands for accountability, and a retiring baby boomer workforce in school leadership, equally evident is the need for careful study of assistant principals and their ethical decision-making process.
Research Questions

Consistent with the purpose and problem statement, the following questions guided the investigation.

1. When presented with an ethical dilemma, which ethical framework, including the ethics of justice, care, critique, and the profession, do selected public elementary school assistant principals’ use for ethical decision-making?

2. What resources, other than the ethical frameworks of justice, care, critique, and the profession, do public elementary school assistant principals consult during ethical decision-making? (Ex: principal, other assistant principals, district policy).

3. How do public elementary school assistant principals describe their decision-making processes during various ethical dilemmas?

Definitions of Terms

The initial focus of this study was to determine which ethical framework including the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession, public elementary school assistant principals use when dealing with ethical dilemmas in their daily work (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). A second focus of the study was to determine which resources, along with the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, or the profession, public elementary school assistant principals’ consult during their ethical decision-
making (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). Therefore, it was necessary to define the terms used throughout the study for clarification.

Assistant Principal: The assistant principal is an administrative position immediately below that of the principal of the school. For the purpose of this study, the term school administrator was used interchangeably to refer to public elementary school assistant principals (AP’s).

Ethics: Ethics is the study of what constitutes a moral life. Ethics is defined as the well-based standards of right and wrong of an individual’s core beliefs and values.

Ethical dilemma: An ethical dilemma is a situation that necessitates a choice among competing sets of principles, values, beliefs, and perspectives. Ethical dilemmas are not always about right versus wrong, but are usually about right versus right options. It is not always easy to decide which of the two rights will yield the best decision.

Ethical framework: An ethical framework is defined as a basic assumption about beliefs, values, and principles used to guide choices. The ethical frameworks used in this study are the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession.

Hypotheticals: Hypotheticals or hypothetical situations are brief scenarios of realistic situations without personal connections, which elicit useful information from participants regarding their values and moral decision-making.

Values: Values are an individual’s ability to define fairness, caring, openness, and concern with what one likes or believes to be good. Values are a matter of choice.
Moral: Being moral is having the ability to identify right and wrong behavior or conduct. Many researchers use the terms morals and ethics interchangeably.

Principal: For the purpose of this paper, the term principal was used interchangeably to refer to the leader or administrator of a public elementary school.

School Administrator: The school administrator is the administrative and instructional leader of the students, teachers, and staff in a public school. For the purpose of this paper, the terms principal and assistant principal were used interchangeably to refer to the school administrator of a public elementary school.

Significance of the Study

Rebore (2001) suggests that the study of ethics provides a framework for decision-making through reflection, by the participants upon their own values. The author suggests the study of ethics continues to approach issues through a disciplined way of thinking. Rebore concludes that the study of ethics provides educational administrators with a different response for educational leadership than those associated with management or business leadership. According to Dempster et al. (2002), school administrators make decisions daily with no laws or policies to guide them. Ethical dilemmas are not about right versus wrong, but are usually about right versus right, or value versus value, and the struggle encountered when dealing with the situation (Young, 1995).
The significance of this study was threefold; in its contributions to scholarly literature, in its contributions to supporting the need for the study of ethics, and in its contributions to the resolution of ethical dilemmas. First, according to the research, there is a serious shortage of school administrators due to smaller pools of qualified candidates, loss of attractiveness in the position due to greater demands of accountability, and increased openings due to retirements of the baby boomer generation of principals (Barker, 1997; Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Lauder, 2000; Leonard, 2007). With the impending openings in the principalship, the replacement would likely be that of current and future assistant principals. The literature suggests that the position of the assistant principal is a stepping-stone to the principalship (Barker, 1997; Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Harris & Lowery, 2004; Marshall, 1993). If the assistant principalship truly is a stepping-stone to the principalship, this study will contribute to the scholarly literature on the assistant principal’s ethical decision-making.

Secondly, in order to lead effectively, assistant principals need more than just the normative ideology of ethics; they need to have an understanding of what the behaviors of an ethical administrator might look like, they also need frameworks and valuation processes encountered in school settings (Begley, 2006; Normore, 2005; Rebore, 2001; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). Ethical behavior is expected yet rarely discussed. It was assumed that assistant principals would do the right thing when faced with an ethical dilemma. However, Campbell (2004) affirmed, “There is often very little open discussion of the ethics upon which the choices to be made in the difficult situation are based” (p. 1).
Lastly, this study was rooted in the anticipation that school administrators would increasingly be challenged to resolve ethical dilemmas in the best interests of the student. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) suggest that the ethical dilemmas faced and decisions made have far-reaching effects. The authors stressed the need for using an ethical reasoning framework in order to make decisions that are more responsive to the needs and concerns of all the individuals involved. Public school children have little voice in their world of schooling. It is the school administrator’s duty and obligation to not only be the voice and advocate for children, but to keep the best interests of the student at the forefront of all decisions. The challenge for school administrators to resolve ethical dilemmas in the best interests of the student was further heightened with the current emphasis on accountability, highly qualified educators, and high-stakes testing. This challenge was increased with the recent Florida Senate Bill 1712, Ethics in Education Act, urging Congress to pass national ethical standards for education.

There was much research on ethics, teachers, and school principals, but few studies on assistant principals and their dealings with dilemmas in their daily work environment. While the results of this study would not generalize to every assistant principal in every school, and while it would not to lead to ethical behavior, the study provided insight into the influence of ethical frameworks in decision-making for current and future assistant principals. The study not only expanded the existing knowledge of assistant principal’s ethical decision-making, but also contributed to the existing knowledge of ethical decision-making in principals and other school administrators.
Assumptions of the Study

In this study, the following were assumed:

1. The opinions expressed were those of the participants;
2. The participants responded to the survey and to the open response questions honestly and to the best of their ability;
3. The demographic section of the survey, while not all inclusive of potentially relevant information, was sufficient for describing the particular group for which it was designed;
4. The data collection procedures did not introduce researcher bias such that erroneous results were reported.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to the detailed analysis of a survey of hypothetical scenarios and open response questions to examine public elementary school assistant principals’ ethical decision-making process. The study was further delimited by the criteria used for selection including the varying years of experience, age, gender, ethnicity, and current employment as a public elementary school assistant principal. There were no retired assistant principals, principals, or district administrators included in this study, as the focus was on current and future assistant principals decision-making.

Although addressed in the literature review in chapter two, this study did not include Furman’s (2003) ethic of community, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) suggested
that it is integrated in the ethic of the profession and it included concerns for the best interest of the student. The study did not focus on ethical theory or philosophy, nor did it argue the merits of any singular ethical theory or philosophy. Rather, the focus was on the implementation of the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, and the profession during the public elementary school assistant principals' ethical decision-making, and what, if any, other resources were consulted during ethical decision-making (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994).

Organization of the Study

This study of public elementary school assistant principals’ ethical decision-making was organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduced the study and presented the problem and research questions of the study. Chapter Two introduced the pertinent literature regarding ethics, ethical frameworks, ethical leadership, and assistant principals. Chapter Three explained the methodology of the study used to determine elementary school assistant principals’ ethical decision-making. Chapter Four presented the findings and the analysis of the data. Chapter Five presented the summary, discussion, and recommendations for future studies in ethics and the ethical decision-making of assistant principals.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

“Ethics are principles kept in a supply closet in one of the back rooms of our consciousness. They are maps we consult when the familiar terrain we are traversing becomes a tangle of underbrush with barely discernable and uncertain trails”

(Starratt, 2004).

Organization of Chapter Two

This chapter was organized as a review of the literature of ethics as a component of assistant principal’s ethical decision-making. The review used a conceptual framework based on theoretical research concerning school administrator’s ethical decision-making. The chapter began with an introduction, followed by a brief review of ethics from a historical perspective, including ancient and contemporary philosophers, to obtain an understanding of ethics. Next, a review of the ethical frameworks in education addressed the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession, as used by school administrators in their daily work (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). The trends for the method of implementation of ethics in coursework for business, medical, legal, and teacher education followed. Since school administrators began their careers as teachers, it was important to include a review of ethics in teacher education. A review of the literature of ethical leadership in general, and then specifically in school administrators and their
preparation for ethical dilemmas followed. Lastly, an examination of the literature on the assistant principal concluded the literature review.

The review was significant but not exhaustive. Primarily the review consisted of empirical and non-empirical works published from 1990 through the present, although classic works were included for historical background. Keywords were used in the search for the resource materials such as ethics, ethical coursework, ethical dilemmas, ethical frameworks, ethics education, education leadership, school administrator, ethical leadership, and assistant principal. Initially, an advanced search of electronic databases such as Academic Search Premier, Eric (Cambridge Scientific Abstract), and Education Full text, yielded over eleven thousand sources; yet, realistically time limited reading all of the findings. Therefore, other than historical background, the sources for this review were limited to literature reporting definitions to frame the issue of ethics, trends in professional ethics preparation, ethical decision-making in school administrators, and the assistant principalship.

Introduction

Although there were decades of research and practice related to school administrators, a major dilemma resulted in trying to make sense of the literature and its use of various terms for ethics. Most of the literature was either theoretical or qualitative small-scale case studies designed to employ convenience samples and self-reported methodologies, mostly interviews and surveys. There were few quantitative studies in
educational leadership, which reflected the difficulties when attempting to quantify complex variables such as ethical leadership in school administrators or ethical decision-making. The range of literature addressed in this chapter was quite broad, yet necessary to examine assistant principals’ ethical decision-making.

How are assistant principals prepared for ethical challenges? The literature suggested that assistant principals are unprepared for ethical challenges (Glanz, 2004; Harris & Lowery, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002). The literature further suggested that universities should focus on the development of skills for assistant principals because that is where so many people started in educational administration (Barker, 1997; Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 2004). Lastly, the literature suggested that the role of the assistant principal is one of the least researched and discussed roles in educational leadership (Glanz, 2004; Harris & Lowery, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002).

The concept of school administration suggests one who rightly and importantly holds a central position in the way schools operate and function in the teaching and learning of students. School administrators, as leaders, are expected to of good character and behave in an ethical manner as a part of the educator’s guiding credo (Beckner, 2004; Begley, 2001; Fullan, 2003). In the past decade, scholars of educational leadership determined a need for ethical leadership in schools and called for reform in principal preparation (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Beckner, 2004; Begley, 2006; Fossey & Shoho, 2006; Fullan, 2003; Levine, 2005; Normore, 2004; Petzko, 2008).
The principal preparation research tended to be sporadic and responsive rather than innovative and evidential. This collective literature was still overwhelmingly descriptive instead of explanatory, more robust with argument and rationale than with evidence of the effects of reform in principal preparedness for ethical decision-making. Most of the existing research was limited to case study designs, small sample sizes, and self-report methodologies. The large-scale quantitative studies that existed in leadership were more focused on business leadership, instead of ethical preparation in educational leadership programs.

There has been a resurgence of interest in, and recognition of, the importance of ethics for educational administrators and an increased demand for training courses in ethics for school professionals (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001, 2005; Stefkovich & O’Brien, 2004; Whitaker, 2002). The literature supported the view that ethics in educational leadership education are deemed important but neglected (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Beckner, 2004; Begley, 2006; Fullan, 2003; Levine, 2005). Likewise, a review of the literature, on the importance of ethics in teacher education coursework, indicated overwhelming support for ethical knowledge (Cummings et al., 2007; Howe, 1986; Lee, 2006; Luckowski, 1987; Nash, 1991; Soltis, 1986; Watson, 2007). Yet, the literature suggested one of the most neglected aspects of professional knowledge in teacher preparedness was ethical knowledge (Blair, 1977; Campbell, 2003; Dempster et al., 2002; Fullan, 2003; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). Business, law, and medical majors
have designated ethics coursework for graduation requirements. That was not the case for the education profession.

The education reform movements of the 1980s are underway to improve the quality of teachers and the conditions of teaching. However, only recently has the focus for accountability and quality aimed at school administrators. With the recent emphasis on accountability, high-stakes testing, and highly qualified educators, school administrators face dilemmas more than ever.

Ethical dilemmas test the personal, professional, and ethical values of school administrators. When entangled in the web of ethical decision-making, school administrators are required to make value judgments about doing or saying the right thing. Each situation causes the school administrator to draw from core values and personal beliefs to resolve the ethical dilemma. Ethical dilemmas are a part of everyday life in schools.

*Ethics*

Ethics derived from the Greek word ethos. Early philosophers differed in their discussions of ethics. According to Rebore (2001), Socrates possibly began the advent of ethical issues, when he went around Athens asking the citizens their opinions concerning the meaning of human existence. Socrates felt so strongly about his search for the truth, that when accused of disturbing the social order, he drank hemlock and died, rather than give up his quest.
History of Historical Ethical Philosophers

Philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, spent their lifetime studying ethics. Philosophers of ethics had to prove themselves trustworthy for selection through recommendation by their teachers. Goree, Pyle, Baker, and Hopkins (2007) suggested that although Plato was not the first to be interested with ethical concerns, perhaps he was among the first to argue that moral right and wrong were more than superstition and mythology. According to Goree et al. (2007) neither Aristotle nor Plato connected moral values with the gods and deities of the Greek mythological religion of the time. Aristotle and Plato were either critical of the Greek gods’ immoralities or they ignored the traditional deities altogether.

Later, Beckner (2004), closely aligned with the works of Rebore (2001), acknowledged that Plato believed moral concepts were understandable only under the conditions of social order. Beckner wrote that Plato attempted to identify the good in life, concluding that good related directly to one’s station in life and to the fulfillment of the obligations of that station. He determined that Plato believed only those who had the necessary training and ability could possibly attain the virtues passed on to society.

Similarly, Mahoney (2006) maintained that justice was the framework of Plato’s ethical decision-making. Mahoney defined justice, in legal terms, as the right conduct towards others through the due process of law. The author asserted that Plato believed one should first know justice before practicing leadership, that caring for the soul was most important of all. He continued that, according to Plato, one could care for the soul
only if one had the knowledge of justice. He acknowledged that Plato stressed that committing an unjust act was a greater evil than committing unjust treatment. He suggested Plato’s theory of ethics was the quest for the ultimate truth. Mahoney concluded that justice was a worthy pursuit because; in the end without justice, anything goes.

Philosophers, since Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle, have struggled with ethics. Aristotle, Plato’s student, attempted to develop the standard of good and defined ethics based on what was good. Aristotle saw the study of ethics tied to the state of being happy. Aristotle’s term for supreme goodness meant happiness. Greeks thought virtue and happiness were inseparable, which led to the Greek view known as Stoicism (Goree et al., 2007). Stoic ideas monopolized Greek thinking until the rise of Christianity with its teachings of charitably doing unto others and loving thy neighbor as thyself.

Before the rise of Christianity, the idea of the good life focused on self-discipline and self-control as the way to attain virtue and happiness or inner tranquility. Plato wrote of four virtues of justice, wisdom, courage, and temperance of self-control and moderation as the ultimate principles of the universe. Aristotle’s views differed from those of Plato’s in that a person’s virtues and moral habits were the most important aspects of one’s development and the most essential elements for success in life.

*Contemporary Ethical Philosophers*

Following the ancients, Goree et al. (2007) pointed out that during the thirteenth century, Aquinas believed the religious faith of Christianity answered all ethical
questions. The authors declared that during the sixteenth century, Hobbes deviated from those beliefs and teachings of Aquinas. They suggested that Hobbes was more interested in self-interest and self-preservation than the search for inner peace and happiness of the ancient Greek philosophers. Mahoney (2006) noted that during the seventeenth century Locke suggested divine, civil, and law of opinion as three kinds of moral laws. Rebore (2001) affirmed that during the eighteenth century Kant believed people were naturally good and should act the way one wanted others to act. Mahoney acknowledged that Kant reasoned the laws of nature were those based on what happened and the laws of ethical philosophy were those according to which everything ought to happen.

**Twentieth Century Forward**

Rebore (2001) noted that Rawls, a twentieth century American philosopher, wrote extensively about justice. According to the author, Rawls theorized that the principles of justice formed the foundation for the structure of society. Rebore substantiated Rawls’ theory stating, “Justice is the guide that regulates how people live out their lives as members of a given community” (p. 227).

According to Mahoney (2006), Kohlberg, a twentieth century philosopher, theorized that full moral development began in childhood and progressed throughout adolescence in predictable stages. Kohlberg’s theory of moral development was not necessarily dependent on maturity but rather that the stages of development progressed with one thinking about one’s own moral problems. Kohlberg was more interested in why
one did something, not so much what it was that one did. Kohlberg argued that the key for ethical growth at any stage of development was justice.

Gilligan (1983), Kohlberg’s student, disagreed with Kohlberg’s findings concerning moral development. Gilligan argued that Kohlberg’s research, conducted exclusively with men, was faulty due to gender bias. Gilligan suggested Kohlberg wrongly assumed women and men would respond alike concerning moral development. Gilligan conducted research with women and concluded that women tended to focus more on the principle of care than the principle of justice. In a critical review of Kohlberg’s moral development, Vitton and Wasonga (2008) supported Gilligan’s findings. The authors suggested that elementary school districts in search of principals who make decisions encompassing high levels of moral decision-making should seek younger, moderately liberal, highly educated females.

Devalued as a feminist by her critics, Noddings (2003) supported the view that ethics concentrated for the most part on moral reasoning. She suggested ethics encompassed principles and terms such as justice, fairness, and justification. Noddings argued ethics guided by Lagos, the masculine spirit, would have been more logical through Eros, the feminine spirit. She noted that an ethic focused on caring was feminine, not that men could not care, but that an ethic of caring arose out of women’s experiences as opposed to those of men. Noddings concluded that the study of ethics was a philosophical study of morality.
Ethics Defined

Philosophers and scholars have defined ethics for centuries. Bolman and Deal (2003) defined ethics as an individual’s core beliefs and values. Begley and Johannson (2003) defined ethics as the customs belonging to one group as distinguished from another. Authors Goree et al. (2007), Harris and Lowery (2004), and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) defined ethics, in similar terms, as the reasoned study of philosophy that grappled with what was morally right and wrong, good and bad. Strike (2007) determined that the historical view of ethics was an inquiry into the nature of good living. He argued that the view of ethics being about morality, what was right or wrong, was too narrow. He suggested that the study of ethics should focus on the nature of good communities, because ethics was about a greater concern of how we should live together.

Starratt (2004) determined ethics as a term used in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes. He declared that ethics was the study of what constituted a moral life. He further suggested that ethics was the analysis of the principles, beliefs, values, and virtues of a moral life. According to Velasquez, Andre, Shanks, Meyer, and Meyer (1987), ethics consisted of constantly studying one’s moral beliefs and moral conduct while striving to adhere to reasonable and solidly based standards. Henderson and Kasson (2004) defined ethics as the study of how moral standards influenced one’s behavior.

More recently, Goree et al. (2007) discussed ethics as a gut feeling or conscience, but continued that ethics cannot end in the gut. They argued that to grow ethically the feeling must move from the gut to the heart, mind, and soul. Bolman and Deal (2003)
suggested that soul and ethics were inextricably intertwined. Numerous authors suggested that ethics and school leadership inextricably intertwined (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007; Denig & Quinn, 2001; Fullan, 2003; Rebore, 2001; Starratt, 2004; Wager & Simpson, 2009).

Rebore (2001) wrote that ethics was a search for the truth that led to the goal of establishing ethical standards of conduct for educational leaders. He suggested that ethics was purposeful inquiry for knowledge used for making decisions about actions. Rebore concluded that educational leaders needed to study ethics because it provided a framework for ethical decision-making through a disciplined way of thinking as decisions were analyzed through the question of why rather than the management thinking of how or what.

In a search of over 1,800 article abstracts, Ciulla (2004) found, what she described as, only a handful of articles that offered any in-depth discussion of ethics and leadership. Ciulla stated, “Ethics lie at the heart of all human relationships and hence at the heart of the relationship between leaders and followers” (p. xv). She determined that the study of ethics usually examined right, wrong, good, evil, virtue, duty, obligation, rights, justice, and fairness in human relations with other humans and living things. The author noted that some of the most frequently cited ethics texts in leadership articles and books were from business ethics. Ciulla shared that the reasons for this were threefold: that researchers were often in business schools, that business ethics texts were written for a
broad audience, and that the content of business ethics research into managerial and organizational ethics was relevant to school leadership.

In summary, philosophers have discussed and argued differing views of ethics for ages. Justice, reason, benefit, and respect, common threads in each philosopher’s ethical beliefs and principles, comprised the core beliefs of ethics and society. Discussions of ethics continued across many disciplines as philosophers and professionals continued to struggle with what exactly defines ethics. Starratt (2004) offered one of the most concise explanations of ethics when he concluded:

Ethics were principles kept in a supply closet in one of the back rooms of our consciousness. They are maps we consult when the familiar terrain we are traversing becomes a tangle of underbrush with barely discernable and uncertain trails (p. 6).

**Ethical Frameworks**

From earliest times, philosophers wrote of justice to mean fate versus free will, good and evil, and the relationships among human beings. Contemporary scholars began to write about justice, critique, and care. Starratt (1994) combined justice, critique, and care into the most recognized ethical frameworks in education, the tri-partite frameworks.

An ethical framework was defined as a basic assumption about beliefs, values and principles to guide choices (Starratt, 2004). Furman (2004) understood that the three ethics complemented each other and thus became the foundation of an ethical school.
Gaining recognition were the ethic of the profession and the ethic of community. The following focused on contemporary philosophers’ ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, the profession, and community as applied to the field of education.

*The Ethic of Justice*

Justice has a long debated meaning and history. Justice served as the foundation for legal principles and ideals, rights and laws, fairness and equity in individual freedom (Shapiro & Gross, 2002; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994; Stefkovich & O’Brien, 2004). According to Starratt (1994), the idea of fairness and equal treatment became the core values of the ethic of justice. He confirmed that the ethic of justice required treating others to a standard of justice applied in all relationships. Starratt posited that fairness, defined as the equitable distribution of resources and the application of rules and equal treatment, was concerned with justice in the social order. Shapiro and Gross (2008) affirmed that the ethic of justice continually raised questions about the just and fairness of laws and policies. They suggested that when viewing ethical dilemmas from the vantage point of justice, queries regarding the interpretation of the rule of law and concepts of fairness and responsibility came into play.

In addition, authors Strike, Holler, and Soltis (1998), as well as Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), affirmed that the ethic of justice supported the principle of due process and protected the civil and human rights of all individuals. Strike et al. (1998) supported the influence of justice in educational decision-making based on maximum benefits in respect to individual needs. Shapiro and Gross (2008) substantiated Shapiro
and Stefkovich’s earlier proposal that school administrators who considered each member of the community before making an ethical decision utilized the ethic of justice as they strived to be fair and equitable. The ethic of justice required an examination of the issues in terms of the rights and laws of students, parents, and school personnel.

*The Ethic of Critique*

Just as the ethic of justice was about fairness, the ethic of critique was about the barriers of fairness (Shapiro & Gross, 2008; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). Starratt affirmed that the ethic of critique sought to identify and remove barriers of favoritism and in doing so created an ethic of justice. Fairness, according to Starratt, was the equitable distribution of resources and application of rules, which became the focus of the ethic of critique. Educators were forced to confront moral issues through the ethic of critique when schools disproportionately benefited some groups in society and failed others (Furman, 2004; Starratt, 1994). Starratt avowed that the ethic of critique challenged the status quo by involving social discourse, which allowed the marginalized a voice and exposed inequities.

According to Shapiro and Gross (2008) and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), the ethic of critique focused educators on an awareness of inequities in society, as it pursued appropriate measures to correct laws, policies, and regulations inconsistent with sound educational practices. The authors confirmed that the ethic of critique forced educators to rethink, redefine, and reframe concepts such as privilege, power, culture, and in particular, social injustice. Shapiro and Stefkovich, as substantiated by Shapiro and
Gross, suggested that school administrators who utilized the ethic of critique questioned not only the law when making an ethical decision, but also considered who made the law and who benefited most from its enforcement. School administrators, who became more knowledgeable and sensitive to inequities, applied the ethic of critique when making ethical decisions, especially when those decisions dealt with class, race, gender, and differences.

*The Ethic of Care*

A third ethical framework, the ethic of care, emerged out of the ethic of justice and shifted the focus from rights and laws to compassion and empathy. Less concerned with fairness, the ethic of care is more concerned with caring for individuals as unique persons (Furman, 2004). The ethic of care required absolute regard for the dignity and intrinsic value of each person based on relationships and demanded care in relationships with others. Starratt (1994) wrote that the ethic of care confirmed caring was the ideal fulfillment of all social relationships.

Furman (2004) noted that the ethic of care balanced the ethic of justice and the ethic of critique. Because of the focus of the ethic of care, the ethics of justice and critique would not be required in every situation if an individual’s needs met. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) suggested that the ethic of care avoided using positions for personal gain through political, social, religious, economic, and other influences.

The ethic of care also focused on respect. Noddings (2003) noted that some thought an ethic built on caring to be tender minded. Shapiro and Gross (2008)
acknowledged that the ethic of care discussed by feminist scholars, critical of the ethic of justice, who demanded that the ethic of care be implemented for moral decision-making. Noddings continued that an ethic of care was a tough ethic, was practical not romantic, and was not concerned with moral judgments. She suggested the idea that an ethic of care, perceived by many as a feminine ethic, often arose out of the experience of women being women. Noddings posited that human love and caring were more than enough to found an ethic of care.

School administrators who utilized the ethic of care valued relationships and connections in the ethical decision-making process, rather than techniques and rules (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). Shapiro and Stefkovich maintained that school administrators who utilized the ethic of care tried to balance power with caring and understood the need for nurturing and encouraging students. They declared that school administrators who utilized the ethic of care considered how they could help an individual student meet his or her needs and desires before making an ethical decision. Shapiro and Gross (2008) affirmed the importance of the ethic of care for educational leaders when they are required to make moral decisions and resolve dilemmas. Shapiro and Gross suggested a need for revising educational leadership training if the ethic of care implemented for dilemma resolution.

In summary, the ethics of justice, critique, and care each complemented the other in establishing an ethical school. The focus of ethics in education during the 1990s, centered on Starratt’s tri-partite theory of justice, critique, and care. However, increased
attention on the works of other contemporary scholars awakened an awareness of two additional emerging ethics, the ethic of the profession, and the ethic of community.

**The Ethic of the Profession**

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) suggested that the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, and care needed expanding. Based on what they noticed in their classrooms, readings, and dialogues, the authors alleged the moral aspect of the profession was to serve the best interests of the student as the focus of ethical decisions. Stefkovich and Begley, (2002) established that school leaders used the rationale, the “best interests of the student,” when making a difficult decision, but continued that when they explored the term “best interests of the student,” they found neither a firm definition nor consistency in use.

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) called for school leaders to consider professional codes and personal ethical principles, as well as, standards of the profession, as they created a dynamic model that placed the best interests of the student at the heart of the ethics of the educational profession (Stefkovich & Begley, 2002; Stefkovich & O’Brien, 2004). Shapiro and Stefkovich noted that the ethic of the profession often meant codes, rules, and principles, all of which aligned with the traditional concepts of justice, but maintained that their interpretation of the ethic of the profession took into account other paradigms such as professional judgment and professional decision-making. The authors maintained that the ethic of the profession should be central to complete the ethical
frameworks of justice, critique, and care. Thus, a fourth ethic emerged, the ethic of the profession, focused on the best interests of the student.

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) suggested that school administrators needed a clear understanding of the best interests of the student when making ethical decisions. The authors proposed that school administrators responded to dilemmas through use of multiple lenses. However, Begley and Stefkovich (2007) argued that Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) stopped short of proposing an actual sequence for applying the use of multiple lenses to dilemmas for resolution.

Instead, Begley and Stefkovich (2007) alleged that the research of Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) suggested that administrators varied in their ethical postures and sequence of applying ethical frameworks. Begley (2006) called for a specific sequence for application of ethical frameworks, beginning with the ethic of critique, then the ethic of care, and ending with the ethic of justice. According to Begley, the ethic of critique allowed for an understanding of the situation, including the perspectives of those without a voice or equal representation. Begley suggested that logically following was the ethic of care, which equally assessed the situation in a humane way. Finally, Begley held that the ethic of justice maximized the benefits for all and respected the rights of the individual.

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) maintained that school administrators who used professional judgment utilized the ethic of the profession when considering the best interest of the student during ethical decisions. Shapiro and Gross (2008) agreed that the ethic of the profession placed the student at the center of the decision-making process.
They determined that the 1996 document, *Standards for School Leaders*, developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), supported the ethic of the profession, and included the ethics of the community, personal codes of ethics, and the professional codes of educational organizations. The focus on standards for ethics awakened Shapiro and Stefkovich to the importance of the ethic of profession in the field of educational leadership. In addition, they argued Furman’s (2004) ethic of community was not clearly visible in the three ethics of justice, critique, and care, but insisted the ethic of community fit well under the ethic of the profession.

*The Ethic of Community*

Proposing a fifth ethical framework for educators, Furman (2003) argued a definite link between the literature on the work on community, which emphasized the importance of relationships, collaboration, and communication, and an ethic of community. She further argued that the ethic of community meant all who were morally responsible for schooling comprised the concept of community. An ethic of community addressed the challenges of daily life and work in schools through moral leadership and the development of moral practices. According to Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) the ethic of community included the customs, practices, and expectations set forth by the community whether the school community, the professional community, or the community at large.

Furman (2004) continued that the ethic of community captured the leadership practices lacking in the ethics of justice, care, critique, and the profession as it
complemented those ethical frameworks. The author used the diagram of a square with one of the four ethical frameworks of justice, care, critique, and the profession positioned at each corner. She then centered the ethic of community in the middle of the square to emphasize its importance and connection with the other four ethical frameworks.

According to the Furman (2004), one important issue addressed in twenty-first century schools was how to ground leadership in the values of the community to ensure the achievement of values outcomes such as justice, equity, and learning for all children. She avowed an ethic of community concerned with the achievement gap, diverse populations, racial inequities, economic gaps, and the current environment of high stakes assessment and accountability, which contributed to the social injustices in schools.

In summary, contemporary scholars agreed that there were no easy answers to ethical dilemmas. They disagreed concerning the ethical framework used to formulate ethical decisions. As ethical decision makers, school administrators strive to create a professional and democratic community. Ethical school administrators use one or more of the frameworks when faced with the challenge of ethical dilemmas. Appendix B summarizes the ethical frameworks.

_Ethics Implementation in Education Coursework_

The literature revealed much consensus for ethics education in business (Crane, 2004; Gini, 2004; Hosmer, 1995; McQueeney, 2006), medical (DuBois & Burkemper, 2002; Roberts, Geppert, Connor, Nguyen, & Warner, 2001), legal (McCormack, 2008;
Miller, 2008; Porter, 2008), and educational (Cummings et al., 2007; Howe, 1986; Lee, 2006; Luckowski, 1987; Nash, 1991; Soltis, 1986; Watson, 2008) professional preparation courses. The question remained how to implement and incorporate ethics training as a much-needed part of professional education preparation coursework.

Many researchers supported specific ethics coursework as the approach for implementation (Crane, 2004; Lee, 2006; Luckowski, 1997). Other researchers considered that ethics included in all coursework a better approach (Cummings et al., 2007; DuBois & Burkemper, 2002; Nash, 1991). Still other researchers argued that a classroom setting implementing hypothetical ethical dilemmas and discussions the best method for ethics training (Howe, 1986; McCormack, 2008; McQueeney, 2006; Soltis, 1986).

**Ethics and Business Education**

Recent scandals in the corporate world increased discussions concerning the need for ethics in the business curriculum among college students (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005; Crane, 2004; McQueeney, 2006). Making ethics relevant was a challenge, even in the wake of the business scandals of the past decade (Crane, 2004; Gini, 2004; McQueeney, 2006). Corporate scandals left business students wondering and questioning about ethics (Crane, 2004; McQueeney, 2006).

McQueeney (2006) suggested that hypothetical ethical dilemmas made ethics relevant for business communication students to discover ethical principles concerning personal and organizational real-world ethical conflicts. He continued that hypothetical
dilemmas allowed students to experience ethical situations and the rarely imagined and often unfavorable consequences. The author surmised that students were most successful developing and understanding business ethics when specific exercises were utilized that presented personal or organizational conflicts with getting or keeping a job. McQueeney concluded that hypothetical ethical situations allowed students to discover their own ethical principles through critical analysis of ethical choices.

In contrast to McQueeney’s (2006) support of hypothetical ethical situations for implementing ethics into coursework, Crane (2004) suggested that stand-alone ethic courses were necessary, as well as, the integration of ethics into other courses such as finance, accounting, and marketing. Crane surveyed MBA students’ attitudes towards the teaching of ethics in business school. Crane found that the participants overwhelmingly indicated ethical standards as necessities in business. Yet, less than a quarter of those surveyed confirmed that the current ethical standards were meeting the needs of business and society. Moreover, 80% of the 122 participants thought they could determine ethical business behavior.

Crane’s (2004) findings supported the need for ethical training as three out of four participants agreed that current ethical training failed to prepare them to meet business ethical standards. His study revealed that 95% of students in business education indicated a need for ethics in the content areas. Crane strongly supported the teaching of ethics and suggested the need for a course in business ethics as a requirement of the
curriculum. Crane concluded that students needed to learn how to handle ethical problems in the business world.

*Ethics and Medical Education*

The American Medical Association (AMA) was founded in 1847. The AMA has highest ethical standards for all physicians and medical students. The AMA Code of Medical Ethics is over 160 years old and recognized as the most comprehensive guide for those in the medical profession who strive to practice ethically. According to Wagner and Simpson (2009), the oath “do no harm” of the medical profession is the oldest of all the professional codes of ethics (p. 13).

Challenging the perception that medical students and professionals are highly ethical, a recent study by Roberts et al. (2001) focused on ethical safeguards in medical education and research. They hypothesized that no documentation of six ethical safeguards in the medical education literature existed. Their findings confirmed the hypothesis. The quantitative evaluation of the study analyzed six specified ethical safeguards and found less than half of the reports documented the ethical safeguards. A qualitative review of the published works revealed themes of incomplete ethical documentation or unusual practices such as deception of the medical student participant. Roberts and colleagues concluded that relatively little of the published medical literature included the ethical safeguards. The authors hoped the findings would raise awareness of the neglected issues in medical education and set standards on the ethical aspect of scholarly practice and research.
Prompted by perceived gaps in the knowledge and abilities of medical ethics curriculum in medical schools, DuBois and Burkemper (2002) conducted an exhaustive survey of all four-year medical school directors in the U.S. to determine the ideal medical ethics curriculum offered in medical schools. They theorized an ideal medical ethics curriculum and found, despite a steady stream of literature insisting on the importance of ethics education, that the actual medical ethics curriculum had weak areas. DuBois and Burkemper concluded that no common core medical ethics curriculum existed. The authors maintained that the lack of a common ethics curriculum presented a significant gap in the ethics education of medical students.

The findings of Roberts et al. (2001), and DuBois and Burkemper (2002) supported the theory that although ethics were talked about and desired in the medical professional’s education, many gaps existed between ethical training and actual curriculum instruction offered to, or required of, medical students.

*Ethics and Legal Education*

Founded in 1878, the American Bar Association (ABA) created a set of professional ethical standards for the legal profession in the United States. After Watergate, those ethical standards became the Model Rules of Professional Conduct for the legal profession. Although the major role of the ABA is to set the academic standards for law schools, ethical standards are also a priority of the voluntary bar association. Briefly, as guardians of the law, the code of ethics charges lawyers to play a vital role in the preservation of society. Lawyers have an obligation to maintain the highest standards
of ethical conduct. Although closely related, ethics and law are not the same. However, ethical obligations often exceed legal duties.

Many states require law students to pass the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE) upon completion of a course in legal ethics during the last year of law school. The MPRE tests knowledge of the ABA codes in professional responsibility, judicial conduct, and legal ethics. Although, law students are required successful completion of ethical coursework and the MPRE, McCormack (2008) substantiated that most people thought of lawyers as unethical.

McCormack (2008) pondered whether law school should become more like medical school. The author confirmed that young medical students ended the first year of medical school with a white coat ceremony pledging the Hippocratic Oath. She suggested law students could benefit from a clinical experience and tradition such as a “Commitment to Integrity” ceremony with a federal judge administering an integrity oath (p. 256). According to the author, an oath concentrated on high standards of academic conduct, integrity, and lawyerly ethics could set the tone of ethical professionalism for law students.

Likewise, Watson’s (2007) prior work supported McCormack’s suggestions regarding a Hippocratic Oath for law students as he suggested a similar Hippocratic Oath for higher education. McCormack (2008) continued her comparison of medical and law school students and found that students who had difficulty with ethical or professional concerns during clinical training were more likely to encounter similar problems in the
professional practice. She suggested clinical settings as the only useful predictor regarding future ethical concerns in medical or law practices.

In summary, research in business, medical, and legal education necessitate ethics education. The literature revealed much consensus for ethics education in business (Crane, 2004; Gini, 2004; Hosmer, 1995; McQueeney, 2006), medical (DuBois & Burkemper, 2002; Roberts et al., 2001), legal (McCormack, 2008; Miller, 2008; Porter, 2008) education courses. Ethical scandals in the business, medical, and legal world have left the American public with a tainted view of those professions. The field of education has also experienced ethical scandals in the past decade. Each scandal intensified the need for ethics training in the field of education.

*Ethics and Teacher Education*

Since school administrators began their careers as teachers, a review of teacher education ethical preparation was necessary to develop background knowledge of school administrators’ ethical preparation. A review of the literature established the importance of ethics in teacher education coursework (Cummings et al., 2007; Howe, 1986; Lee, 2006; Luckowski, 1987; Nash, 1991; Soltis, 1986; Watson, 2008). Yet, one of the most neglected aspects of professional knowledge in teacher preparation is ethical knowledge (Blair, 1977; Campbell, 2003; Dempster et al., 2002; Fullan, 2003; Johnson, 2007; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005).

Fullan (2003) questioned student teachers regarding the development of ethical principles. He found student teachers acknowledged that established ethical principles
were a good idea, but they had not thought about it nor been taught about it. Fullan found that instead of actual courses in ethics, most assumed moral responsibility for schools and the education of those in them to be a part of educators’ guiding credo.

Campbell (2003) found that there existed an understood expectation that educators would do the right thing when faced with an ethical dilemma. Ethical behavior is expected, yet rarely discussed by teachers and school administrators (Campbell, 2003; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). Howe (1986) confirmed a renewed interest within teacher education for ethics education. He found ethics in teacher education more critical, than in other professions, because teachers touched the lives of virtually everyone. Campbell confirmed the dearth of open discussion of ethics upon which to base choices in difficult situations. The author acknowledged that teachers were unaware of making ethical decisions daily. She maintained an expectation of flawless moral values and principles in teachers because they occupy positions of trust and confidence. Campbell concluded that teaching has no room for those who lack the personal and professional ethics expected of the profession.

*Ethics Implementation in Education Coursework*

Like McQueeney (2006), who favored hypothetical discussions for business students, Soltis (2007) supported hypothetical ethical situations in teacher education discussions. He declared that such situations required justification of one’s actions as a basis for a sincere commitment to ethical professional conduct. Howe (1986) suggested that the use of hypothetical ethical dilemmas engaged future educators in critical ethical
reflection. Soltis asserted that education students needed an understanding of the basic ethical philosophers and ethical theories to develop fully as ethical educators.

In a comparison of methods for teaching ethics, Lee (2006) suggested that education students develop critical thinking skills, one of the better ways for ensuring high ethical standards in education and society. Lee found that students equated critical thinking with being critical of another. As he compared the moral indoctrination approach and the moral engagement approach, Lee recognized stark differences between the two methods. Lee suggested that the moral engagement approach, which required listening to others with thoughtful deliberation, avoided the pitfalls of the moral indoctrination approach, a rote learning method of authoritarian principles.

Similarly, Nash (1991) analyzed a three-pronged approach in teaching applied ethics for educators. Nash determined that applied ethics consisted of three concepts as rules and principles, character and structure, and beliefs and ideals. Nash defined the rules and principles concept as a duty, an obligation or responsibility, or a right or wrong. He suggested that the character and structure concept best described as principles, rules, and virtues. Nash defined the beliefs and ideals concept as what was good, valuable, and right. The author confirmed that the three concepts were necessary for an ethical life. Each concept has a unique language for the educator to understand and apply to ethical situations. The author criticized the rules and principles approach as useful yet incomplete, because educators needed exposure to all three concepts of applied ethics. He acknowledged that an advantage of the rules and principles approach helped educators
make sense of difficult ethical situations. Nash preferred the character and structure approach for teaching ethics. He suggested that the character and structure approach answered questions concerning decisions made and allowed for teacher intuition through developing an understanding for living ethically. Lastly, he acknowledged that the background and beliefs approach permitted teachers to put their highest ethical ideas into practice while developing an understanding of living an ethical life. Nash concluded that ethics education courses should include those three interrelated dimensions of ethical analysis.

On the other hand, Luckowski (1997) questioned the rule and principle approach for teaching ethics in teacher education. Luckowski argued that a virtue-centered approach better aligned with teacher commitment to ethical behavior and ethical judgment. She acknowledged that the virtue-centered approach focused on the good of teaching as it helped teachers strengthen their commitments to the profession and ethical obligations to help others. She suggested that teachers worked with individuals who were neither friends nor intimates, and that required civility. Luckowski defined civility as accepting responsibility for the well-being of students. She considered the ethics of teaching as how well teachers conducted relationships with students, other educators, and the community. She maintained that teachers could behave ethically good or bad, but defined neither behavior. Luckowski pondered how teachers acquired good ethical habits. She declared that teachers must be more pragmatic than moral theorists must be and viewed the rules and principles approach as improbable. As she reviewed the literature
concerning the development of educators’ ethics, she criticized applied ethics instruction for using unrealistic case studies. However, she concluded that case studies resulted in ethical reflection and ethical action by teachers, which lead to the resumption of trust in teachers and the teaching profession.

**Moral Reasoning of Educators**

Overall, individuals who function as teachers and school administrators are expected to have a solid foundation of ethical values and moral reasoning. In a review of the literature, Cummings et al. (2007) found that concerns about the moral domain of teaching had been around for over 30 years, yet almost no empirical studies investigating the moral reasoning of teachers existed. They posited that teachers should be able to make sound moral judgments and recognize the basic worth and dignity of all students.

Cummings and colleagues (2007) suggested that Kohlberg’s work on moral development continued to influence thinking about morality and moral development. Their study focused on Kohlberg’s Moral Judgment Interview (MJI), a standardized individualized test used to measure moral reasoning. They found little attention given to the use of scientific approaches in the study of moral reasoning of education professionals. Cummings and others found lower moral reasoning for education majors than for other college majors. The authors suggested that reasons for lower moral reasoning were that education courses tended to emphasize skills and methods with no coursework requiring abstract or theoretical content.
In a previous review of the literature, Cummings and others (2007) found in an examination of 526 course descriptions involving elementary education programs, 90% of the courses were skills and methods courses. This supported the authors’ theory that teacher education curricula did not include enough courses requiring critical thinking. According to Cummings and colleagues, critical thinking is necessary for the development of moral reasoning.

Further review by Cummins et al. (2007) revealed support for purposeful interventions of moral reasoning to become a part of teacher education. However, studies of deliberate moral reasoning intervention implementation revealed only modest gains reported. The authors suggested the necessity for more theory-based teacher education programs for development of moral reasoning in teacher education students. The findings led Cummings and colleagues to suggest that education majors had lower moral reasoning because some prospective teachers thought education was an easy major. Furthermore, the authors claimed that teacher education focused on skills and methods rather than on critical thinking. In conclusion, Cummings and colleagues stated that teacher education candidates must possess the cognitive levels necessary to deal with the demands of a teacher education program that stimulated both critical thinking and moral reflection.

*Code of Ethics for Educators*

The National Education Association (NEA) originally endorsed a code of ethics for the education profession in 1929. Updated several times, the NEA Assembly adopted
a revised Code of Ethics of the Education Profession in 1975. Included in the code, is the statement that the educator accepts the responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical standards, followed by the principles, which restate the importance of being ethical at all times.

In 1965, Florida adopted the Code of Ethics for the Education Profession based upon that of an earlier version of the NEA Code of Ethics. Amended several times, in 1982 the Florida Code of Ethics for the Education Profession became the State Board of Rule (SBER) 6B-1.001, Florida Administrative Code. It is important that educators understand Florida is not a nexus state, which means any ethical violation whether professional or personal, can be punishable in Florida. The Florida Code of Ethics for the Education Profession includes a standard stating that the educator would strive to achieve and sustain the highest degree of ethical conduct and required prospective teachers demonstrate knowledge of ethics to obtain certification.

Standards of ethical conduct positions the education profession apart from other professions as it mandates standards the education profession determined morally right and wrong. Despite there being a code of ethics for educators, both Soltis (1986) and Goree et al. (2007) raised the concern one did not become ethical because of a code of ethics. Soltis argued that most codes included a mandated list of rules, rather than the philosophical or fundamental principles of ethics. Soltis understood that codes of ethics were useful but left teachers ill equipped to solve ethical dilemmas. He maintained that it was important to include the National Education Association (NEA) code of ethics in
teacher education programs. Soltis concluded that membership in a profession required commitment to the historical practice of that profession, whether business, medical, legal, or educational.

Supporting that thought, Ungaretti, Dorsey, Freeman, and Bologna (1997) affirmed that business, law, public relations, and social workers have ethical conduct codes. Ungaretti et al. (1997) declared that teacher conduct should be no different. They suggested that teacher education lacked an ethical conduct code for the profession.

Validating the concerns of Soltis (1986) and Goree et al. (2007) regarding codes of ethics and ethical behavior, Wagner and Simpson (2009) suggested that codes of ethics emerged due to efforts to bring into view a shared moral vision that all the members of the profession aspired to, not as a negative demand for accountability. They concluded that a code of ethics was meant to be responsive to practical matters and should not be too specific in articulation. Instead, Wagner and Simpson determined that a code of ethics was more of a prescription of a shared sense of a general direction of the moral vision of the members of a profession.

Similar to the concerns of Soltis (1986) and Goree et al. (2007) regarding codes of ethics and ethical behavior, Somers (2001) conducted a survey of 613 management accountants addressing the effects of a code of ethics on employee perceptions of ethical behavior. Somers found that only 8% of the participants reported knowledge of a code of ethics, while 42% of the participants reported an unawareness of a code of ethics, the remainder of participants indicated no response on the question. The author suggested
that when employees knew there was a code of ethics, there was an association of less perceived wrongdoings than when employees were unaware of a code of ethics. He acknowledged that the findings were based on a small return rate, but affirmed the hypothesis that a professional code of ethics inhibited wrongdoing in an organization.

In summary, teachers and school administrators have an understood expectation for flawless personal morals, values, and principles. As professionals, they also have an expectation for adopting and following a code of ethics for the profession. Teacher education has no consensus concerning the various methods of implementation of ethics education in coursework. The revealed lack of dedicated ethics courses in teacher education raised concerns for future school administrators’ ethical preparedness (Cummings et al., 2007; Howe, 1986; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007; Soltis, 1986). Business, medical, legal, and teacher education professed the need for ethical training, yet the literature revealed a void in explicit ethics coursework. Appendix C summarizes the findings regarding affirmations and criticisms of the various methods of implementing ethics in professionals’ coursework in preparation for ethical challenges.

**Ethical Leadership**

With decades of research related to the study of ethics and leadership, a brief review of the literature was necessary to find out what is known about ethical behavior and leadership. Gini (2004) declared ethics and leadership inseparable. Branson (2007)
confirmed, although the literature acknowledged the role of moral leadership, there was a blank spot in moral leadership research. The purpose of this section was to summarize findings from a review of the research in ethical leadership.

According to Begley and Stefkovich (2007) values, ethics, and valuation processes were related to leadership. They wrote, “Leaders should know their own values and ethical predispositions” (p. 399). Begley and Stefkovich further noted that leadership was “essentially focused on people and relationships” (p. 401). The authors defined the study of ethics as the life-long struggles and failures to be ethical, and the inconsistencies of ethical postures during the dilemmas of everyday professional life. They further declared ethics highly relevant to school leadership. They suggested that valuation models were templates for moral action and cautioned against applying ethical postures without consideration of the consequences.

Branson (2007) examined the role of moral leadership and the effects of positively influencing a leader’s moral development through its nurturing of moral development. Branson suggested that moral leadership is not a natural outcome, but sustained that people wanted leaders who acted morally. Branson defined acting morally as producing no harm to others and behaving in ways that showed interest in the well-being of others, rather than self-interest, as the driving motivation behind their leadership. He suggested that leaders had no formal exposure to moral decision-making and initiated what he determined to be an effective method for nurturing a leader’s moral consciousness leading to moral development. Branson posited the view that leaders
responded to moral situations reflexively. He held that through nurturing of the leader’s moral consciousness and guidance with self-reflection, the leader could develop professionally as a moral leader. While his view was not the norm, the author suggested that moral consciousness must be the essence of contemporary leadership. Branson concluded that leaders needed to learn how to self-reflect, not only to become morally accountable, but also to live a more fully human life.

In a proposal to study ethical leadership characterized from a descriptive perspective, Brown et al. (2005) initiated conceptual and empirical groundwork to advance knowledge about ethical leadership. Brown and colleagues reviewed the literature and proposed a social cognitive theory as a basis for understanding ethical leadership. Brown and colleagues defined ethical leadership as demonstrations of appropriate conduct through actions and relationships contributing to communication and decision-making with followers.

Brown et al. (2005) hypothesized that ethical leadership positively related to employees’ satisfaction with their leaders and developed a pool of 49 items to measure their hypothesis of ethical leadership. They conducted 20 in-depth interviews and used a five-point Likert-scale in a content analysis of the data. Additionally, the authors implemented a 10-item questionnaire survey of 127 employees from a financial firm in the United States. A factor analysis, conducted using the data from the survey sample, indicated that ethical leadership positively related to trust in an effective leader, and negatively related to an abusive leader. The findings confirmed the authors’ hypothesis
that satisfaction with the leader, perceived leader effectiveness, and job satisfaction were important predictors in ethical leadership.

Brown et al. (2005) suggested that ethical leaders became role models through ethical behavior. Ethical leaders who modeled ethical behavior did so by rewarding appropriate behavior and disciplining inappropriate behavior. Brown and colleagues found transformational leadership paradigms flawed leading to unethical behaviors in leaders who used rewards-and-punishment leadership styles. They further found that survey research linked leadership effectiveness with honesty and trustworthiness. The study had several acknowledged limitations with data from a single source used for multiple comparisons and the cross sectional design of the studies. Brown and colleagues concluded questions such as, ‘do individuals come to organizations as ethical leaders, or do organizations develop ethical leaders, and if so how,’ remained unresolved.

Similarly, Gini (2004) determined that the ethics of the leadership affected the ethics of the workplace and decisions of the workers regarding ethical behavior. He declared that the terms business ethics and moral leadership were prime examples of oxymorons. According to Gini, neither term carried much credibility because so few models of ethical businesses and leaders existed. The author suggested that the terms were more of a wished for ideal, not the actual mode of operation.

Gini (2004) based his statements on a survey conducted by New York Times/CBS News in 1985, which revealed 59% of the American public believed that white-collar crime occurred regularly and 55% believed that the majority of business executives were
dishonest. Gini found, in a similar study by the *Wall Street Journal* in 1987, that one fourth of the business executives surveyed, revealed ethics interfered with their career and more than half admitted they abused ethical rules. He commented about a 1990 survey, which rated business executives the letter grade of C for ethical behavior. Gini found that workers followed the example of perceived low ethical standards of their leaders and admitted to feeling justified with petty theft, indifference, absenteeism, and poor performance in the work place. The author suggested that American workers are as ethical, in their job, as they perceive their bosses are ethical. He concluded that ethics and leadership are inseparable in the business organization.

In an empirical study of 206 mid-level managers, Deshpande (1996) examined the ethical climate and practices of successful managers. He found that public trust in non-profit organizations eroded resulting in a loss of charitable donations. The author posited ethical behavior in non-profit organizations as an issue demanding the attention of social scientists. He confirmed that most of the published research was theoretical, focused on attitudes, not on ethical behavior, and proposed to remedy the deficiencies. He acknowledged that important factors influencing ethical behavior in employees were the ethical behaviors of the managers and the climate within the organization.

Deshpande (1996) examined a previous study, which indicated that managers did not believe ethical behavior was necessary for success. The author proposed to reexamine this belief. Although 252 managers participated in the original sample, 206 participated in Deshpande’s study, resulting in a response rate of 69% for the study. A four-point Likert
scale measured the ethical climate of the organization and the perceived ethical behavior of the managers. The participants identified professionalism, caring, and rules as the top ethical climates in their organization. Over one third of the managers reported that unethical behaviors were necessary in order to be successful in their organization. However, a factor analysis revealed a strong link between success and ethical behavior, as two thirds of the managers reported that ethical behavior was a factor contributing to their success. The results of Deshpande’s study revealed a correlation between a manager’s success and ethical behavior when combined with trust. The author concluded that future research should examine the impact of ethical climate types on the success of ethical behavior management strategies.

Brien (1998) determined that the problem of ethical failure in organizations, a culture that failed to promote trust in the profession. He suggested that professionals occupied important and powerful roles with members of society dependent on and vulnerable to the actions of the professional. He analyzed three methods for regulating ethical behavior in professionals as codes of ethics, legislative, or self-regulatory. The author pointed out flaws in each method and suggested a new solution for ethical regulation in professionals. Brien posited ethical behavior in professionals promoted through a method he described as an Enforced Self-regulation (ESR).

Brien (1998) suggested that a code of ethical behavior, enforced by the professional society, was more likely to result in fewer ethical violations than other methods of regulating professional behavior. Under Brien’s ESR, each profession
designed tailored codes of ethics and submitted the codes to a regulatory agency, with enforcement left to the profession. He suggested that the ESR method resulted in the ultimate goal of ethics as trust. Trust, defined by the author, involved a feeling of security and prediction about the behavior of another person. Brien avowed that ethical behavior provided a level of trust. Houston and Sokolow (2006) found trust was more about the leader trusting than another being trustworthy. Although the authors cautioned against blind trust, they affirmed that trust was the most precious gift a leader could give to others.

In summary, ethical is essential in leaders. Ethics and leadership are inextricably interwoven. Ethical leaders model the expected behavior. The foundation of a successful leader is trust, achieved through the ethical behavior of the leader. The ethical behavior of the followers is based upon the ethical behavior of the leader in the organization. The question remains whether ethical leadership is learned or if it is an inherent quality in some leaders and not others.

*Ethics and School Leadership*

Enlightened school leaders must be knowledgeable of moral and ethical dimensions inherent in any position of educational leadership. Denig and Quinn (2001) affirmed that schools are ethical organizations. As the leader of an ethical organization, school administrators confront a variety of ethical dilemmas and challenges daily. How
school administrators resolve ethical dilemmas depends upon the administrators’ training, values systems, and approaches to moral decisions (Denig & Quinn, 2001).

Wagner and Simpson (2009) compared school leaders to moral architects who planned, designed, and constructed a framework that accomplished a set of desired goals, pursued in an ethical manner resulting in a more credible, informed, and civil society. They confirmed that in the 1970s, with a renewed emphasis in medical ethics, the word ethics implied rules, regulations, principles, and shared moral commitments common to a group of professionals. They suggested a distinction between morals and ethics, although both terms referred to prescriptive rules as making something better, as guiding principles for an appropriate action. They further suggested that educational leaders worked in a setting of specific contexts limiting the range of goals and social dynamics. According to Wagner and Simpson, this indicated that the leader was bound to the ethics of the organization of the school or of the district.

An overview of research in ethics and school leadership revealed concern for ethical leaders and ethical leadership development. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) further compounded the recent emphasis on accountability, which had its roots in the education reform initiatives of the 1980s. The NCLB Act stressed high standards and accountability in teacher quality. Briefly mentioned in the NCLB Act, was that leadership demonstrated ethical behavior, but the act included no definition of that expectation. Thus, arose the issue of how ethical leaders of schools are developed. The following section dealt with educational administration preparation programs.
School Administrators' Preparation for Ethical Challenges

Most school administrators began their careers as teachers, thus the previous review of ethics preparation in teacher education. Many universities offer preparation programs to train individuals to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to transition to the leadership role of the principal (Harris & Lowery, 2002; Weller & Weller, 2002). As leaders, there is an understood expectation for school administrators to be of good character and for ethical behavior (Beckner, 2004; Begley, 2001; Begley & Johannson, 2003; Fullan, 2003; Mahoney, 2006; Rebore, 2001; Starratt, 2004).

However, in the past decade, there has been a resurgence of interest in, and recognition of, the importance of ethics for school administrators (Beckner, 2004; Begley, 2006; Fullan, 2003; Rebore, 2001), and an increased demand for dedicated courses in ethics for school professionals (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Stefkovich & O’Brien, 2004; Whitaker, 2002). According to Dempster et al. (2002), data from a study of over 500 Australian school principals conducted during 1999-2000, found a lacking in ethical decision-making in professional development programs. The authors confirmed that the effects from a lack of professional development and the stress of ethical decisions were showing up in administrators as stress related illnesses and suggested training delivered through face-to face interaction with peers. Dempster and colleagues argued that effective ethics education should focus on learners achieving commitment to the analysis and evaluation of ethical problems as they occurred.
Concluding a four-year study of educational administration programs at over 25 schools of education, Levine (2005) issued a scathing report, “Educating School Leaders,” in which he denounced universities engaged in a “race to the bottom,” (p. 1). He argued that there was no typical school of education and that only two of the twenty-five schools of education offered any quality educational administration degree. He questioned how well schools of education prepared future leaders as he criticized universities for lowered standards and watered down programs with degrees cheapened as a result.

Levine (2005) avowed that educational administration was the weakest of all programs offered at education schools. He further criticized that the course of study for principals did little to prepare the person for the principalship. In a survey conducted to determine ethical preparation, the author found that of the participants who responded, only 53% took actual ethics courses. He estimated that over 40% of school leaders would leave their job in the near future, due to the demands of and unpreparedness for the job. Levine included several recommendations to better educational administration programs, such as programs grounded in high standards, a balanced curriculum, field experiences, and rigorous program evaluations. He concluded his attack with the suggestion to eliminate the doctorate of education in favor of a philosophy of education degree more aligned to the rigor of a law or MBA degree.

Recent events in Texas were determined by Fossey and Shoho (2006), as another indication of the growing dissatisfaction regarding the nation’s educational leaders’
preparation by universities. The state legislature in Texas had proposed a bill authorizing school districts, not universities, to grant principal certification and to develop their own principal training programs, which would have made the state’s 40 educational leadership departments obsolete. The authors acknowledged the public skepticism about educational leadership programs heightened by highly publicized critiques like that of Levine’s (2005). Fossey and Shoho continued that not only had outsiders attacked educational leadership, but that attacks were coming from within the profession as well. Harsh criticisms of educational leadership preparation programs ranged from descriptions of embarrassing, to disastrous, to one of the weakest components in education. They suggested careful consideration of Levine’s criticisms and found some merit in the author’s recommendation to restructure the graduate level of educational leadership programs, more like those of law school or MBA.

In response to Levine’s (2005) report, the educational literature of the early 21st century placed principal preparation programs under indictment. By way of introduction, to the need for preparation, calls were then made for improving principal preparation programs (Ballenger, Alford, McCune, & McCune, 2008; Begley, 2006; Dempster et al., 2002; Leonard, 2007; Normore, 2004; Perez, Uline, Johnson, James-Ward, & Basom, 2008). The focus in this section will remain on the preparation of the principal for the role of leadership. Unfortunately, very little empirical work was conducted in this area. However, numerous articles and books described principal preparation and professional
development programs and suggested specific emphasis to guide the development of school principals.

Ballenger et al. (2008) substantiated the need for restructured principal preparation programs through a study of a redesigned program, which included an internship for principal candidates, competent faculty to prepare effective educational leaders, and aligned curriculum and assessments to measure mastery of skills taught in every course. The authors determined that innovative principal preparation programs featured selective admission processes, cohort groupings, increased field experiences, and problem-based learning. This type program was in direct contrast to prior programs with an open admissions policy, isolated lecture based courses, and limited field experiences.

Ballenger et al. (2008) used a comparison of follow-up survey responses from program graduates to analyze the differences in the diverse program features and outcome measures. Interestingly, the only survey question that came close to analyzing ethical training dealt with making decisions typical of an educational leader. The authors determined that changes in principal preparation programs were in response to the changing needs in public schools focused on the demands of accountability. Ballenger and colleagues concluded principal preparation programs should replicate their study. They also suggested that universities evaluate their own principal preparation programs to ensure meeting quality standards by producing educational leaders who positively impact student achievement.
Based on her ongoing work in principal preparation programs, Leonard (2007) questioned whether administrator preparation programs were effectively preparing candidates to fulfill the moral responsibilities of the public school setting. She agreed that administrator candidates were expected to meet program standards, but stressed that the effectiveness of the programs were compromised by administrators who were unprepared or unwilling to address the confrontation of daily ethical and moral challenges. The author suggested trends, evidenced in the United States and elsewhere, recognized the importance of the moral and ethical dimensions of effective leading. She further suggested that much work remained at the higher education level to ensure that newly designed teacher and leadership education programs reflected professional standards related to ethics and ethical decision-making. Leonard provided a framework for integrating values and ethics into higher education coursework through authentic learning experiences, autobiographical writing, action research, and case studies of the real-world ethical dilemmas of schooling.

In a review of six scholarly reports, Petzko (2008) examined recommendations by scholars similar to those of Art Levine (2005). Petzko surveyed 250 beginning principals and assistant principals to identify the knowledge and skill areas perceived important in their initial success. Participants used a 4-point Likert-type scale to rate criteria, according to importance, of 18 knowledge and skill domains in their level of preparation and success in that area. Beginning school administrators ranked human relations, personnel, educational leadership, and curriculum as the top four areas of need.
Interestingly, even with the increased demand for ethical leaders, ethics was not specifically identified among the 18 knowledge and skill domains. Petzko reported that a shortage of school administrators was more of a shortage of qualified candidates, as well as, a shortage of candidates interested in the long hours, increased accountability, and low salary of the position. The author concluded that with a return of only 77 completed surveys, the findings were not reported as an indictment of preparation programs. Rather, Petzko emphasized this as a call for each program to analyze the content and emphasis of their programs compared to what program finishers had to say about their preparation when first beginning as a school administrator.

Pijanowski (2008) conducted interviews of department chairs at 43 major research universities to determine the extent of the teaching of moral decision-making and ethics in each university’s educational leadership doctoral program. He found that 91% of the universities reported moral sensitivity included in their leadership curriculum through either explicit courses or integration methods. He acknowledged eight different methods of delivering moral instruction with case studies and in-class discussion the most frequent method of implementation. Pijanowski concluded that it was unclear “whether the increased attention given to moral leadership education was due to a result of accreditation standards, the public call for better moral leadership, or the presence of more scholarly articles on the subject” (p. 9).

Lauder (2000) addressed seven trends in principal preparation programs. She declared that the principalship was in a precarious position and determined that with
looming retirements there were not enough prepared knowledgeable and skilled professionals. Additionally, the author found that districts were having difficulty recruiting teacher-leaders to pursue another degree. Lauder avowed that principal preparation programs must appeal to and attract those educators with the potential and desire to lead. She suggested that effective redesigned principal preparation programs incorporated entrance requirements aligned with the demands of the job, cohort models, performance-based standards, individualization, and development and assessment of skills. Lastly, Lauder suggested that effective principal preparation programs evaluated their programs continuously, recognized needed changes, and implemented needed changes.

In a theoretical perspective on ethics and values as a component of professional preparation for school leaders, Normore (2004) declared that leadership was a moral task for educational leaders. He affirmed that an action taken by an educational leader implied a comment about how things should be done, defined as a moral action. Normore reviewed the literature inquiring into the integration of the study of ethics into leadership preparation programs, the incorporation of ethics in administrative decision-making, and the use of ethical rules and ethics by individuals in leadership positions. His search of studies conducted during the 1970s and 1980s revealed that for most of the twentieth century, implicit and unexamined values shaped leadership development. Universities had promoted social values in administrator training programs rather than assisting students to think critically about their own ethics. During that time, ethics were viewed as
a set of principles and reasoning strategies for problem solving, a subject of knowledge for administrators, or a way of viewing the world that affected one’s understanding of the work of an administrator.

Normore’s (2004) study confirmed a shift in the study of ethics and educational administration with a reconfirmed importance of ethics, morals, and values in educational administration in the changing political, social, and economic environment in education. Normore avowed, “Ethics and questions of ethics are inextricably woven into the fabric of what educational leadership is” (p. 3). He strongly supported the findings of scholars such as Starratt (2004), Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), who maintained that leadership preparation programs must deal with formal ethical concerns to prepare children to live and work in the 21st century.

Additionally, Normore (2004) made two explicit suggestions for revamping educational leadership principal preparation programs, which could develop morally competent school leaders. First, the author avowed that there existed a critical need to design or redesign ethics courses for leadership preparation. He proposed that ethics courses focus on the five ethical frameworks presented earlier in this paper. Normore confirmed that valuing and reflecting on the ethical frameworks was crucial for guiding decision-making. Secondly, he charged that admission standards needed to move beyond grade point averages and graduate record examinations scores for admission, instead applicants should present letters of recommendation and participate in structured interviews, which would ensure equity and diversity in the candidates. He further
suggested that universities apply the multi-dimensional frameworks during the application process to identify candidates worthy of acceptance into an educational leadership program. Normore concluded that if those working in schools expected to understand and embrace the diverse ethical values schools have traditionally respected, then, promoting ethical literacy through preparation training should be the expectation.

In summary, of the articles reviewed in the previous section, only two specifically addressed ethics. Although principal preparation programs were under fire to implement needed changes, the literature suggested that principal preparation programs were lacking in training in ethics and the ethical dilemmas encountered in schools. School administrators have an understood expectation of ethical behavior. The findings in the literature substantiated that belief as evidenced by little research on the implementation of ethics in principal preparation for ethical challenges. Appendix D summarizes the principal preparation programs.

*Ethical School Administrators*

School administrators face busy days filled with dilemmas and conflict (Harris & Lowery, 2004). School administrators are expected to resolve issues and to preserve the school’s culture and environment (Harris & Lowery, 2004; O’Neill, 2002), to work well with others, and are often called upon to be peacemakers (O’Neill, 2002; Weller & Weller, 2002). The school administrator recognizes ethical implications and knows how
to act with integrity and fairness, and is committed to ethical and legal behavior at all times (Glanz, 2004; Harris & Lowery, 2004).

School administrators are often unaware and unprepared for the growing number of daily ethical dilemmas. Stefkovich and Begley (2007) found that school administrators sought refuge in ethics when confronted with social issues. School administrators faced with dilemmas and challenged to make complex decisions, justified those decisions as made in the best interests of the student (Shapiro, 2006; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007; Stefkovich & O’Brien, 2004). Marshall (1993) maintained, “You don’t know what the right thing is all the time, but you do the very best that you can with each situation” (p. 32).

According to Harris and Lowery (2004), other than religion, no issue compared to values in education. They maintained that parents and educators did not share the same values of the right way to resolve issues, which created conflict. Begley and Stefkovich (2004) confirmed that value conflicts had always been present in educational administration to some extent, “however, value conflicts now seem to have become a defining characteristic of the school leadership role” (p. 134). School administrators needed to know conflict was natural but not always disruptive (Glanz, 2004; Marshall, 1993). Harris and Lowery (2004) acknowledged that value conflicts and ethical dilemmas were never between a good and a bad alternative otherwise, there would be no dilemma. Young (1995) concurred that the dilemma occurred when the choices were equally undesirable.
Although, there has been an awakening of international scholarly interest in the study of ethics in leadership situations within the past decade, Begley (2006) revealed several challenges associated with international scholars engaged in educational administration and moral literacy. One challenge was agreement with the vocabulary including the relationship between the terms used. The author suggested terms such as values, morals, and ethics used interchangeably led to debate regarding a philosophical, legal, pragmatic, theoretical, naturalistic, or social justice perspective of the definition.

Begley (2006) sustained that living in a global society was another challenge associated with international scholars engaging in the study of educational administration and moral literacy. Each ethical scholar’s work reflected the distinct social contexts of their country as each scholar approached the study of ethics from a variety of foundational perspectives. The author revealed that some ethical philosophers or theorists grounded in philosophy focused on basic meanings associated with the terms. Others focused on moral orders and the adoption of the right values. Still others focused on the values of educators; however, those values were not necessarily the values of the profession, community, or society, which often resulted in conflicts and dilemmas. Begley suggested that the potential for misuse of information regarding personal values led to more unresolved ethical questions. The author revealed that a final challenge in the study of ethics and authentic leadership was that of the dark side of leadership, which Blase and Blase (2003) also exposed in their book Breaking the Silence. Begley and
Stefkovich (2007) acknowledged that leaders should know their own values and ethical predispositions, as well as, become more sensitive to the values orientation of others.

In a previous work, Begley (2006) established that genuine leadership began with the understanding and thoughtful interpretation of valuation processes by individuals. Begley and Stefkovich (2007) suggested that values related to leadership practices as a guide for action in resolving ethical dilemmas. They further suggested a strategic application of ethics through ethical postures a school community adopted such as an ethic of community or an ethic of justice. However, Begley and Stefkovich cautioned, strategic adoptions of ethical postures might not be ethical, as leadership tools, for supporting decisions made or actions taken. They suggested that most current leadership development programs emphasized the importance of ethics. However, they argued that was not enough. Their findings indicated that school administrators employed ethics as a guide when confronted with situations of high stakes urgency when consensus was impossible.

Begley and Stefkovich (2007) acknowledged merit in ethical actions through ethical frameworks such as an ethic of community, best interests of the student, or authentic leadership, but pointed out, that preparation programs needed careful selection of such metaphors to make ethical leadership understandable. Although more for teacher education preparation, the authors suggested that Nucci (1987) offered three principles relevant for the college sector. Nucci’s first principle proposed moral education focused on issues of justice, fairness, and human welfare. His second principle suggested moral
education programs integrated within the curriculum and concluded with a third principle that addressed negotiating ethical postures in preparation coursework.

Shapiro and Hassinger (2007) analyzed the Multiple Ethical Paradigm of Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) in addition to Gross and Shapiro’s (2004) Turbulence Theory. Shapiro and Hassinger determined that the use of multiple ethical paradigms and turbulence theory allowed for ethical decision-making in case studies based on Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) under NCLB. They suggested that AYP under NCLB shortchanged students raised in deprived conditions. The authors contended that those students were not given the necessary tools and concepts to solve ethical dilemmas faced in life. Instead, students raised in deprived conditions received intensive instruction in remediation of basic skill based coursework. They argued that under the ethic of care and justice, AYP was neither fair nor just. They continued that under the ethic of the profession, AYP and NCLB required school administrators to follow the law, while violating personal codes of ethics. They acknowledged that universities expected to help students grow into leaders who worked to solve the problems of the world. Yet, as the world became more complex and difficult, likewise it became increasingly difficult for school leaders to reach solutions that did not develop into other problems.

Shapiro and Hassinger (2007) suggested case studies as a way to frame ethical dilemmas, but agreed that a criticism of case studies was that their use did not allow for replication of the emotions of an actual case. They suggested implementing a theoretical concept to replicate emotions through the rational problem solving and evaluation of
ethical dilemmas using emotional perspectives to overcome the limitations of case studies. The authors concluded that the multiple ethical paradigms and turbulence theory not only provided school leaders with tools to be rational problem solvers, but they also could be utilized in other areas to remedy injustices of the past.

**What Ethical School Administrators Do**

There was much research on ethics, teachers, and school leaders, but there were few studies on school administrators and their dealings with dilemmas in their daily work environment (Blase & Blase, 2003; Cummings et al., 2007; Harris & Lowery, 2004; Howe, 1986; Mahoney, 2006; Marshall, 1993; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). Ethical situations constantly bombarded school administrators in their daily work (Campbell, 2003; Shapiro, 2006; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007). Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) granted that situations in schools could be complicated and frequently required ethical decisions. The school administrator’s own race, ethnicity, religion, social class, gender, age, as well as personal beliefs, value system, and ethics influenced the outcome of each situation (Harris & Lowery, 2004; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005).

Marshall (1993) found, despite a lack of training, that school administrators attested to having a precise set of ethical values. In contrast, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) emphasized that most school administrators did not have a defined ethical reasoning framework used when making an ethical decisions. Shapiro and Stefkovich
found resurgence in the importance of ethics for educators in the past few years. They stressed the significance of training in the ethics of justice, critique, and care. According to Shapiro and Stefkovich, the four paradigms to use during ethical situations are the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession. Shapiro and Stefkovich determined that dilemmas in schools were complicated and naturally led to the use of two or more paradigms to solve problems. Supporting that thought, Fullan (2003) confirmed that one of the greatest strengths needed, especially during troubled times, was a strong sense of moral purpose. Fullan defined his idea of moral purpose as a school administrator who led a deep cultural change that led to the commitment of everyone to improve the learning of all students.

According to Dempster et al. (2002), school administrators made decisions daily with no policies or law to help or guide them. They found that school administrators determined the right thing based upon personal ethics and values. School administrators reached decisions that were right, fair, just, and good while dealing with competing demands and values characteristic of contemporary pluralistic societies. Dempster and colleagues identified the most frequent and troublesome circumstance school administrators had to deal with were conflicts between the school and values taught at home. Dempster et al. concluded conflicts over issues concerned with the best interests of the student often led to ethical dilemmas between school administrators, teachers, and parents.
Although her study focused on superintendents, not school based administrators, Marshall (2008) found that superintendents stated they thought about ethical leadership as they made decisions based on the best interests of the student. Superintendents admitted that some decisions were made to protect themselves or others, while other decisions were made to draw attention to specific needs. For example, all of the superintendents reported hesitation when cutting programs that affected students, knowing the decision would result in professional backlash or potential support for more funding for their educational programs. She found that superintendents mentioned personnel issues as their toughest ethical dilemma followed by making decisions in the name of what was best for the student. Marshall acknowledged in her study of twenty-one participants, that women have a different way of leading than men, and recommended further study on the leadership of women administrators.

Ethical issues concerned the daily work and private conduct of school administrators. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) found that even into the latter half of the 20th century, various communities practiced dismissal of educators for conduct outside of school (McBroom v Board of Education, 1968). According to Shapiro and Stefkovich, there had been a strong move away from communities monitoring educators’ private lives. Yet, even the most liberal communities have higher expectations for those who worked with their youth.

In summary, ethical leaders exhibit concern for themselves and for those in the organization. Ethical leadership inspired followers to pursue the values, morals, and
ethics of the leader. Ethical leaders are concerned with issues of justice, equality, and trust. School administrators are concerned with the teaching and learning of all students. School administrators adhered to ethical standards such as those of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) or the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLAC). Standard five addressed ethics indicating that candidates who completed leadership programs were educational leaders with the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner. School administrators developed personal and professional values that reflected a code of ethics. Appendix E summarizes the findings on ethical leadership.

Summary of Ethics

Ethical dilemmas are a part of everyday life in schools. Ethical dilemmas test the personal, professional, and ethical values of school administrators. School administrators, found caught in the web of ethical decision-making, are required to make value judgments about doing or saying the right thing. Each situation causes the school administrator to draw from core values and personal beliefs to resolve the ethical dilemma.

Ethics are also a part of everyday life in the professions of business, medicine, law, and education. The professions of business, law, and medicine require students to take at least one ethics course. According to Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), the field of educational administration has no such ethics requirement. Consensus indicates that
ethics education is needed for ethics coursework for business, medical, legal, and education majors. The debate regarding implementation of ethics education in educational administration programs continues to divide the scholars and philosophers of ethics.

Assistant Principals

There was much research available on the history of the principalship (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Cranston et al., 2003; Dempster et al., 2002; Lauder, 2000; Wagner & Simpson, 2009). Many books flood the market on becoming a principal (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Mahoney, 2006; Robbins & Alvy, 2004; Starratt, 2004). Likewise, there are numerous journals and articles about the principal, but rarely does someone become a principal without first serving as an assistant or vice principal (Barker, 1997; Begley, 2006; Buser et al., 1991; Daresh, 2004; Fossey & Shoho, 2006; Glanz, 2004; Hartzell, 1993; Lauder, 2000; Levine, 2005; Normore, 2004; Petzko, 2008; Rebore, 2001; Weller & Weller, 2002). However, as substantiated by Glanz (2004) there was little information available on the assistant principalship.

There was very little said about the AP’s job in university training programs and almost nothing said about it in professional books or journals (Buser et al., 1991; Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002). Few, if any, books address the unique needs of prospective and practicing assistant principals (Glanz, 2004). Supporting that thought, Harris and Lowery (2004), found that only eight of 756 professional articles published
from 1993-1999, focused specifically on the assistant principal. Assistant principals serve in one of the least researched and least discussed positions in the school system today (Weller & Weller, 2002).

**History of the Assistant Principalship**

Historically male leadership, encouraged by a ‘good ole boy’ network that filled administrative positions with friends and protégés while largely ignoring qualified women and minorities, dominated school administration (Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Harris & Lowery, 2004). During most of the nineteenth century, “loosely structured decentralized ward boards” controlled schools, with superintendents and principals having little if any authority over curricula or programs (Glanz, 2004, p. 2). Then, during the late nineteenth century, educational reformers began transforming schools into organized efficient systems. Daily control of schools slowly transferred from ward boards to the local superintendent.

As school enrollment increased during the first few decades of the twentieth century, the local superintendent, overwhelmed by the rapid growth, needed assistance with the day-to-day operations of schools. Thus, “the role of the principal teacher emerged” (Glanz, 2004, p. 2). Although, the principal teacher had little authority over the supervision of teachers, the daily operations of the school became the primary responsibility of the principal teacher.
Around 1920, the “superintendent appointed principal teacher was relieved of all teaching duties and became known as the Principal” (Glanz, 2004, p. 3). The primary duties of the principal were to assist less experienced teachers in instruction, curriculum, and classroom management. There were no criteria for the selection of the principal. The appointments for the position were at the whim of the superintendent, in return for expected obedience and loyalty.

Schools continued to increase in numbers and the student population continued to grow rapidly during the 1930s. The number of principals doubled and the principal began to assume more managerial duties and less supervisory duties. This created the need for an assistant for the day-to-day supervision of the classroom. Two groups of supervisors emerged during this period, “the general supervisor and the special supervisor” (Glanz, 2004, p. 4).

The general supervisor, usually a male, was selected to assist the principal in the administrative logistical operations of the school, and helped “prepare attendance reports, collect data for evaluation purposes, and coordinate special school programs” (Glanz, 2004, p. 4). The special supervisor was usually a female. Women, generally, were more accepted by the teachers, as the superintendent and principal supported the thought of that period of time, that the general supervisor position was no place for a woman.

By the mid 1930s, the role of the special supervisor became obsolete. This possibly was due to the views and attitudes of the time that men were managers and women were to be managed by men. The general supervisor, most of whom were male,
had become the principal’s primary assistant. The principal’s assistant was selected by the principal, from the teachers in his school, to assist in the administrative duties of the school. During the following decade, the position of the principal’s assistant became that of the assistant principal.

**Role of the Assistant Principal**

It is difficult to define the role of the assistant principal (Buser et al., 1991; Daresh, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002). No one description, or universal definition, or clearly defined job description of the position of the assistant principal exists. Rather it is some combination of that which is assigned, expected, and assumed (Buser et al., 1991; Daresh, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002).

Being an assistant principal is a demanding time consuming role. It is also a very frustrating role. According to Daresh (2004), one “enters into a gray world where they are no longer a classroom teacher, as a teacher will tell you very quickly, but also you are identified as only the ‘assistant principal’ by other administrators” (p. 3). Daresh continued:

The main reason why I believe your service as an assistant principal might be one of the more difficult educational jobs that a person can do. Teachers know what they are supposed to do each day—they teach—and principals are hired to lead, or at least ‘run the school.’ Counselors counsel. Assistant principals on the other
hand, do a lot of things that do not appear on the list of normal, routine activities of any school (p. 5).

Weller and Weller (2002) affirmed that the position of the assistant principal is between that of teachers and principals, which contribute to the difficulty in the role of leadership for the assistant principal.

The assistant principalship originated as an administrative function primarily to handle routine administrative tasks, custodial duties, and discipline, not leadership responsibilities (Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Harris & Lowery, 2004; Kessor, 2005; Weller & Weller, 2002). Throughout the history of the assistant principalship, instructional duties have not been an expectation of their responsibilities. Kaplan and Owings (1999) granted that AP’s have administrative responsibilities, as well as the responsibilities to manage student discipline, student safety, and school climate issues. However, the two most time consuming and frequent tasks for assistant principals are “discipline and paperwork” (Daresh, 2004; Harris & Lowery, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002). Marshall (1993) asserted that the “media portrays assistant principals as a buffoon or chauvinist moron who walks around with the big stick of discipline and is the hammer guy” (p. 1).

Harris and Lowery (2004) acknowledged, “Despite the move to empower assistant principals to become school leaders, little research has been done in this area” (p. 2). The authors continued, “School principals are generally identified as leaders (visionaries) and assistant principals are more likely to be seen as managers (nuts and
bolts oriented)” (p. 5). Continuing that thought, Weller and Weller (2002) affirmed, “Leadership is an ability to get things done and in schools the principal assumes the role of the leader who inspires and motivates others and the assistant principal assumes the role of the manager” (p. 4).

According to Weller and Weller (2002), managers pay attention to detail. They get things done and are organized. They reward, praise, and secure resources for others to do their work. Managers learn how to use the bureaucratic structure to their advantage—they bend the rules for some and not for others. Managers are responsible for effective and efficient task accomplishments of others. Like managers, effective assistant principals are “highly organized and knowledgeable in time management techniques” (Weller & Weller, 2002, p. 31). The authors concluded that assistant principals who desire to make the transition from manager to leader not only have to “see the big picture but also develop and implement a plan to improve it” (p. 31).

In her study seeking to understand how assistant principals operate within the context in which they serve, eight high school assistant principals participated in observations and in-depth interviews about their work in their school with Mertz (2000). Mertz found that all eight aspired to become a principal at some point in their career, although some of the participants knew they would become ‘career assistant principals’ as described by Marshall, Mitchell, Gross, and Scott (1992). None of the eight assistant principals aspired to the role of a career assistant principal, although two of the assistant principals no longer desired to become a principal either due to health concerns or
because “he was now making almost as much as the principal without all the aggravation” (Mertz 2000, p. 6). Two of the assistant principals desired to become principals, but only within certain parameters regarding the type of school they were willing to be the principal. Discipline, assigned by the principal, was one of the major duties, in addition to hall duty and cafeteria duty. Each assistant principal knew who was in charge. Even when the assistant principals spoke of working as a team, they acknowledged the principal set the rules. Three themes emerged from the study of the assistant principals: the principal as boss, the structural/managerial nature of duties, and the zone of independent authority.

*Principal as Boss*

The literature supports the idea of the principal as boss (Daresh, 2004, Mertz, 2000). Daresh affirmed the assistant principal has an obligation to defer the most challenging decisions to the principal. Daresh acknowledged that the principal is legally and ethically responsible for all that happens in the school. Even earlier studies by Marshall (1993) supported the idea that assistant principals have a behind-the-scenes work mode that seldom provides tangible rewards, honors, or promotions. Mertz noted that assistant principals “accept the notion of the principal as boss, accept it unquestioningly and placidly, as a given, and more, to speak of it as a right, appropriate” (p. 8).

Assistant principals, for the most part, are former teachers. Teachers learn compliance as one of the socializing forces of the organization of schools. Weller and
Weller, (2002) suggested that voluntary compliance by subordinates of those in formal leadership positions, such as that of the principal and assistant principal, as “zones of indifference, or situations where orders are followed without question” (p. 67). Compliance is often viewed as a form of loyalty. Daresh (2004) stated, “The assistant principal owes the principal discretion and loyalty” (p. 72). Prior support of that view of loyalty surfaced when Covey (1990) stated, “One of the most important commitments in a family or business is never to bad-mouth” (p. 46).

**Structural/Managerial Nature of Duties**

Assistant principals define their job by the duties they are assigned (Mertz, 2000). Yet, most of the duties assigned to the assistant principal do not prepare them to be principals. In his earlier studies of the duties assigned to assistant principals, Hartzell (1993) established that the assigned duties did not adequately prepare assistant principals for the principalship, nor was there any indication that the work involved specialization of duties. Mertz revealed, when she asked principals what they would do if they were aspiring assistant principals, the principals responded they would want to do everything as an assistant principal. However, Mertz concluded those very principals did not follow their own advice in their schools when assigning duties to aspiring assistant principals.

**The Zone of Independent Authority**

Mertz (2000) defined the zone of independent authority as those actions that assistant principals take when they go beyond what is assigned or expected, yet it does not violate any established norms. This is the place where assistant principals derive
personal meaning and satisfaction from their work, where assistant principals “try to make your own world, to get things to fit what you value, think is right and how it should be” (Mertz, 2000, p. 12). Assistant principals who fulfill their assigned duties and have the freedom to take on other roles and duties experience the zone of independent authority. Usually, this was when the assistant principal wanted to change the way things were done or change things that were not quite right.

Assistant principals who step into this zone of independent authority do so knowing that ultimately without the support of their principal, most likely little if anything will change at all. Bolman and Deal (2003) acknowledge that any significant change in an organization creates conflict. Assistant principals who aspire to further their career must make critical decisions when attempting to create change that violates the norms of standard behavior for their position (Mertz, 2000).

Mentoring Assistant Principals

In a study on the effects of mentoring assistant principals, Cantwell (1993) suggested that specific mentoring could provide a firm foundation for developing much needed communication between the assistant principal and the principal regarding the leadership role of the assistant principal. Cantwell noted that assistant principals “tend to feel powerless and isolated professionally when compared to the principal” (p. 52). She determined that those feelings greatly intensified the more professional education the assistant principal had completed.
Cantwell (1993) developed a questionnaire to measure assistant principals’ perceived distribution of time concerning seven administrative functions derived from the literature. The author also implemented structured discussions with educational administrators concerning the assistant principal’s role. The results of her study indicated that both assistant principals and principals thought the assistant principal should spend significantly more time on instructional supervision and curriculum development. Interestingly, the results indicated that assistant principals thought they should spend significantly less time on clerical and organizational duties, but the principals did not significantly support that thought. Cantwell posited that the difference in the findings of significance in the clerical and organizational duties had to do with the perceived duties of the role of assistant principal. She concluded that principals had a clearly defined ideal for the assistant principal, but this ideal was not that of the assistant principals.

Kaplan and Owings (1999) surmised that assistant principals could improve and expand their skills by working closely with a principal as a mentor. They affirmed that mentoring allowed opportunities for the assistant principal to effectively prepare for the role of principal. Mentoring provided not only meaning to their jobs, but also provided opportunities for assistant principals to conduct leadership activities, practice new skills, and to receive feedback. Mentored assistant principals learned to reflect on the role of the principalship and their desire to continue the pursuit of the position.

Bloom and Krovetz (2001) suggested that mentoring or an apprentice relationship could help with the shortage of qualified principal candidates. As a result of the apparent
need for assistant principals to have an apprenticeship, the authors sponsored a series of gatherings in California entitled” Growing our Own” (p. 12). They revealed that contrary to popular belief, building mentor-apprentice relationships did not burden principals. Not surprisingly, those principals who engaged in the mentoring relationships reported finding themselves reflecting upon their own practices and as a result growing more effectively as leaders. The results of this study implied that one way to overcome the approaching principal shortage was to “establish explicit mentor-apprentice relationships within existing organizational structures. Everyone benefits when we build leadership within our own ranks” (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001, p. 14).

Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) confirmed that some assistant principals have difficulty when they change careers from teacher to an administrator. Some new assistant principals struggle giving up the known role of teacher in exchange for the unknown role of assistant principal. In support of the aforementioned authors’ findings, Glanz (2004) suggested that new assistant principals (AP’s) are not prepared to assume the roles and responsibilities of the position because graduate school training deals little if any at all with matters of how to handle discipline and administrative duties such as lunch duty.

Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) gained insight into the preparation of future school leaders as they made recommendations for role socialization, mentoring, and capacity building. The authors surmised that role socialization involved the assistant principal learning and reflecting on field based experiences, gaining confidence through leadership and administrative activities, and assuming professional self-confidence. They
further suggested that mentoring, when carefully constructed and implemented, served as an effective tool for professional development for the aspiring assistant principal and the veteran principal. Browne-Ferrigno and Muth concluded that an incredible opportunity for capacity building, through sharing between the assistant principal and the principal, led to the development of a community of practice in which steady improvement was the ultimate goal.

Shortage of Assistant Principals

School populations continued to increase, while at the same time the number of principals reaching eligibility for retirement, either through years of service or age, also continued to increase. In his review of the literature, Barker (1997) found that of 1,179 elementary and secondary principals and assistant principals who responded to a prior survey, 39 percent indicated intentions to retire by 1995. An additional 39 percent indicated plans for retirement by 2003. Only ten percent planned to retire as late as 2007. Barker suggested that those figures were inaccurate, that the actual retirement rate for those in the 30-years-of-service category indicated 50 percent retire the first year of eligibility with a quarter of the remaining 50 percent retiring each year thereafter, leaving fewer than 10 percent of the original retirement group in those positions in their 34th year of service.

Additionally, assistant principals, teachers, and counselors, who once desired the role of the principalship, are no longer seeking this position as they observe the demands
and expectations that now consume the principal. Barker (1997) acknowledged that students in educational administrative programs are interested in leadership roles but not as a principal. Demands from parents, few status or financial incentives, a shift in the role from manage to change agent, and teachers’ lack of understanding of the administrator as an instructional leader influence future principals’ decisions not to pursue the principalship.

Kessor (2005) reaffirmed that the “shortage of willing and qualified candidates for principal positions is a serious problem in education” (p. 66). One reason cited by participants in her study of assistant principals was paperwork. Other reasons cited as inhibitors of becoming a principal were bureaucracy, potential litigation, standardized tests, and salary. In a study of high school assistant principals, Pellicer and Stevenson (1991) determined that insufficient pay and little hope for advancement were major deterents for those qualified to seek the position of assistant principal.

Pellicer and Stevenson (1991) declared that the role of the assistant principal must evolve into a legitimate career status. The authors noted that the position traditionally was regarded as an entry-level administrative position, but that the demands of the role and the fact that those employed in the position earned less than they would as teachers, made attracting qualified applicants difficult. The authors suggested a career ladder established that would make the position of assistant principal more attractive to the young and talented aspiring leadership roles. One suggestion was to establish levels of the assistant principalship, such as an assistant to the principal for the novice, extending to the title of
executive vice-principal, reserved for those with a significant amount of experience and responsibility.

Supporting that thought, Barker (1997) found trends, which explained the increasing difficulty in finding qualified candidates for the principalship. Barker suggested, due to smaller candidate pools, that there are fewer students in educational administration preparation programs. Barker posited that the position has become less attractive due to greater demands of accountability. Finally, Barker suggested there are more openings in the principalship due to increased retirements of the baby boomer generation of principals.

The Path to the Principalship

The path to becoming an assistant principal or principal varies. A study completed in Australia by Blackmore, Thomson, and Barty (2006) addressed the principal selection process in two Australian states. Blackmore et al. (2006) argued that the process is a “technology that reproduces dominant forms of principalship” (p. 298). Australia instituted a merit selection process, linked to equity during the 1980s, where each school became responsible for the selection of their principal. Blackmore and colleagues pondered a definite decline in the number of applicants in the principal selection applications. Several factors emerged, notably the current merit selection process, which had produced much disenchantment among perspective applicants. Upon further inquiry, it was determined that applicants felt the selection process was ‘prone to error’ and those
conducting the interviews did not fully understand quality responses to the questions. It was also determined that there was a trend for selection of the incumbent assistant principal for promotion within a school over an outside principal applicant. One unexpected factor of this in-house promotion resulted in the selection of women as the principal over an outside male applicant. Yet, the newly appointed assistant principal was invariably male and would soon follow as the principal, returning the system to one of almost all male principals. Blackmore and colleagues concluded that the selection process created situations where incumbents groomed successors who resembled themselves and the prospects for the principal selection process in need of reform.

Stepping Stone to the Principalship

There was a time in the not-too-distant past, when the assistant principalship was not accorded much attention in the literature or on the job. The AP was simply regarded as someone employed, if the school’s enrollment justified it, to take some of the burden off the principal. According to Glanz (2004), the assistant principal is one of the “undervalued and unacknowledged and unseen elements that contributes to an effective and efficient school” (p. 2).

Many view the position of the assistant principal as a stepping-stone to the principalship (Barker, 1997; Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Glanz, 2004; Kessor, 2005; Marshall, 1993). There is an “assumption that an energetic and motivated assistant principal should try to move up the career ladder” (Marshall et al., 1992, p. 3). Harris and Lowery (2004) noted that there are nearly 17,000 AP’s in the United States and most of
them plan to become a principal. Daresh (2004) suggested that people pursue the position of the assistant principal for many reasons, but for most, it is a necessary step towards becoming a principal.

On that note, Marshall et al. (1992) implemented intensive field studies to examine the assistant principalship and career mobility. Marshall and colleagues found that the assistant principals, in their study, viewed the position as a transitional one in which to learn skills and prove oneself. The authors revealed assistant principals often face moral and ethical choices. Marshall and others continued that the assistant principal’s decisions during those demanding choices affected their future careers. Loyalty errors, which included failure to support their principal, defiance of district policies or orders, and publicly questioning superiors, were considered errors, which prevented an assistant principal from advancement.

Many assistant principals desire to advance to the position of principal (Glanz, 2004; Marshall et al., 1992; Pellicer & Stevenson, 1991). Anyone who stays in the AP role too long is considered a fool or a failure (Glanz, 2004; Marshall, 1993). Although most aspire to the position of principal, many assistant principals are content with their position and realize that they have no desires to pursue the principalship, and become known as career assistant principals.

*Career Assistant Principals*

Career assistant principals are those administrators who recognize the importance of being able to come to grips with personal values and priorities needed for the
remainder of their educational career (Daresh, 2004). Marshall (1993) acknowledged career assistant principals have a willingness and a commitment to making things work. Not every assistant principal will become a principal. Marshall determined that the career assistant principal is a people person. She noted that the career assistant principal has the knowledge and desire to help young people grow and develop.

Furthering thoughts of the assistant principal as a caring person, Marshall, Patterson, Rogers, and Steele (1996) studied 50 assistant principals from throughout the United States. Marshall et al. (1996) argued that an “ethic of caring is needed in leadership, if the purpose of educators is to nurture children and to teach them to be caring, moral, productive members of society” (p. 272). In an analysis of extant data, Marshall et al. confirmed that most educational administration research focused on those administrators with the most power and authority, the principal and superintendent.

Instead, Marshall et al. (1996) determined that career assistant principals (CAPs) exhibited many of the caring behaviors Noddings (2003) described in her ethic of care framework. The career assistant principals had made the choice to remain close to the students and teachers in their schools. The result of the authors’ study was an empirically based description of caring in administration. Marshall and colleagues concluded that the career assistant principal exhibited the characteristics of a good and caring administrator, as one who was connected, committed, and concerned, and was best described as simply “being there” when needed (p. 287). The authors recognized that career assistant
principals often damaged their opportunities for advancement by choosing to care about their schools and families over the principalship.

Marshall et al. (1992) garnered six identified categories, from case studies, in the assistant principal career process. Those categories were the upwardly-mobile assistant principal, the career assistant principal, the plateaued assistant principal, the shafted assistant principal, the assistant principal who considers leaving, and the downwardly-mobile administrator. The upwardly mobile assistant principal was characterized as one who is loyal to superiors, demonstrates a willingness to take risks, and most importantly has a network of colleagues who assist their goals. The career assistant principal was identified as either one who does not wish to be a principal, for personal reasons such as the time commitment from their family, or view their current position with pride as a pleasant environment in which to work.

The remaining categories of the career assistant principalship identified by Marshall et al. (1992) were perceived as a negative in the position. Marshall and others found, that the plateaued assistant principal desired promotion to the position of principal, in fact applied for the position, but was rebuffed, with no further opportunity for advancement. The shafted assistant principal had also plateaued, because of an inappropriate placement or district changes, not necessarily from being rebuffed like the plateaued assistant principal. Marshall and colleagues identified assistant principals who were young and had alternative career skills as the assistant principal who considers leaving. Lastly, Marshall and others revealed a reverse career trend known as the
downwardly-mobile administrator. The authors identified that some administrators, who no longer desired to be the principal, returned to the position of assistant principal. The reversals in position were not always a demotion, but were often voluntary due to health problems, a desire to put family first, a reflection of the time demanded by the position of principal, or in some cases a desire to return to a job preferred and enjoyed.

Challenges Assistant Principals Face

Assistant principals, as leaders, are expected to be of good character and to behave ethically. Being a leader has an understood expectation of one having flawless moral values and principles. Armstrong (2004) found that assistant principals are focused on “doing things right and tend to follow a rule-based egocentric morality, which is driven by personal needs and a desire to appear competent” (p. 4).

The “number one skill that is most essential to the effectiveness of an assistant principal is people skills, followed by good communication skills, knowledge of leadership theory, techniques for improving curriculum and instruction, teamwork and flexibility” (Weller & Weller, 2002, p. 14). Assistant principals with well-developed human relations skills do not resort to authoritarian behaviors that have negative impact on morale, job satisfaction, and respect of teachers (Weller & Weller, 2002). The effectiveness of the assistant principal depends on their interpersonal skills. “The assistant principal must also address the subtleties of influencing those above them in the
hierarchy to acquire the resources (and sometimes the authority) they need to influence and facilitate those below” (Hartzell, 1993, p. 710).

Assistant principals face busy days. They may feel an overwhelming responsibility to keep the school community safe (O’Neill, 2002). Assistant principals are often placed in the middle of ongoing conflicts (Harris & Lowery, 2004). Assistant principals are expected to revolve the conflicts safely, while preserving the school’s culture and environment (Harris & Lowery, 2004; O’Neill, 2002).

In a study of over 500 Australian school principals during 1999-2000, Dempster and colleagues (2002) confirmed a lack of professional development for school administrators in ethical decision-making. The authors continued that effects from the lack of professional development and the stress of ethical decisions are showing up in administrators as stress related illnesses. The authors acknowledged that elementary school principals and assistant principals make decisions daily with no policies or law to help or guide them. Dempster and colleagues confirmed that the administrator determined the right thing to do based on personal ethics and values.

Dempster et al. (2002) continued that the most common types of dilemmas requiring decisions of assistant principals are those that deal with harassment where students harassed, intimidated, or bullied others. They asserted that the type of dilemmas most disturbing for administrators were those dealing with possible cases of child abuse. The authors affirmed that conflicts over issues that deal with situations concerned with the best interests of the student often led to ethical dilemmas between principals,
teachers, and parents. “However, the issue of dealing with conflict between the school’s values, and the values taught to students at home was identified as the most frequent and most troublesome circumstance” to deal with (Dempster et al., 2002, p. 437). The authors concluded that situations requiring staff interventions, which may lead to possible dismissal of a teacher, cause assistant principals’ ethical tension.

Assistant principals need to know that conflict is natural, but it does not always have to be disruptive. Harris and Lowery (2004) acknowledged that assistant principals “confront problems and face many decisions each day” (p. vi). Assistant principals faced making the right decision must also determine what the right decision will be. The assistant principal is expected to recognize ethical implications and to know how to act with integrity, fairness, and to commit to ethical and legal behavior at all times (Harris & Lowery, 2004; Glanz, 2004).

Harris and Lowery (2004) affirmed, “Other than religion, there is no issue as value laden as education—parents and educators all do not share the same values of what is the right way to resolve issues which creates conflict” (p. 58). “Value conflicts and ethical dilemmas are never between a good alternative and a bad one—if this were so, there would be no difficulty” (Harris & Lowery, 2004, p. 59). Daresh (2004) best summed it as he concluded, “Being an assistant principal is often a real test of a person’s ability to demonstrate humility” (p. 53).
Summary of the Assistant Principalship

In summary, what is known about assistant principals’ ethical decision-making remains unresolved. The assistant principal research is one of the least researched and least discussed topics in professional journals and books focusing on education leadership (Harris & Lowery, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002). These are some of the reasons why definitive answers to the question regarding which ethical framework, including the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession, assistant principals’ use during ethical decision-making, so difficult to ascertain (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). Despite these concerns, it is both appropriate and possible to offer the following statements summarizing the findings from the literature review.

Chapter Summary

In the past few decades, there has been a resurgence of interest in, and recognition of the importance of, ethics for educational administrators and an increased demand for training courses in ethics for school professionals (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Stefkovich & O’Brien, 2004; Whitaker, 2002). Although most school administrators began their careers as teachers, the literature supported the view that ethics in teacher education is deemed important but is neglected. Fullan (2003) wrote that when questioned about ethics, future educators said it was probably a good idea, but that they had not thought much about it. Instead of actual courses in ethics, “most assumed that
moral responsibility for schools and the education of those in them to be a part of the educators’ *guiding credo*” (p. x).

The literature is still more robust with argument and rationale than with evidence of the effects of reform in school leadership and ethical decision-making. Most of the existing research is limited to case study designs, small sample sizes, and self-report methodologies. The large-scale quantitative studies that exist in leadership are more focused on business leadership, not assistant principals’ ethical decision-making.

Assistant principals are often unaware and unprepared for the growing number of ethical dilemmas. Assistant principals frequently are required to make value judgments about doing or saying the right thing. Assistant principals may find themselves caught in the web of ethical decision-making, and it is not always easy to decide the right option in different situations.

Ethics and ethical dilemmas confront school administrators daily. The literature suggests that although school administrators adhere to a personal and professional code of ethics, school administrators are unprepared for ethical challenges. Ethical dilemmas often test the personal values, professional values, and ethical values of principals and assistant principals. Each situation causes the educator to draw from their core values, race, ethnicity, religion, social class, gender, age, and personal beliefs, consciously or unconsciously to resolve the dilemma. Marshall (1993) concluded, “You don’t know what the right thing is all the time, but you do the very best that you can with each situation” (p. 32).
The literature also supported the view that educators are expected to behave ethically. Fullan (2003) posits an assumption of moral responsibility to be a part of the educators’ beliefs and principles. Ethical behavior for school administrators is one closely aligned to Shapiro and Stefkovich’s (2005) ethic of the profession. Although difficult to define the best interests of the student, school administrators who attempt to put the student first, exhibit ethical behavior.

Stefkovich and Shapiro (2005) noted that while dilemmas in educational institutions can be complicated, most educational leaders do not have a defined ethical reasoning framework they use when making an ethical decision. They suggested that an ethical reasoning framework, based on the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession, pave the pathway to resolving ethical dilemmas. According to Dempster et al. (2002), the issues facing school principals need to be resolved in the best interests of the student, by school leaders who attempt to reach decisions considered right, fair, just, and good, by the demands and values of our contemporary pluralistic society.

Elementary school principals and assistant principals make decisions daily with no policies or law to help or guide them. The administrator has to determine the right thing to do based on his or her own personal ethics and values. The literature suggests that, with looming retirements of the current baby boomer workforce in the principalship, there are not enough prepared, knowledgeable, and skilled assistant principals to fill the anticipated school principal shortages (Barker, 1997; Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Lauder, 2000; Petzko, 2008).
Ethics and leadership are inextricably interwoven. Ethical leadership is essential in leaders. Ethical leaders model the expected behavior. Trust, the foundation of a successful leader, is achieved through the leader’s ethical behavior. The ethical behavior of the follower is based upon the ethical behavior of the leader in the organization. The question remains whether ethical leadership is learned or if it is an inherent quality in some leaders and not others.

Educational leadership programs have a duty to prepare candidates to fulfill the moral responsibilities of the role of the principalship (Leonard, 2007). Effective educational leadership programs need to focus on ethical frameworks, crucial for decision-making (Normore, 2004). Starratt (2005) sums it up when he writes, “Being ethical means working with the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, and the heroic and prosaic side of any and all human beings” (p. 126). Evident is the need for a careful study of ethics and assistant principals’ ethical decision-making.
Chapter Three

Methodology

“The more he heard the less he spoke; 
The less he spoke the more he heard”
(Mother Goose Nursery Rhyme)

Introduction

A review of the literature has shown that researchers endlessly seek to understand how principals carry out their responsibilities (Begley, 2001; Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Cranston et al., 2003; Dempster et al., 2002; Denig & Quinn, 2001; Fullan, 2003; Rebore, 2001; Starratt, 2004; Strike, 2007). Yet one of the least researched and least discussed roles in educational leadership is that of the assistant principal (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Buser et al., 1991; Daresh 2004; Hartzell, 1993; Marshall, 1993; O’Neill, 2002; Weller & Weller, 2002). Much is known about elementary school principals’ ethical decision-making (Cranston et al., 2003; Dempster et al., 2002; Starratt, 2004). However, little is known about elementary school assistant principals’ ethical decision-making (Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 1994; Weller & Weller, 2002).
Organization of Chapter Three

The purpose of Chapter Three was to describe the methodology used to explore the purpose and research questions in this study. This chapter included the research design, instrumentation for the study, data collection and analysis, and a summary of the methodology. This chapter was organized in the following: (a) the problem and purpose of the study, (b) research questions, (c) population and sample, (d) design of the study, (f) design of the instrument, (g) data collection, (h) data analysis, (i) validity and reliability, (j) role of the researcher, and (k) summary.

Problem and Purpose of the Study

As evidenced in the literature review, assistant principals are one of the least researched and least discussed roles in educational leadership. More research is needed on assistant principals and their ethical decision-making processes. This study addressed the problem concerning the lack of research on assistant principal’s ethical decision-making. The purpose of this study was to examine public elementary school assistant principals’ ethical decision-making when analyzed through the conceptual lens of the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, and the profession (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994).
**Research Questions**

Consistent with the purpose and problem of the study, the following questions guided the investigation:

1. When presented with an ethical dilemma, which ethical framework, including the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession, do selected public elementary school assistant principals use for ethical decision-making?

2. What resources, other than the ethical frameworks of justice, care, critique, and the profession, do public elementary school assistant principals consult during ethical decision-making? (Ex: principal, other assistant principals, district policy).

3. How do public elementary school assistant principals describe their decision-making process during various ethical dilemmas?

**Population and Sample**

The purpose of the study was to examine which ethical framework, including the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession, public elementary school assistant principals’ use during decision-making (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). The participants for this study included a group of 80 public elementary school assistant principals. In order to reduce the number of participants to a reasonable size, purposeful sampling, not a probability sampling that leads to statistical inferences, but rather a
sampling that best lends itself to study the problem, was implemented (Patton, 1990; Creswell, 2007).

There was the possibility of snowball or opportunistic sampling during the study. Participants, who knew someone who fit the criteria, were given the opportunity to include that person in the study. This snowball or chain effect identified people who knew people who were good examples for the study (Patton, 1990). Specific criteria for the purposeful sampling of the participants for this study included: (1) the assistant principal was interested in participating in the study, (2) the assistant principal was currently employed in a public elementary school, and (3) the assistant principal had a minimum of one year of experience in the position.

*Design of the Study*

The design for this study was descriptive and implemented through survey research with a questionnaire designed to collect public elementary school assistant principals’ use of ethical frameworks during decision-making. This approach was selected for two reasons. First, as Glatthorn and Joyner (2005) noted, “Descriptive research is used to describe the characteristics of a population by directly examining samples of that population” (p. 101). Descriptive statistics primarily use surveys, interviews, and observations to report frequencies, averages, and percentages of an occurrence. Secondly, survey researched was used due to the exploratory nature of the
study and the recommended use of surveys for describing the practice of professionals (Portney & Watkins, 2000; Teeters Myers, 2007).

Survey research, developed during the years of World War II in social science, combined and included sampling, interviewing, attitude measurement or assessment, and content analysis (Withey, 1953). Miskel and Sandlin (1981) noted that, “Survey research is a planned method of data collection that involves entering a subject population and measuring a specific set of responses” (p. 1). Roche (1999) affirmed that survey research allowed the participants to freely express doubts, opinions, and memories without fear of reprisal.

Survey research provided descriptions, explanations, predictions of relationships through interpretation of participant facts, opinions, attitudes, and behaviors. Some of the strengths of an email survey research were that it was efficient and inexpensive, had a very rapid response, respondents were prevented from viewing or responding to other participants ensuring confidentiality, and the data were easily aggregated and analyzed (Dillman & Schaefer, 1998).

On the other hand, there were limitations to survey research, which must be addressed. Dillman, Phelps, Torotra, Swift, Kohrell, Breck, and Messer (2008) determined that the internet now gives researchers an option to traditional data collection of “telephone, mail, or face-to-face surveys” (p. 2). However, in a prior study, Dillman, Tortora, and Bowker (1999) addressed web surveys and the issue of generalizing the results. Dillman et al. (1999) found that there were four errors in web surveys, which
must be kept low for generalization of the findings, included non-response errors, measurement errors, sampling errors, and coverage errors.

Dillman et al. (1999) further determined that web surveys decrease measurement and non-response errors. Additionally, the authors suggested that participants preferred a plain survey format verses a fancy version, which also decreased non-respondent errors. Dillman and Schaefer (1998) affirmed that email was ideal for the first mode of contact in a survey, but acknowledged the concern that even though email allowed for a quicker return, participation in a survey would be exclusive to those with internet access. The authors suggested another limitation of survey research was that a Likert scale only allowed for approximations of responses, some participants may have had difficulty quantifying a decision as most like or least like one they might make. One final limitation mentioned was researcher bias. This researcher acknowledged, in the introduction to the survey, that the survey’s purpose was for a doctoral candidate’s dissertation.

Additionally, reliability was considered, as the responses were only written descriptions of the participants’ responses. Written descriptions do not always accurately reflect what a participant might actually do or feel about a situation. However, Roche (1999) found that using hypothetical scenarios and open-end interviewing questions, such as those used in this survey research, resulted in more definitive responses by the participants, as the scenarios recalled memories of similar situations previously encountered. Reliability increased through identification of a target group, such as that of public elementary school assistant principals. Multiple methods of collecting data such as
a Likert scale for rating responses, a ranking of choices, and open response questions contributed to the reliability of the survey (Abbasi, 2008; Roche, 1999; Trochim, 2006). A survey that was easily understood and could be completed in a reasonable amount of time also contributed to the increased reliability (Abbasi, 2008; Trochim, 2006). Lastly, Thomas (1999) acknowledged that surveys are an effective means of gathering information from educators.

**Design of the Instrument**

The instrument was designed on the conceptual framework for ethical reasoning of the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). The researcher developed a hypothetical scenario survey, after reading numerous hypothetical ethical dilemmas by authors such as Shapiro and Stefkovich, (2005) and Shapiro and Gross (2008). The instrument consisted of four hypothetical scenarios exemplifying dilemmas elementary assistant principals might encounter in their daily work.

Hypothetical scenarios are brief scenarios “which constitute an unobtrusive approximation of realistic situations which could elicit useful information about the participants’ thought processes” (Poulou, 2001, p. 50). Hypothetical scenarios can help school administrators become more aware of what is at stake when confronted with ethical dilemmas in their workplace setting (Dempster et al., 2002; Howe, 1986; McQueeny, 2006; Soltis, 1986). The use of hypothetical situations allowed participants
to be objective, reduced the personal connections that could taint the facts, and most importantly provided standardized examples, all of which added to the validity of the study.

The instrument was available in an online format for 80 public elementary school assistant principals for convenience and confidentiality. This method of surveying infringed upon their personal time the least and ensured anonymity for the participants’ responses. There were no identifiers indicating respondents other than demographic data.

The instrument consisted of a brief demographical section identifying the gender, age group, ethnicity, bachelor’s degree, highest degree earned, years of experience as an educator, and years of experience as an assistant principal. A second section consisting of four hypothetical scenarios exemplifying ethical dilemmas that assistant principals face in their daily work followed. The content of each hypothetical scenario reflected one or more of the four ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession.

The intended purpose of the instrument was to collect data regarding assistant principals’ decisions concerning four hypothetical scenarios, which included:

1. A first grade student found a pocketknife in his backpack and then showed it to other students on the bus.
2. A teacher had not followed a county procedure regarding a trade day certificate.
3. A teacher who had raised concerns suddenly retired, only to request a reference for employment in another county a few months later.
4. Parents of two third grade students accused the other student of bullying their children.

Each scenario included solutions with the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, or the profession embedded (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). Detailed directions instructed the participant to rate each solution using a five-point Likert scale rating. The Likert scale rating consisted of: one as not at all like what I would do; two as slightly like what I would do; three as halfway like what I would do; four as mostly like what I would do; or five as very much like what I would do for the solution in that dilemma.

A third section of the instrument instructed the participants to rank the importance of other resources assistant principals’ consult during decision-making. The participants ranked the other resources with one being the least important to five being the most important resource they might consult during decision-making regarding dilemmas such as those in the survey. The participants ranked resources such as seeking advice from their principal, calling another assistant principal, calling district personnel, checking district policy manuals, or the option of other which requested additional comments.

The fourth section of the instrument consisted of the option for additional comments. Participants, who selected the option other as a resource for consulting during dilemmas, were afforded the opportunity to share their thoughts and decision-making processes regarding each specific dilemma. This anonymous method of data collection
removed any apprehensions or concerns with an interview about a subject as personal as ethics and thought processes during decision-making.

The fifth section of the instrument consisted of three open response questions, which allowed the participants to discuss their ethical decision-making and thought processes regarding barriers to ethical decisions, pressing issues in school leadership, and the design of an ethics-training program. Lastly, participants were offered the opportunity to participate in follow-up telephone interviews. Directions requested those interested, to email to the researcher their contact information, regarding optional participation in a telephone interview for further discussion of their decision-making. The finalized instrument was available electronically. The Hypothetical Scenario Survey is presented in its entirety in Appendix F.

Data Collection

Data for this study was both quantitative and qualitative. A researcher-developed electronic web survey gathered the data. An electronic survey provided anonymity, was convenient to administer and analyze, and was unobtrusive as it removed any fear of reprisal or criticism (Portney & Watkins, 2000). The results from the scenarios and other resources provided the quantitative data, while the open response questions provided the qualitative data. There was also the potential for additional follow-up telephone interviews with self-selected participants.
Quantitative Data Collection

Descriptive statistics were implemented as a basis for collecting the quantitative data (Glatthorn & Joyner, 205). Detailed directions instructed the participant to rate each solution from one to five, with one being the solution that is not at all like what I would do, to five being the solution that is very much like what I would do, as a choice they might make in that situation. Additionally, assistant principals ranked other resources they might consult during decision-making with one being the least important to five being the most important resource they might consult during decision-making. The assistant principals reflected on each dilemma as they ranked resources such as seeking advice from their principal, calling another assistant principal, calling district personnel, checking district policy manuals, or the option of other which requested additional comments.

Qualitative Data Collection

A second source of data was collected through open response questions on the survey. During the hypothetical scenario survey, public elementary school assistant principals participated in open response questions regarding other sources they might consult during decision-making. Assistant principals shared their thoughts regarding their decision-making process during the various ethical dilemmas, as well as, through additional open response topics such as barriers to ethical decisions, pressing issues in school leadership, and the designing of an ethics-training program.
Data Analysis

The data analysis process consisted of a quantitative analysis of the participants’ survey responses. The data analysis process also consisted of qualitative analysis of the participants’ open response statements. Additionally, there was the potential for qualitative data analysis of optional follow-up telephone interviews.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis of the data identified the ethical framework, including the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession, most frequently implemented during the decision-making process (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). The data was entered into a Microsoft Office Excel 2007 spreadsheet, and then imported into Statistical Analysis Software 9.1.3 (SAS) for further analysis. The first step in the quantitative data analysis of the data used descriptive statistics. An analysis of the data by SAS using a `proc freq` procedure revealed the frequency of selection for each solution. A `proc univariate` revealed the mean, median, and mode for each solution. The results from the survey data allowed for a quantitative or numeric description of attitudes or opinions of a sample population (Creswell, 2007). A histogram displayed the final quantitative data for the survey analysis.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data generated from open response questions based on the decision-making that public elementary school assistant principals implemented during ethical dilemmas. When the survey process was completed, Creswell’s (2007) five-step
process was implemented to analyze the qualitative data. The researcher began the qualitative analysis through coding the open response statements. Reading and rereading the open response statements identified patterns and allowed the emergence of themes from the data. “The qualitative inquirer engages in the activity of coding, a procedure that disaggregates data, breaks it down into manageable segments, identifies those segments, compares, contrasts, and categorizes them” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 117). Triangulation of the qualitative data was implemented, as the open response statements were compared with the survey quantitative data in an effort to establish an understanding of public elementary school assistant principals’ ethical decision-making. This triangulation of the quantitative data with the qualitative data allowed the researcher to support any findings from the data collection.

A general description of the themes emerged through becoming familiar with the survey data, through making logical associations with the open response statements, and through reflecting upon what was learned from the statements. The findings were retold in the researcher’s words with the liberal use of the participants’ descriptions of their decision-making process. Direct quotations and supporting details from the open response sections were incorporated in the findings. The findings effectively illustrated the decision-making and thought processes of the participants. Rich description of the findings gave support for transferability, which allows other researchers to apply the findings of the study to their own.
Validity and Reliability

The study incorporated qualitative and quantitative strategies for data collection. The instrument was a researcher-developed survey. The researcher followed the advice of author Susan Thomas (1999) from her book, *Designing Surveys That Work! A Step-by-Step Guide* in developing the survey especially the manner in which the respondents rated their solutions for each hypothetical scenario. A five-point Likert scale measured the frequency and degree of the participants’ response for each hypothetical scenario solution.

The survey was based on adaptations of scenarios faced by public elementary school assistant principals. The researcher originally sought input from two noted authors regarding clarity and validity of the survey. The potential contributions of the noted authors would validate each of the four hypothetical dilemmas and the solutions to ensure that each solution embedded one of the four ethical frameworks. The survey was reviewed by a panel of experts consisting of a noted author in the field of educational leadership ethical dilemmas, currently employed or recently retired principals and assistant principals, and the researcher’s doctoral committee members. A copy of the letter seeking input from the panel of retired principals and assistant principals is found in Appendix G.

The researcher received specific assistance from Dr. Jacqueline Stefkovich, a distinguished author and researcher, in the field of educational leadership and ethics. Dr. Joan Shapiro and Dr. Jacqueline Stefkovich authored *Ethical Leadership and Decision*
Making in Education (2005), which featured ethical scenarios for implementation in educational leadership coursework. Dr. Jacqueline Stefkovich was provided an electronic copy of the survey. Dr. Stefkovich validated the survey and confirmed the identified ethic correctly embedded in the solution. Dr. Stefkovich suggested improvements in the wording of the hypothetical scenario solutions especially those focused on the ethic of critique. The feedback from Dr. Stefkovich was incorporated into the survey. Appendix H contains Dr. Stefkovich’s communication for the hypothetical scenario survey.

The panel of principals and assistant principals determined that the scenarios accurately reflected ethical dilemmas assistant principals encounter. One retired principal stated, “The situations are so very real. They are just exactly like those we dealt with at my school.” A retired assistant principal from the panel replied,

The situations caused me to reflect on my own practice. As I read each scenario, I thought about former students and wondered if I had made the decision that really was in their best interest or if I had made decisions that were easiest for me.

The researcher received specific guidance and input from the committee members. Specific concerns such as leading questions were addressed. Additionally, demographic information was revised to allow the researcher to determine that participants met all of the criteria for the study, thus preventing data tainted by a respondent other than public elementary school assistant principals.

The instrument was field tested by a group of five assistant principals familiar with this study who volunteered to participate in the survey. Their results were not
included in the final survey data. Although, the survey was available electronically for those five participants, the feedback from the field test was provided to the researcher in person. A pilot study of the survey was administered to 57 Master’s level educational leadership students and their feedback incorporated in the survey.

In an effort to establish validity and reliability, a Cronbach’s alpha was conducted with the pilot study data and again with the assistant principal data. A Cronbach’s alpha is a test of internal consistency or an average correlation that gauges the reliability for a given test (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). Cronbach’s computation of alpha is based on the reliability of a test relative to other tests with the same number of items measuring the same construct or hypothetical variable (Santos, 1999). A test of Cronbach’s alpha yields reliability through statistics with ranges from 0 to ±1 with 0 indicating no correlation and ± 1 indicating a perfect correlation between the items.

One concern with a Cronbach’s alpha for this type survey involved the number of items. As the number of items in a survey increases, the Cronbach’s alpha also increases (Gliem & Gliem, 2003; Santos, 1999). The parameters of this researcher-developed survey were restricted in the number of response items. Thus, a factor analysis or inter-item correlation, which is descriptive information about the correlation of each item with the sum of all the remaining items, was administered to determine the final overall reliability of the Cronbach’s alpha (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). According to Gliem and Gliem (2003), when using Likert-type scales, it is important to “calculate Cronbach’s
alpha with summated scales for internal consistency, because Cronbach’s alpha does not provide reliability estimates for single items” (p. 88).

Therefore, a Cronbach’s alpha was computed with the summated scales. The pilot study data with 51 participants yielded a reliability value of an overall alpha of -0.9 and the assistant principal data with 37 participants yielded an alpha of -0.6, thus satisfying alpha requirements set forth by Santos in 1999. Santos (1999) cited Nunnally (1978) regarding the desired reliability coefficient of ± .7 or higher, in social science research, however, lower thresholds are sometimes used in the literature. Lastly, the researcher’s dissertation committee members reviewed the revised scenarios and solutions, the open response questions, made suggestions, which were then incorporated in the survey, contributing to the validity of the instrument. Based on analysis of the pilot study, the field test, the input from the panel of experts, the suggestions from Dr. Stefkovich, and the suggestions from the researcher’s committee members, modifications were implemented until the hypothetical scenarios, the solutions, and the directions were clear.

**Role of the Researcher and Ethical Considerations**

The researcher gathered input from a panel of experts consisting of public school principals and assistant principals regarding clarity and validity of the survey directions and hypothetical scenarios. A pilot study of the survey instrument was administered to two master’s level educational leadership cohorts. Willing participants provided the researcher feedback regarding clarity of directions and discrimination in the scenarios.
Additionally, five elementary school assistant principals field-tested the survey. The researcher incorporated the feedback into the survey instrument.

The researcher received assistance and input from Dr. Jacqueline Stefkovich, distinguished author and leader in the field of educational leadership and ethics. A copy of the survey was emailed to Dr. Stefkovich, who promptly replied with assurances of her input. The advice from Dr. Stefkovich, concerning the validity of the survey and that each identified ethic was correctly framed in the solution, was incorporated in the survey. A copy of the correspondence with Dr. Stefkovich is included in Appendix H.

The instrument was administered in a manner that provided complete anonymity for the respondents. The survey was available electronically for participants without identification of individual participants. Each participant followed written directions to complete the survey. As previously stated the hypothetical scenario survey is included in Appendix F.

The following steps were taken to assure the participants of the researcher’s highest ethical intentions. Anonymity was assured with no participants indentified other than with optional demographic data. All participants were given complete anonymity and were assured of ethical treatment through their consent to participate in the survey. Complete disclosure was included in the survey overview concerning the intent and purpose of the proposed study. Although the known risks associated with participation in the study were minimal, participants were informed of their right, to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were informed of the potential benefit their
participation would contribute to the profession of educational leadership, specifically
that of the assistant principal and ethical decision-making. Additionally, the researcher:

1. Created pseudo identities for potential interview participants to ensure
   complete anonymity.
2. Disaggregated the survey data.
3. Sorted and coded the open response narratives looking for identifiable
   themes regarding assistant principal ethical decision-making.
4. Wrote the descriptive narrative, which was a combination of the analysis
   of survey data and the open response data.

The researcher followed all IRB requirements for USF for the participants in the
study. The data were available for the researcher to reference as needed. All data will be
stored in a locked safe in my home for a period of five years, at which time; it will be
disposed through incineration.

Summary of the Methodology

This chapter explained the methodology in the study of assistant principals’
ethical decision-making. The problem and purpose of the study and the research
questions were restated. The research design, instrumentation for the study, data
collection and analysis procedures were included. Chapter Four presented the results and
analysis of the data obtained.
Chapter Four

Analysis of the Data

“You don’t know what the right thing is all the time, but you do the very best that you can with each situation” (Marshall, 1993, p. 32)

Introduction

This chapter reported the findings of the study. The chapter began with the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the research design. The chapter included the study sample and the selection criteria for the study. The demographic data and instrumentation were offered. The chapter also described the data collection procedures used in the study. An analysis of the data is presented followed by a brief summary of the findings.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine public elementary school assistant principals’ ethical decision-making when analyzed through the conceptual lens of the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, and the profession (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). Assistant principals are one of the least researched and least
discussed roles in educational leadership. Included is a lack of research on ethics and assistant principal’s decision-making.

**Research Questions**

Consistent with the purpose of the study the following questions were addressed in the study:

1. When presented with an ethical dilemma, which ethical framework, including the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession, do selected public elementary school assistant principals use for ethical decision-making?

2. What resources, other than the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, and the profession, do public elementary school assistant principals consult during ethical decision-making? (Ex: principal, assistant principals, district policy, district office, or other).

3. How do public elementary school assistant principals describe their decision-making process during various ethical dilemmas?

**Research Design**

The design for this study was descriptive and implemented survey research to gather data regarding public elementary school assistant principals’ use of ethical frameworks during decision-making. Descriptive statistics primarily use surveys,
interviews, and observations to report simple statistics such as frequency of an occurrence in quantitative terms. This study implemented descriptive statistics with frequency to describe responses from the hypothetical survey and to provide data summaries. Secondly, due to the exploratory nature of the study, survey research is recommended for describing the practice of professionals because it gathers data about their thoughts and behaviors (Portney & Watkins, 2000; Teeters Myers, 2007).

**Study Sample**

Purposeful sampling identified assistant principals interested and willing to participate in this study. The study included the opportunity for snowballing or opportunistic sampling, meaning that participants who knew someone who fit the criteria were given the opportunity to recruit that person for the study (Patton, 1990). The initial number of assistant principals contacted was 80, but they were invited to snowball, which makes it unknown how many assistant principals were actually contacted for the survey. This number was reduced to a reasonable size of 59 potential participants who responded to the online survey. Based on the selection criteria, there was a response rate of 46%, with 37 elementary school assistant principals included in the study.

**Selection Criteria for Participants for the Study**

Specific criteria was implemented for the inclusion of the participants in the study in order to learn more about public elementary school assistant principals’ ethical
decision making. The criteria for selection of a public elementary school assistant principal were: (1) the assistant principal was interested in participating in the study, (2) the assistant principal was currently employed in a public elementary school, and (3) the assistant principal had a minimum of one year of experience in the position.

There were 22 survey participants not included in the data analysis. Those participants consisted of four high school assistant principals, eight middle school assistant principals, two K-12 assistant principals, two private school assistant principals, and one charter school assistant principal. Additionally, five of the initial participants did not select any solution for the four dilemmas, thus they were not included in the final data analysis. Thirty-seven participants or 46% met the specific criteria for the study.

Demographic Data

There were 37 participants included in the study with 28 female and nine male responding. Twenty-five of the 37 participants indicated their ethnicity as White, non-Hispanic. Eight participants indicated their ethnicity as African American, three as Hispanic, and one as Asian. Initially, 59 participants responded to the survey. Twenty-two participants did not meet the specific criteria for the study.

The average age of the participants was in the 30-39 year old range with 35 of the participants completing the age category. Two of the participants did not indicate their age group. Thirteen participants, who indicated an age group, were in the 30-39 years of
age group, 14 participants were in the 50-59 years of age group, and the remaining eight participants were in the 40-49 years of age group.

The average number of years of experience as an educator was 17 years with a range of 4 to 38 years. The average number of years of experience as a public elementary school assistant principal was four years with a range of 1 to 13 years. Seven of the participants had completed one year as an assistant principal and one participant had thirteen years of experience as an assistant principal.

All of the participants had a minimum of a Master’s degree. Two of the 37 participants had completed two master’s degrees, four participants had completed a specialist degree, three participants had completed a doctorate degree, and one participant was in the midst of writing a dissertation proposal. Appendix I contains details of each participant’s demographics.

Instrumentation

The data were gathered through an online researcher-developed survey. The survey, based on the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession, was designed upon the conceptual framework for ethical reasoning developed by Dr. Joan Shapiro and Dr. Jacqueline Stefkovich, in their book *Ethical Leadership and Decision Making in Education* (2005). Advice from experts in the field, such as Dr. Stefkovich, the researcher’s committee, and retired principals and assistant principals contributed to the validity of the survey. A Cronbach’s alpha was administered with data from a pilot study.
conducted with Master’s level university students, which further contributed to the validity and reliability of the survey.

The survey consisted of four hypothetical scenarios, illustrating ethical dilemmas assistant principals encounter at work. Participants rated solutions with one of the ethics of justice, critique, care, or the profession embedded. Participants then ranked other resources they might consult when dealing with ethical dilemmas. Open response questions allowed participants to further share their decision-making process.

Data Analysis

A five-step process was used to analyze the data from the surveys. First, an electronic version of the survey was emailed to all public elementary school assistant principals in a highly populated county in the Tampa Bay area. Next, the researcher monitored the response rate for the surveys. The researcher then created a raw data grid presented in Appendix I. This data grid included the demographic data and the responses of each participant for the four scenarios. The frequencies of solutions selected for each scenario were calculated. Lastly, the summated frequencies for each ethical framework were displayed in tables by hypothetical scenario. Consistent with the purpose of the study, the primary focus of the analysis was to determine which ethical framework public elementary school assistant principals use during ethical decision-making. Appendix I displays the demographic data, participant responses, and a histogram of the results.
Presentation of the Findings of Research Question 1

The following section presented the research question followed by a brief overview of each hypothetical scenario. The data followed each hypothetical scenario overview. The first hypothetical scenario, Riley and the knife, considered issues of zero tolerance policies versus marginalizing the economically disadvantaged. The second hypothetical scenario, Carla and the Trade Day, regarded a breach of professional responsibilities versus equity dictating special circumstances. The third hypothetical scenario, Joanne and the recommendation, offered a potential violation of professional standards versus discrimination for a temporary mental disability. Lastly, the fourth hypothetical scenario, Third grade, presented concerns for advocacy for minority students versus potential bullying. Each hypothetical scenario is presented in its entirety in Appendix F.

Research Question 1

When presented with an ethical dilemma, which ethical framework including the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession do selected public elementary school assistant principals use for ethical decision-making?

Hypothetical scenario 1: Riley and the knife. Riley Smith, a first grade student, found his Tiger Cub Scout knife in his backpack while riding the bus to school. Riley showed his knife to friends on the bus and another student reported the incident to the assistant principal. Riley admitted the incident and promised to “never do it again.” The
assistant principal called Riley’s father, explained the zero tolerance policy for weapons and drugs, and informed Mr. Smith that Riley will be suspended from the bus for three days. Mr. Smith explained he cannot drive the children to school because he will jeopardize his job if he is late to work again. Mr. Smith asked the assistant principal to consider suspending Riley out of school one day rather than three days from the bus. This was not the usual consequence for this infraction based on the district’s zero tolerance policy. The participants rated four solutions regarding the assistant principal’s decision. Table 1 presents the findings for the hypothetical scenario concerning Riley and the knife.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethic</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13(43%)</td>
<td>3(10%)</td>
<td>7(23%)</td>
<td>4(14%)</td>
<td>3(10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13(40%)</td>
<td>4(12%)</td>
<td>3(9%)</td>
<td>8(24%)</td>
<td>5(15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11(32%)</td>
<td>6(17%)</td>
<td>5(14%)</td>
<td>5(14%)</td>
<td>8(23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12(35%)</td>
<td>4(11%)</td>
<td>6(17%)</td>
<td>5(14%)</td>
<td>8(23%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = Respondents, 1 = Not at all like what I would do, 2 = Slightly like what I would do, 3 = About halfway like what I would do, 4 = Mostly like what I would do, 5 = Very like what I would do.*

The solution with the ethic of justice embedded stated:

*Follow through with the three-day suspension, because that is the district’s recommended discipline consequence, and you follow all district policies to the letter.*
Three responses or 10% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of justice embedded. The findings indicated that 13 or 43% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of justice embedded.

The solution with the ethic of critique embedded stated:

*Call the district office and request leniency in the discipline consequence due to Riley’s age and the innocent mistake, because zero tolerance should be for severe violations. You also mention the potential financial hardship this would create for Riley’s father, if you follow the district’s discipline consequence.*

Five responses or 15% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of critique embedded. The findings indicated 13 or 40% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of critique embedded.

The solution with the ethic of care embedded stated:

*Decide that Riley will be given a one-day out of school suspension as suggested by Mr. Smith, even though this is not the usual discipline consequence.*

Eight responses or 23% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of care embedded. The findings indicated that 11 or 32% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of care embedded.

The solution with the ethic of the profession embedded stated:

*Give Riley a stern talking to and accept his promise ‘not to do it again.’ You and Riley think of a fair punishment for the discipline consequence. You also involve the guidance counselor and ask the school’s social worker to check on the*
Lastly, you involve the threat assessment team to determine if some intervention strategies need implementation. Eight responses or 23% were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of the profession embedded. The findings indicated that 12 or 35% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution the ethic of the profession embedded.

Hypothetical scenario 2: Carla and the trade day. Carla Edwards, a teacher attended training over the summer and earned a Trade Day certificate. Teachers who do not have a “trade day certificate” must attend training provided by the school district on the Monday before Thanksgiving. Carla cannot locate her certificate and will have to attend the district’s training or take a day off from work without pay. Carla planned to drive across the state in order to spend the week moving her ailing parents into an assisted living facility. Carla is the sole provider for her family and a day without pay would affect her financially. Carla walked into the assistant principal’s office and inquired if there is anything the AP can do to help with this situation. The participants rated four solutions regarding the assistant principal’s decision. Table 2 presents the findings for the hypothetical scenario presented in Carla and the Trade Day.
Table 2

*Frequency and Percentage of Participants’ Responses Within Each Ethical Decision-making Framework Used in the Hypothetical Scenario Carla and the Trade Day*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethic</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8(23%)</td>
<td>8(23%)</td>
<td>4(11%)</td>
<td>11(32%)</td>
<td>4(11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>14(40%)</td>
<td>2(6%)</td>
<td>5(15%)</td>
<td>6(18%)</td>
<td>7(21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9(25%)</td>
<td>5(14%)</td>
<td>3(8%)</td>
<td>7(19%)</td>
<td>12(34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8(24%)</td>
<td>9(26%)</td>
<td>4(12%)</td>
<td>7(29%)</td>
<td>6(18%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* n = Respondents, 1 = Not at all like what I would do, 2 = Slightly like what I would do, 3 = About halfway like what I would do, 4 = Mostly like what I would do, 5 = Very like what I would do.

The solution with the ethic of justice embedded stated:

*Offer Carla sympathy, but also inform her there is little you can do legally, because district policy mandates that teachers are to submit earned “trade” day certificates at least one month in advance of anticipated trade time off, and Carla clearly has not followed the procedure.*

Four responses or 11% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of justice embedded. The findings indicated eight or 23% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of justice embedded.

The solution with the ethic of critique embedded stated:

*Call the supervisor, explain the situation, and carefully state the inequities of the trade day policy when there are unusual circumstances surrounding a teacher’s life. You assure the supervisor that Carla was indeed at the training and should be allowed to secure a duplicate certificate.*
Seven responses or 21% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of critique embedded. The findings indicated 14 or 40% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of critique embedded.

The solution with the ethic of care embedded stated:

Assure Carla you understand the unusual circumstances in her life, and that you will agree to sign a letter written to the payroll office verifying Carla attended the training and request she be allowed to take the day off as a trade day.

Twelve responses or 34% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of care embedded. The findings indicated nine or 25% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of care embedded.

The solution with the ethic of the profession embedded stated:

Explain to Carla that the trade day process is a payroll requirement, not just a formality for paperwork, and that without meaning to she is putting everyone in to a position of committing a potential violation of professional standards, by asking to be allowed to take the day off without proper documentation.

Six responses or 18% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of the profession embedded. The findings indicated eight or 24% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of the profession embedded.

Hypothetical scenario 3: Joanne and the recommendation. The assistant principal is a first year administrator at an elementary school known for its high student achievement and parent involvement. Early in the fall semester, Joanne began to arrive
late to work, leave early, appears disheveled and confused. Joanne’s colleagues are concerned. The assistant principal scheduled a conference with Joanne, only to receive a phone call stating Joanne had submitted retirement paperwork, would not be back at school, and would use her sick days for a substitute teacher until the retirement was officially processed. Three months later Joanne applied for a teaching position with another district. The assistant principal just received an email from Joanne, stating she is seeking employment in the nearby district, and that she needs the current AP to give her a good employment evaluation. The previous assistant principal completed Joanne’s evaluations stating she met all of the district’s minimum expectations. The participants rated four solutions regarding the assistant principal’s decision. Table 3 presents the findings for the hypothetical scenario presented in Joanne and the Recommendation.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert Scale</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11(32%)</td>
<td>8(24%)</td>
<td>6(17%)</td>
<td>8(24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11(32%)</td>
<td>7(21%)</td>
<td>9(26%)</td>
<td>5(15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8(22%)</td>
<td>5(13%)</td>
<td>2(6%)</td>
<td>10(28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7(20%)</td>
<td>6(17%)</td>
<td>4(11%)</td>
<td>9(26%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = Respondents, 1 = Not at all like what I would do, 2 = Slightly like what I would do, 3 = About halfway like what I would do, 4 = Mostly like what I would do, 5 = Very like what I would do.
The solution with the ethic of justice embedded stated:

*Decide not to mention anything about the concerns about Joanne. At this point you only have speculations and concerns prior to Joanne’s abrupt retirement. Her evaluations state she met all district expectations. You are aware that there are laws protection her privacy and if you were to violate those laws, you could face serious consequences.*

One response or 3% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of justice embedded. The findings indicated 11 or 32% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of justice embedded.

The solution with the ethic of critique embedded stated:

*Decide not to say anything about Joanne’s personal situation when you complete the reference. You determine this because equity would dictate that Joanne’s special circumstances must be taken into account as not to penalize an otherwise find teacher. You reaffirm that a previous administrator completed the evaluations indicating Joanne was a competent teacher.*

Two responses or 6% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of critique embedded. The findings indicated 11 or 32% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of critique embedded.

The solution embedded in the ethic of care stated:

*Call Joanne and explain that you have serious reservations about writing a letter of reference. You express your concern and understanding of the difficulties she*
has been through, especially the tremendous grief she has experienced. You then suggest she contact the previous administrator for the letter of reference, because many people have stated she was well respected in the school and community.

Eleven responses or 31% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of care embedded. The findings indicated eight or 22% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of care embedded.

The solution with the ethic of the profession embedded stated:

Call the personnel director in the nearby district and state that you prefer not to complete the employment evaluation, because you did not personally complete any evaluations about Joanne. You also share this decision with Joanne.

Nine responses or 26% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of the profession embedded. The findings indicated seven or 20% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of the profession embedded.

Hypothetical scenario 4: Third grade. Daniel Riggins, an African American male, has been in school three weeks and his grandmother has made five complaints ranging from the bus stop to the school’s tardy policy. She is certain her grandson, is being bullied, because he is the only African American in the class. Mrs. Johnson, the mother of the white female involved in the alleged bullying, is equally upset, that her daughter is being bullied by the African American boy. Both parents demand to know what the assistant principal is going to do about the alleged bullying in the third grade classroom.
The participants rated four solutions regarding the assistant principal’s decision. Table 4 presents the findings for the hypothetical scenario presented in Third Grade.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethic</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
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<td>6 (17%)</td>
<td>8 (23%)</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
<td>9 (25%)</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22 (65%)</td>
<td>9 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (9%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>10 (21%)</td>
<td>23 (66%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16 (41%)</td>
<td>10 (29%)</td>
<td>7 (21%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = respondents, 1 = Not at all like what I would do, 2 = Slightly like what I would do, 3 = About halfway like what I would do, 4 = Mostly like what I would do, 5 = Very like what I would do.

The solution with the ethic of justice embedded stated:

*Although this behavior is not bullying, it is unacceptable. Both children hurt the other, and you think that perhaps you should write a discipline referral for both.*

*You decide that an acceptable consequence will be for each student to write the other an apology letter.*

Six responses or 17% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of justice embedded. The findings indicated six or 17% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of justice embedded.
The solution with the ethic of critique embedded stated:

*Know that some of the problem has to do with the fact that Daniel is the only African American in the classroom. You will offer Mrs. Riggins the opportunity for Daniel to transfer to a classroom that has a teacher with prior experiences as an advocate for minority students. You want to be careful with how you present this to Mrs. Riggins, because she has made it clear that she feels that because of her race, there will be inequities to overcome, no matter the situation.*

One response or 3% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of critique embedded. The findings indicated 22 or 65% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of critique embedded.

The solution with the ethic of care embedded stated:

*Meet with both students separately on Monday morning and listen to both sides of the story. Then you will meet with the students together and discuss how to handle their differences in a more acceptable manner.*

Twenty-three responses or 66% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of care embedded. The findings indicated two or 5% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of care embedded.

The solution with the ethic of the profession embedded stated:

*Call the district’s anti-bullying office and talk to the director about the phone calls. You want an outsider to confirm whether this is determined bullying.*
One response or 3% indicated they were very likely to select the solution with the ethic of the profession embedded. The findings indicated 16 or 47% of those responding were not at all likely to select the solution with the ethic of the profession embedded.

**Presentation of the Findings for Research Question 2**

The following section presents a summary of the ranking of importance of resources assistant principals’ might consult during ethical decision-making. The resources were listed as their principal, other assistant principals, the district office, district policies, or other sources. The data are presented by hypothetical scenario.

**Research Question 2**

What resources other than the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, and the profession, do public elementary school assistant principals consult during ethical decision-making? (Ex: principal, other assistant principals, district policy).

**Hypothetical scenario 1: Riley and the knife.** The hypothetical dilemma involving Riley and the knife presented concerns regarding zero tolerance policies versus marginalizing the economically disadvantaged. The findings in Table 5 indicated 23 or 70% of those responding ranked consulting their principal as the most important resource during an ethical decision dealing with issues such as zero tolerance policies versus marginalizing the economically disadvantaged. When the data were collapsed for 4 = important and 5 = most important 88% of those responding indicated consulting their principals the most important resource during ethical decision-making. Additionally,
when the data for 4 = important and 5 = most important were collapsed, 58% of the participants indicated referring to the district policy as the second most important resource to consult during ethical decision-making. On the other hand when the data for 1 = least important and 2 = slightly important were collapsed 74% of those responding indicated consulting another assistant principal as the least important resource when dealing with a dilemma such as the one presented in Riley and the knife.

Table 5

Participants’ Ranking of the Importance of Other Resources for Consultation During Decision-making for the Hypothetical Scenario Riley and the Knife

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Resources</th>
<th>Ranking of Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call another AP</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult Principal</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call the District office</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refer to District policy</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = respondents, 1 = Least important, 2= Slightly important, 3=Halfway important, 4=Important, 5 = Most important.

Fifteen assistant principals selected the open response entitled other and shared additional resources not included in the predetermined selections. Six of the responding assistant principals stated the need to consider Riley’s prior discipline record before deciding upon a proper consequence for the incident with the pocketknife on the bus. The assistant principals indicated that Riley’s prior discipline record would influence their final decision. They also wanted input from his teacher as well. The assistant principals indicated that they felt uncomfortable following the district policy for what they
perceived as an ‘innocent mistake,’ yet there was concern with regard for not following
the district’s discipline consequence. One assistant principal noted they would, “use
common sense and find an alternative consequence, the child is only six years old.”

_Hypothetical scenario 2: Carla and the trade day._ The hypothetical dilemma
involving Carla and the trade day certificate presented the issue of a breach of
professional responsibilities versus equity dictating special circumstances. The findings
in Table 6 indicated 21 or 71% of those responding ranked consulting their principal as
the most important resource during an ethical dilemma of this caliber. When the data for
4 = important and 5 = most important were collapsed 83% of those responding ranked
consulting their principal as the most important resource during ethical decision-making.
On the other hand, 54% of the participants ranked consulting another assistant principal
as the least important resource when dealing with a dilemma such as Carla and the trade
day certificate. When the data for 1 = least important and 2 = slightly important were
collapsed 86% indicated consulting another assistant principal as the least important
resource during ethical decision-making.
Table 6

Participants’ Ranking of the Importance of Other Resources for Consultation During Decision-making for the Hypothetical Scenario Carla and the Trade Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Resources</th>
<th>Ranking of Importance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call another AP</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult Principal</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call the District office</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refer to District policy</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = Respondents, 1 = Least important, 2= Slightly important, 3= Halfway important, 4= Important, 5 = Most important.

Fifteen assistant principals selected the open response entitled other; however, only 7 included additional comments regarding the other resource they might consult during ethical decision-making. Four assistant principals replied that they would call the professional development department and ask for a check of the records for a duplicate certificate. According to one of the assistant principals, the trainers responsible for the trade day session are required to turn in a copy of the trade day certificate for each teacher who attends the training. One assistant principal replied, “This is a decision for principals to make so I would refer the teacher immediately to the principal.” Another assistant principal stated, “I would explain to Carla, that in the future as soon as her trainings are completed, to give the paperwork to the secretary immediately, avoiding this type situation in the future.”

Hypothetical scenario 3: Joanne and the recommendation

The hypothetical dilemma involving Joanne and the recommendation request, presented potential violations of professional standards versus discrimination for a
temporary mental disability. The data presented in Table 7 indicated 23 or 72% of those responding ranked consulting their principal as the most important resource during this type dilemma. When the data for 4 = important and 5 = most important were collapsed 85% of those responding indicated consulting their principal the most important resource during ethical decision-making. On the other hand, 33% indicated they would never call another assistant principal during decision-making. When the data for 1 = least important and 2 = slightly important were collapsed 62% of those responding indicated consulting another assistant principal as the least important resource when dealing with a dilemma such as that presented in Joanne and the recommendation request.

Table 7

Participants’ Ranking of the Importance of Other Resources for Consultation During Decision-making for the Hypothetical Scenario Joanne and the Recommendation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Resources</th>
<th>Ranking of Importance</th>
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<tr>
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<td>n</td>
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<tr>
<td>Call another AP</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult Principal</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call the District office</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refer to District policy</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = Respondents, 1 = Least important, 2 = Slightly important, 3 = Halfway important, 4 = Important, 5 = Most important.

Three assistant principals who selected the response entitled other included additional comments. One assistant principal stated, “I would speak to Joanne and let her know my concerns. I would then write her the letter.” In response to the other resource to consult during decision-making another assistant principal replied, “I’m not sure, but I do
not see any reason to call the district office.’’ The third assistant principal noted they
would ‘‘take Joanne’s entire career into context, say she did a great job, and move on.’’

_Hypothetical scenario 4: Third grade._ The hypothetical dilemma involving the
two third grade students presented the issue of advocacy for minority students versus
potential bullying. The data presented in Table 8 indicated 21 or 61% of those responding
ranked consulting their principal as the most important resource during a dilemma with
this concern. When the data for 4 = important and 5 = most important were collapsed 85%
indicated consulting their principal the most important resource during ethical decision-
making. When the data for 1 = least important and 2 = slightly important were collapsed
52% indicated consulting with another assistant principal as the least important resource
when dealing with a dilemma such as that presented with the two third grade students.
Additionally, when the data were collapsed for 1 = least important and 2 = slightly
important 46% indicated consulting the district office as least important during a dilemma
such as the one with the potential bullying with the third grade students. Perhaps the
specific training offered by the district on bullying might have created a disinclination to
seek district input on this issue.
Participants’ Ranking of the Importance of Other Resources for Consultation During Decision-making for the Hypothetical Scenario Third Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Resources</th>
<th>Ranking of Importance</th>
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<td></td>
<td>n</td>
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<tr>
<td>Call another AP</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult Principal</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call the District office</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Refer to District policy</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* n = Respondents, 1 = Least important, 2 = Slightly important, 3 = Halfway important, 4 = Important, 5 = Most important.

Ten of the assistant principals who selected the option entitled other included additional comments. Four of the assistant principals indicated they would involve the guidance counselor or the Olweus Bullying Team to work with the children. One assistant principal noted they would meet separately with the parents and their children. Another assistant principal stated, “I would speak with both children separately, then together, to discuss the situation. I would then contact their parents and let them know of the findings and consequences if any.”

**Findings of Research Question 3**

The hypothetical scenario survey also contained additional open response questions for assistant principals to describe their decision-making. Three additional topics posed as open response were the barriers to doing what is right during an ethical dilemma, the most pressing ethical issue in school leadership today, and the design of an
ethics-training program. The data were analyzed through Creswell’s (2007) recommended five-step process. First, each response was transcribed from the online survey verbatim. Secondly, the researcher read and reread the responses. Third, as themes emerged regarding ethical decision-making a color code was used to identify each. For example for the first question, comments and inferences to the barriers of doing what they thought was right, revealed barriers such as that of district policy which were highlighted in red. Additionally, the barriers of time were highlighted in orange and those of the principal were highlighted in green. Fourth, the color-coded responses were grouped accordingly. Fifth, summary statements were written conveying the assistant principals’ decision-making. The following presents a summary of the comments from assistant principals regarding ethics and decision-making.

Research Question 3

How do public elementary school assistant principals describe their decision-making process during various ethical dilemmas?

Barriers to ethical decision-making. Three themes, district policies, time, and the principal, emerged from the assistant principals’ comments to the question regarding ‘the barriers to doing what you think is right’. The most frequently mentioned barrier was school district policies. It was repeatedly noted by the assistant principals that, “policies do not allow for special circumstances.” An assistant principal criticized no tolerance policies stating “they are not a ‘one size fits all’ when dealing with elementary school age students.” A recurring comment regarding district policies was that “sometimes policies
or procedures are in place that do not allow for choices that one might normally make in that given situation.”

The assistant principals indicated that they struggle with the concepts of fairness and equity in regards to district policies as described in the following open response statements as one assistant principal noted, “So very many policies and rules.” Expressing reasons policies created barriers another assistant principal wrote, “My concern is with how far and to what letter of the law must policy be followed. You want to be just and use common sense.” Still another assistant principal voiced the concern, “There is a human side to all problems that sometimes needs to be understood before a decision can be made. Policy is so very broad without looking at what may be special causes.” One assistant principal acknowledged the problem with district policies and wrote, “Sometimes the district policies are not age appropriate and every situation has different and unique circumstances that need to be considered.” This statement was echoed by another who noted, “Sometimes my idea of doing what is right for the student does not correlate with Board policy.” Another assistant principal expressed concerns that following district policies created a barrier to doing what one thinks is right and wrote, Many people are overly sensitive or think everyone is ‘out to get, hurt, or pick on’ their child. Parents enable their children and many think that their child would never do anything wrong. This circumstance frequently requires re-teaching and taking a stand for what is ‘right’. Sometimes sticking to the letter of the law can
do more harm than good. Sometimes you have to bend a little in order to stand tall.

One assistant principal wrote, “When all else fails revert to the district policy. If that does not help, revert to the unbiased decision that you can live with,” in response to the barriers in ethical decision-making in schools today.

The assistant principals indicated a second theme or barrier in making ethical decisions was the time needed to protect the rights of all individuals. One assistant principal concerned with the amount of time dilemmas consumed commented, “Protecting the individual student is extremely important and it takes time to investigate student concerns.” Another assistant principal mentioned the issue of time needed to protect individuals during dilemmas as a barrier to ethical decision-making and wrote, “The time to thoroughly investigate both sides of the dilemma is a barrier, yet I feel I must investigate to protect those involved, as well as, myself.” Yet, another assistant principal noted the negative impact time has on ethical decision-making and wrote, “It takes time to thoroughly investigate an incident, which negatively impacts time spent elsewhere.”

A third barrier in the decision-making process that emerged from the assistant principals’ data was the need to include the principal in the decision-making process. The assistant principals indicated this need either slowed the decision-making or hindered their ability to make a decision without input or permission from their principal. An assistant principal fairly new to the job wrote, “Being fairly new, one year completed, I
think that it is important to understand district policy, but equally important to know that my principal will support the decisions that I make in regard to the situation.”

Another assistant principal concerned with being compared to his or her predecessor stated,

> The most common barrier that I have encountered is the history of what has been done in the past. I feel the need to find out what the previous AP did in a similar situation, because I am measured against him, and it takes time to investigate the concern and then time to talk with my principal, because without his support and input my decision will likely be overturned.

Still another assistant principal realized the necessity of consulting with their principal as a barrier to decision-making and wrote,

> Somewhat of a barrier is the fact that although the AP and Principal work closely together, in order to keep consistent and informed decision-making, consultation with the principal is necessary for major incidents at the school and this sometimes slows down the process of work during a dilemma for the AP.

*Ethical issues in school leadership.* Three themes emerged from the assistant principals’ comments to the question of the most pressing ethical issues in school leadership today. The themes were meeting the needs of the students and parents, policy versus common sense, and bullying. While equitable access to quality educational opportunities for all children was an underlying issue for the assistant principals, the most frequently mentioned ethical issue was meeting the needs of the students and parents as
assistant principal wrote, “Meeting the needs of the parents while trying to follow county
guidelines.” Another assistant principal echoed that thought and stated, “Meeting the
needs of students and staff in the most effective and efficient ways and at the same time
in the most ethical ways,” as the most pressing ethical in school leadership. One assistant
principal noted parental support was an underlying issue and that “different values
between the school and some parents” created difficulties during ethical dilemmas.

A second theme emerging as a pressing issue in school leadership today was one
of policy versus common sense. Supporting the concern of policy and common sense one
assistant principal wrote, “Using professional judgment and district policy. I believe that
a wide gray area exists between the two. Things don’t always seem to be as cut and dry
as policy makes it out to be.” Another assistant principal reiterated the issue of policy and
common sense and stated, “Not being able to use what is known as ‘common sense’
without being grieved or being called in to OPS.” In support of that comment another
assistant principal wrote, “A concern is being human and fair, yet upholding district
policy is a constant issue.”

Lastly, the theme of concern for bullying also emerged as a pressing ethical issue
in school leadership today. Assistant principals mentioned the underlying topics of
discipline, race related issues, and students not being responsible for their own behavior
as the contributing factors in the bullying issue. One assistant principal stated the bullying
problem was that, “Administrators either do not have the knowledge to address the issue
of bullying, or the administrators choose to ignore the concern, and then it becomes a bigger challenge.”

*Topics in ethics training.* The third open response question asked participants to consider what they would include in the design of an ethics-training program. Twenty-two of the participants gave input regarding the topics they would include in an ethics-training program. One overarching theme, which emerged from the assistant principals, was ethics in education and the factors in making an ethical decision versus professional expectations. Several assistant principals suggested an ethics-training program should include “using dilemmas to safely work through topics that may occur.” Topics mentioned less frequently to include in an ethics-training program were those of diversity and dealing with difficult parents.

Several of the assistant principals indicated ethics and ‘what defines ethics’ as the most important topic to include in an ethics training program. Responses repeatedly contained references to an ethics-training program that would define what is meant by ethics versus professionalism as defined by the code of ethics. Included in the design of ethics programs was training for administrators and teachers, indicated as necessary for an understanding of dealing with ethical dilemmas as one assistant principal wrote, “Every year, we review the ‘Code of Ethics.’ The needs vary each year based on the teachers’ interpretation of the ethics.” That thought was echoed by another assistant principal who stated,
We need training in the use of moral sensitivity and moral judgment when making decisions that affect children, parents, and teachers. Professionalism as defined by the code of ethics does not include the correct resources to deal with ethical issues or the factors in making an ethical decision. No one discusses the natural conflict between codes of ethics, district policies, and competing ethical values during decision-making.

One assistant principal summarized their thoughts on ethics training and noted,

I attend training through our Professional Standards Department, as part of the administrative training process, yet other than the directive to call OPS no one guides us in those day-to-day dilemmas that consume so much of our time, energy, and effort.

Another topic the assistant principals indicated to include in an ethics-training program was diversity. Dealing with diversity was mentioned as a contributing factor in many ethical dilemmas. One assistant principal expressed their thoughts on the design of an ethics-training program and ethical dilemmas as,

Diversity, understanding in dealing with students of different cultures. The critical importance of relationships in handling dilemmas is intensified when I am dealing with a diverse student body. I find myself being overly sensitive at times because I am uncertain if the underlying cause of the dilemma is one of a race issue or a cultural issue or an ethical issue. We need to look beyond race and how well you like the student and just consider the actions.
The third topic assistant principals would include in an ethics training program was that of dealing with difficult parents. Five of the respondents noted this as one assistant principal wrote, “How to handle difficult parents, especially when making decisions regarding ESE placements for students in crisis.” Other topics briefly mentioned to include in an ethics-training program were how to embed the teaching of ethics in the classroom and character training.

Summary of the Findings

The key findings of the hypothetical scenario survey indicated that the public elementary school assistant principals who participated in this study selected the solution with the framework of the ethic of care embedded most frequently when faced with an ethical dilemma at work. The assistant principals in this study relied most on their principal as an important resource during decision-making. The assistant principals in this study indicated a desire for training in ethical decision-making. This chapter presented the findings from the data of the study regarding assistant principals’ ethical decision-making. Chapter 5 presented the discussion and summary of the findings and the limitations of the study. Chapter 5 also included recommendations for future studies.
Chapter Five

Summary and Discussion

“There are no silver bullets in solving ethical dilemmas”
(Harris & Lowery, 2004, p. 60)

There is much research on ethics and principals and their ethical decision-making (e.g. Cranston et al., 2006; Dempster et al., 2004; Denig & Quinn, 2001; Fullan, 2005; Starratt, 1994). However, there is a dearth of research on assistant principals and their ethical decision-making (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Buser et al., 1991; Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 1994; Marshall, 1993; Weller & Weller, 2002). Little is known how assistant principals reach ethical decisions.

Many universities offer preparation programs to train individuals to become principals. Conversely, few universities offer preparation programs specifically to train individuals to become assistant principals. Yet, most principals begin their career in administration as an assistant principal, a position viewed by many as a stepping-stone to the principalship (Barker, 1997; Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Marshall et al., 1992; Marshall, 1993).

Ethical knowledge should provide the framework for the educator’s professional learning (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Beckner, 2004; Begley, 2006; Normore, 2004; Rebore,
Research implies that ethics is lacking in the educator’s professional preparation (Campbell, 2003; Howe, 1986; Johnson, 2007; Lee, 2006; Luckowski, 1987; Nash, 1991; Soltis, 1986; Watson, 2008). Consequently, assistant principals are often unaware and unprepared for the growing number of ethical dilemmas they face on a daily basis (Cranston et al., 2003; Daresh, 2004; Dempster et al., 2002; Glanz, 1994; Harris & Lowery, 2004; Marshall, 1993; O’Neill, 2002; Weller & Weller, 2002).

Problem and Purpose of the Study

Assistant principals are one of the least researched and least discussed roles in educational leadership. More research is needed on assistant principals and their ethical decision-making process. This study addressed the problem concerning the lack of research on assistant principals and their ethical decision-making. The purpose of this study was to examine public elementary school assistant principals’ ethical decision-making when analyzed through the conceptual lens of the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, and the profession (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994).

Research Questions

Consistent with the purpose and problem of the study, the following research questions guided the investigation:
1. When presented with an ethical dilemma, which ethical framework, including the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession, do selected public elementary school assistant principals use for ethical decision-making?

2. What resources, other than the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, and the profession, do public elementary school assistant principals consult during ethical decision-making? (Ex: principal, other assistant principals, district policy).

3. How do public elementary school assistant principals describe their decision-making process during various ethical dilemmas?

Population and Sample

The participants for this study included a group of 80 public elementary school assistant principals. There was the opportunity for a snowball or opportunistic sampling during the study, in that participants who knew someone who fit the criteria were given the opportunity to invite that person to participate in the study. Specific criteria reduced that number to 37 participants or 46% who responded to an online survey of hypothetical dilemmas assistant principals might encounter in their work day.
Instrument

The instrument was designed on the conceptual framework for ethical reasoning of the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). Included in the researcher developed hypothetical survey, were four scenarios which public elementary school assistant principals might encounter during their workday. Each scenario included four potential solutions, with the framework of the ethics of justice, critique, care, or the profession embedded. Participants rated the solutions using a Likert scale.

The intended purpose of the instrument was to collect data regarding assistant principals’ decisions concerning four hypothetical scenarios which included:

1. A first grade student found a pocketknife in his backpack and then showed it to others on the bus.
2. A teacher who had not followed a county procedure regarding a trade day certificate.
3. A teacher who had raised concerns suddenly retired, only to request a reference for employment in another county a few months later.
4. Parents of two third grade students accused the other student of bullying their child.

Additional sections on the survey gathered data regarding the assistant principals’ decision-making through open response questions. Also, assistant principals indicated the most important resource to consult during dilemmas for decision-making.
Discussion

This study asks important questions in an attempt to gather specific data regarding assistant principals’ decision-making during ethical dilemmas. Previous studies suggest school administrators use an ethical reasoning framework during decision-making (Beckner, 2004; Cranston et al., 2003; Dempster et al., 2002; Fullan, 2003; Marshall, 2008; Rebore, 2001; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 2004; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007). The primary findings of this study show the most frequent selection by the assistant principals was the solution with framework of the ethic of care embedded.

Ethical leadership, according to Brown et al. (2005), is defined by the actions of a leader who becomes the role model through ethical behavior. Branson (2007) found that people want leaders who act morally, cause no harm to others, and behave in ways that shows interest in the well-being of others as the motivation behind their leadership. With that thought in mind, school administrators, are held to higher moral standards than the public in general simply for the fact they work with children (Beckner, 2004; Begley, 2001; Fullan, 2003).

Previously, Rebore (2001) confirmed that educational leaders needed to study ethics because it provided a framework for ethical decision-making through a disciplined way of thinking. Supporting that thought, Begley and Stefkovich (2007) suggested that although leadership development programs emphasized the importance of ethics, most school administrators only employed ethics during high-stakes situations, when consensus is impossible. Ethical dilemmas, situations requiring a decision between a right
versus a right decision, are now so commonplace they have become the “bread and butter” of educational leaders’ lives (Cranston et al., 2006).

School administrators may rely on personal values and morals when dealing with ethical dilemmas (Fullan, 2003; Harris & Lowery, 2004; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). On the other hand, school administrators may use an ethical reasoning framework when making decisions (Marshall, 1993; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). An ethical framework is a basic assumption about beliefs, values, and principles used to guide choices (Starratt, 2004).

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) suggested an ethical reasoning framework based on the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession as a pathway to guide school administrators during resolutions for ethical dilemmas. Begley (2006) urged the ethical reasoning framework needed a specific sequence during decision-making. He suggested the sequence began with the ethic of critique for an understanding of the situation. Then logically following was the ethic of care for assessing the situation in a humane way. Lastly, was the ethic of justice for maximizing and respecting the rights of all involved in the situation. Thus, the suggested sequence of application of the ethical frameworks resulted in decisions made in the best interests of the student, the core value of the ethic of the profession.

The ethical frameworks shaping this study included the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1994). The discussion of the findings is presented in the following sections.
The Ethic of Justice

The ethic of justice traditionally focuses on rights and law, fairness and equal treatment. The ethic of justice requires treating others to standards of justice in all relationships. Queries concerning the interpretation of rules and laws, the concept of fairness, and recognition of social order emerge under the ethic of justice. The ethic of justice considers whether there is a law or policy, if not, should there be a law or policy, and if there is a law or policy should it be enforced. Ethical school administrators, who implement the ethic of justice attempt to maximize the benefits of the whole community, while striving to be fair, just, and respectful of the individual student during decision-making. Comments such as “look at his prior discipline record before deciding upon a proper consequence,” and “follow the district’s discipline consequence” suggested the ethic of justice is a consideration for the decision-making by the assistant principals in this study.

Gilligan (1983) and Noddings (2003) suggested that women focus more on the principle of care than justice. Interestingly, the evidence from this study, of mostly women assistant principals, shows some interest in the ethic of justice as a solution. Surprisingly though, the findings suggest assistant principals in this study appear to be more lenient with applying the ethic of justice towards teachers than students. Perhaps this is explained by the demographics indicating the assistant principals, relative novices in their position, relate to ethical situations more as a colleague than as an administrator. This may be explained by Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) who confirmed that some
assistant principals have difficulty transitioning from the known role of classroom teacher to the unknown role of the assistant principal.

Prior studies by Armstrong (2004), Hartzell (1993), O’Neill (2002), and Weller and Weller (2002), indicated assistant principals want to appear as confident rule and policy followers. Evidence in this study suggests the assistant principals wrangle with following district policy during decision-making through comments such as “so very many policies and rules,” or “my concern is with how far and to what letter of the law must policy be followed.” Then there is a refocus from justice towards critique and care with the statement, “policy is so very broad without looking at what may be special causes.” The statement, “Sometimes my idea of doing what is right for the student does not correlate with Board policy,” encapsulated the struggle assistant principals’ face during decision-making. The findings in this study signify a concern with following rules and policies, as well as, concern with nurturing students and caring for the individual during an ethical dilemma.

*The Ethic of Critique*

On the other hand, the ethic of critique is based on critical theory, which analyzes social class and inequities, which asks educational leaders to confront issues dealing with social class, gender, race, and differences. It raises queries such as who made the laws, who benefits from the laws and policies, and most importantly, who has power and who has been silenced. The ethic of critique questions the barriers of fairness regarding human rights, privilege, and power. The ethic of critique challenges the status quo, involves
social discourse, allows the marginalized a voice, and exposes inequities in society. An awareness of those inequities forces educators to rethink, redefine, and reframe concepts such as privilege, power, culture, and social injustice. School administrators who employ the ethic of critique confront moral issues benefiting some groups in society and failing others. It is interesting to note that the assistant principals in this study indicated a willingness to consider the ethic of critique as they questioned how to resolve each dilemma. One assistant principal wrote, “I need to make it fair to all parties involved. What you think is right is not always going with the conformity of everyone else. There are always three sides to every situation—both sides and the truth,” indicating the possibility of questioning an expected consequence. The comment from one assistant principal, “use common sense, and find an alternative consequence, the child is only six years old” indicated a consideration for the ethic of critique.

Assistant principals, for the most part are former teachers. Previous studies suggest assistant principals reluctant to question authority due to learned compliance as former teachers (Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Mertz, 2000; Weller & Weller, 2002). One assistant principal stated, “This is a decision for principals to make so I would refer the teacher immediately to the principal.” Hartzell (1993) suggests assistant principals’ struggle learning the subtlety of influencing the hierarchy above them while developing the authority ofilitating those below them. The findings allude to the supposition that being an assistant principal, with desires to become a principal, creates a hesitancy to question policies.
The Ethic of Care

Balancing the demands for justice and critique, the ethic of care shifts the focus from justice and critique to empathy and compassion. The ethic of care requires individuals to consider the consequences of their decisions by asking who will benefit and who will be hurt as a result of the decision. The ethic of care focuses on respect, care, nurturing, and relationships. Also rising under the ethic of care are concepts such as loyalty, trust, and empowerment. Emerging as a challenge to the patriarchal dominance of the ethic of justice, concerns of tenderness and femininity overshadow the ethic of care. School administrators utilizing the ethic of care try to balance nurturing and caring relationships in an attempt to meet the needs of the individual through questioning the effect of decisions on others. The ethic of care emerged as the dominate framework for the assistant principals’ solution throughout this study.

Noddings (2003) suggested that the job of schools is to care for children. In previous studies, Daresh (2004), Kidder, (1995), Lashway (1996), Marshall et al. (1996), and Mertz (2000) ascertain assistant principals as caring and compassionate people. The ethic of care emphasizes compassion and empathy for individuals rather than rights and laws. Assistant principals expressed compassion and empathy with comments such as “take her entire career into context, say she did a great job, and move on.” Other studies also confirm the assistant principal is a caring person, willing to go beyond the normal role of their duties in an attempt to resolve conflicts (Harris & Lowery, 2004; Hartzell, 1993; O’Neill, 2002; Weller & Weller, 2002). Comments
expressed regarding the age of the student, the innocent mistake with the knife in the backpack, and the potential financial hardship incurred by the family if the district’s discipline consequence was implemented, suggested caring.

Noddings (2003) acknowledged an ethic of care is perceived as a feminine ethic, but insisted an ethic based on caring is tough and not tender-minded. Traditionally, teaching has been dominated by women and considered by many as a feminine nurturing profession. Similarly, school administration has been dominated by businesslike men trained to be commanding with an understanding of the hierarchy of being in charge of subordinates. It appears the assistant principals in this study seem to relate to the dilemmas as nurturing teachers, which tends to reinforce the perception that a prevalence of feminism exists from the classroom to administration in the field of elementary education. Suppositions made from the findings suggests the assistant principals were not far removed from the classroom and tended to align their decision-making more as nurturing sympathizing classroom teachers than as compassionate empathizing administrators. Assistant principals in this study mentioned, “protecting a teacher’s former stellar performance,” and “explain to her that in the future turn in the paperwork immediately avoiding this type situation in the future,” as though protecting and caring for a student.

Vitton and Wasonga (2008) suggested that school districts searching for elementary school principals who make decisions encompassing high level of moral decision-making seek younger, moderately liberal, highly educated females. Although,
the demographics did not determine the participants as moderately liberal, the
demographics did indicate the majority of the assistant principals in this study as highly
educated, younger females, with limited experience as an administrator. One might
perceive that the assistant principals in this study are nurturing, reinforcing a feminist
perspective of teaching, with their selection of the ethic of care.

*The Ethic of the Profession*

Traditionally, professional ethics was more of an ethic of justice with specifics for
the designated profession. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) realized that most professions,
such as business, law, and medicine, have ethical requirements for their profession. The
authors suggested an ethic focused on serving the best interests of the students the moral
imperative of the education profession. However, they recognized that community
standards, personal codes of ethics, and professional standards might collide during
ethical decision-making.

Encompassing the ethics of justice, critique, and care, the ethic of the profession
focused on the best interests of the student. It is reflected in most educational professional
association codes. The prominence of the best interests of the student is also reflected
through Noddings’ (2003) ethic of care that placed students as the primary educational
focus. The ethic of the profession is also reflected through the ethic of critique that
promotes advocacy for the marginalized.

School leaders often refer to decisions made in the ‘best interest of the students,’
as justification for decisions that, upon closer scrutiny, actually reflect the ‘best interest
of the adults.’ Conversely, what defines the best interests of the student has yet to be clarified. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) suggests that decisions made in the best interests of the student are those “incorporating individual rights, accepting and teaching students to accept responsibility for the actions, and respecting students, also referred to as the three R’s of rights, responsibilities, and respect” (p. 25). Implementation of the ethic of the profession requires questioning the expectations of the profession, the expectations of the community, and the needs of the student during ethical decision-making. School administrators, who employ the ethic of justice, the ethic of critique, and the ethic of care, question the aforementioned expectations during dilemmas as they position students at the heart of the ethical decision-making process.

Evidence shows assistant principals in this study closely split in their selection of the ethic of critique and the profession solutions. Previous findings by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) and Marshall (2008) suggests educators struggle as they make decisions in the best interests of the student. The data in this study indicates consideration for the ethic of the profession solution, through the statements such as, “using professional judgment and district policy,” and “meeting the needs of students and staff in the most effective and efficient ways and at the same time in the most ethical ways.” The assistant principals mention struggles with following rules and policies, while making decisions in the best interests of the student, which is the essence of a dilemma.

Nonetheless, with the predominance of the ethic of care solutions and the lack of dominance for the ethic of critique solutions, one could not expect an outcome favoring
the ethic of the profession solutions. The ethic of the profession incorporates the three ethical frameworks of justice, critique, and care and requires careful balanced blending of the three frameworks during an ethical decision. The data shows the assistant principals do not know how to adequately implement the ethic of the profession during ethical decision-making.

**Resources for Decision-making**

Another important question addressed in this study concerned the resource most consulted by assistant principals during ethical decision-making. Not surprisingly, as a result of learned compliance and loyalty as former teachers, the findings in this study demonstrate the assistant principals concede discretion to the principal in that they tend to consult with their principal most frequently during decision-making. This suggests the possibility the relationship between the assistant principal and principal is more of a potentially taxing teacher-pupil relationship than an instructive mentor-mentoree relationship. Mentoring provides a firm foundation for developing assistant principals as future principals (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Kaplan & Owings, 1999). Mentoring could reduce the assistant principals’ feelings of powerlessness, noted by Cantwell (1993), which also emerged from the findings in this study through statements such as, “I need to know that I am going to be supported in my decisions,” and “I want to know that I am making the right decision.”

Many districts encourage assistant principals to develop a network of fellow assistant principals. Although, this would not be a mentoring situation, it would give
assistant principals another resource to consult during decision-making. The assistant principals in this study consistently selected the option of consulting with another assistant principal as the least important resource during ethical decision-making. Evidently, the assistant principals in this study have not developed a network of fellow assistant principals. Perhaps, Armstrong’s (2004) supposition that assistant principals want to appear confident, extends to the point of not seeking help from a colleague, as evidenced from the findings in this study.

Assistant principals have an undefined role or job description, yet it is clearly understood the principal is ‘boss and accept the notion unquestioningly as a given or a right’ (Buser et al., 1991; Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Harris & Lowery, 2004; Kessor, 2005; Marshall, 1993; Mertz, 2000; Weller & Weller, 2002). Daresh (2004), Mertz (2000), and Weller and Weller (2002) further suggests assistant principals tend to defer all decisions to the principal as the final authority. Data in this study supports those findings. One assistant principal wrote, “Although, consulting with the principal slowed the process, it also allowed for consistent, and informed decision-making.” The assistant principals in this study appear to accept the idea of their principal as boss without question and defer decisions to the principal.

**Issues in Decision-making**

Lastly, this study gathered data describing assistant principals’ decision-making regarding three specific open response questions concerning barriers to ethical decisions, issues in school leadership, and ethics training. Assistant principals face considerable
barriers to decision-making. Revealing responses provide a sense of the challenges assistant principals face.

Prior studies propose assistant principals tend to follow rules and policies (Armstrong, 2004; Hartzell, 1993; O’Neill, 2002; Weller & Weller, 2002). Assistant principals are challenged to follow the rules and policies, while at the same time, consider the needs of the individual, thus creating a dilemma. Assistant principals in this study indicated they considered policies barriers to making the right decision and that policies interfered with doing what is best for the student in a given situation.

Prior studies suggest an issue in school leadership were the differing principles between school policies and home values an issue during decision-making (Begley & Stefkovich, 2004; Dempster et al., 2002; Harris & Lowery, 2004; Marshall, 1993). The assistant principals in this study echoed those findings as they divulged the struggle with meeting the needs of both the students and parents during decision-making also a pressing issue in school leadership today. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) confirm school administrators justify making complex decisions in the best interests of the student. The data from this study further suggests district policy and what is best for students did not always connect.

Another pressing issue in school leadership was the time required for resolution of ethical dilemmas. In their desire to make the right decisions, the assistant principals in this study, admitted that it takes time to thoroughly investigate student concerns, and that the time spent on one concern, negatively impacts time spent elsewhere. The assistant
principals in this study were hesitant to ‘just implement a stated consequence’ in every situation, especially if they thought it violated the rights of a student.

The study of ethics and the need for ethics training emerged from throughout the remarks of the assistant principals in this study. Bull (1995) suggests school administrators not only follow and make the law, but also interpret it, as they stress the need to study ethics and law together. Assistant principals’ acknowledged the fear of lawsuits enters into their decision-making as one wrote, “Sometimes sticking to the letter of the law can do more harm than good.” Another assistant principal replicated that fear of lawsuits and noted, “My concern is with how far and to what letter of the law must policy be followed.”

Prior studies acknowledge concerns regarding the lack of ethics in educator’s coursework (Cummings et al., 2007; Howe, 1986; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007; Soltis, 1986). The assistant principals in this study mention codes of ethics and the need for specific training in ethics to adequately deal with ethical dilemmas. However, Goree et al. (2007), Soltis (1986), Somers (2001), and Wagner and Simpson (2009) argue that a code of ethics does not make one ethical. The findings in this study affirm the summation of one assistant principal who wrote, “no one discusses the natural conflict between codes of ethics, district policies, and competing ethical values during decision-making.”
Relevance of the Study

The significance of this study originated as threefold; in its contributions to scholarly literature, in its contributions to supporting the need for the study of ethics, and in its contributions to the resolution of ethical dilemmas. This study was of particular relevance, in that if the assistant principalship is a stepping-stone to the principalship, there is an assumption that future principals are inclined to use the ethic of care during ethical decision-making. The findings of this study beg for a second look as it contradicts previous studies suggesting assistant principals are rule and policy followers.

Assistant principals are supposedly groomed by school districts through various training programs to be knowledgeable in the district’s policies and procedures. Yet, the findings in this study suggest the assistant principals more willing to bend district policies than followers of rules and procedures. Perhaps the findings suggest that the assistant principals are so busy during the workday they do not have time to reflect during ethical decision-making and instead rely on their previous experiences as a classroom teacher for ethical decision-making.

Questions arise as a result of the findings in this study. There is an indication the assistant principals in this study are compassionate nurturers especially in dealing with ethical dilemmas with teachers. While these compassionate nurturing behaviors are desired and expected in teachers, the findings imply that once a teacher always a teacher. There is the insinuation that teachers tolerate misbehavior in teachers, as they tolerate misbehavior in students, unless that misbehavior violates certain boundaries. Perhaps
there is an understood ‘ethic of colleagues,’ much like in law enforcement, that we protect our own.

Then again, the findings may simply reveal nothing more than the fact that the assistant principals in this study use an ethic of care because they do not know how to use the ethic of critique or the ethic of the profession. If so, this is indeed an indication of the need for training in the deliberate and strategic use of the ethics of critique and the profession for resolution of ethical dilemmas. The data in this study confirmed that the assistant principals need and desire to have an understanding of ethics and the use of ethical frameworks for decision-making.

*Limitations of the Study*

There were two major limitations in this study. It should be noted, the instrument included a forced choice that only allowed for the selection of the options presented, which may have affected the results and the generalizabilities of the study. The results of this study were limited to the individual public elementary school assistant principals involved in this particular study at this particular place and this particular time. Another study may result in dissimilar findings. Another researcher may use a different procedure and obtain the same or dissimilar results.

The second major limitation of the study was bias. Although safeguards were in place to guard against bias built into the study, the experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of the researcher had the potential to affect the study design. According to
Creswell (2007), the researcher decides when and how to introduce his or her personal experiences into the study. As an assistant principal, this researcher personally experiences many ethical dilemmas, and the potential for bias acknowledged. Additionally, there was the potential for participant bias, as the participant may have altered what they thought or included what they thought the researcher wanted to find out.

Suggestions for Educators

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are offered to public elementary school assistant principals and other educational leaders. Assistant principals should participate in staff development that provides them with the opportunity to learn about the importance and application of the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, and the profession. One example would be for assistant principals to participate in book studies such as *Ethical Leadership and Decision Making in Education* by Joan Shapiro and Jacqueline Stefkovich or *Ethical Educational Leadership in Turbulent Times (Re)solving Moral Dilemmas* by Joan Shapiro and Stephen Gross. Additionally, the assistant principals need time to discuss ethical dilemmas faced at work. Researchers Brown et al. (2005) pondered whether individuals are born as ethical leaders or are developed through training in the organization. The Hypothetical Scenario Survey or similar hypothetical ethical scenarios should be used as a teaching tool in educational leadership preparation classes and in
district training for current school administrators for discussion of ethical decision-making. Lastly, this study, with its focus on decision making and ethical leadership and the revealing need for training in ethics, could be implemented in connection with principal preparation programs and the “Florida Principal Leadership Standards.”

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings and the conclusions of this study, the results should encourage future studies to:

1) Replicate this study with a select few public elementary school assistant principals who would be willing to participate in the hypothetical scenario survey with immediate face-to-face follow up interviews for an in-depth analysis regarding the decision-making process during the survey.

2) Replicate this study with a larger sample of public elementary school assistant principals to see if the findings and conclusions are the same as those in this study.

3) Compare the responses of a larger sample of male versus female public elementary school assistant principals to see if the findings and conclusions are the same as those in this study.

4) Focus on a larger sample of public elementary school assistant principals to compare responses of inexperienced versus experienced assistant principals to see if the findings and conclusions are the same as those in this study.
5) Investigate through a large sample of public elementary school assistant principals who are alternatively certified educators versus those who are traditionally certified educators to see if the findings and conclusions are the same as those in this study.

6) Replicate this study with public middle and high school assistant principals to determine whether they use the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, and the profession during decision-making when faced with a dilemma at work.

7) Explore to determine whether there is an overuse of the ethic of care during decision-making by public elementary school assistant principals.

8) Pursue why public elementary school assistant principals indicate it most important to consult with their principal during decision-making.

Conclusion

This study is one of the first to examine public elementary school assistant principals’ ethical decision-making. Based on the data gathered from the hypothetical scenario survey and the open response questions, there are two conclusions that can be made from this study. First, public elementary school assistant principals in this study use the ethic of care solution most frequently to make decisions that they think are fair and right for the student or other individuals involved. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) maintain administrators who use the ethic of care try to balance power with caring and understand the need for nurturing and encouraging students. The authors continue that
school administrators who utilize the ethic of care consider how they can help an individual student meet his or her needs and desires before making an ethical decision. However, the overuse of the ethic of care does not allow for the ethics of justice, critique, or the profession to enter into the decisions.

While the ethic of justice is the easiest and quickest decision to make based on rules and policies, repeatedly the ethic of care was the preferred solution for the dilemmas presented in this study. It was somewhat of a surprising outcome in that research indicates assistant principals are rule and policy followers. Is there an allusion that a feminist theory permeates the field of elementary education, since it is predominately female, resulting in one dominated by a caring and nurturing framework? Is there an insinuation that the ethic of care indicates weakness rather than strengths with regard to following district rules and policies? Does this finding infer that rules and policies for elementary education need to be more care based?

Secondly, the public elementary school assistant principals in this study rely on their principal as the resource most frequently consulted during decision-making. Does this mean that the assistant principals in this study seek approval, are weak, and afraid to take risks? Does this finding entail an understood or possible mandated compliance and acquiescence to their principal?

Ethical knowledge provides the framework for renewed teacher education and professional learning (Campbell, 2003). Educational preparation programs may not adequately prepare principals or assistant principals to deal with ethical challenges. The
The ethic of critique requires consideration for the long-term effects of a decision. The ethic of the profession requires deep thinking and reflection during ethical dilemmas but results in accountable and responsible administrative decisions. Preparation programs need to guide educators so that they become prepared to make ethical decisions, which reflect the ethics of critique and the profession.

It is not enough that assistant principals make decisions based on the best interests of the student when faced with ethical dilemmas, as suggested by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005). As future principals, assistant principals must develop an ethical reasoning framework to ensure decisions made in the best interests of the student, that are right, fair, just, and good while dealing with competing demands and values of schools, parents, and students. Likewise, it is not enough that assistant principals emulate morals and values as they access ethical frameworks during difficult decisions. Assistant principals must strive to develop as ethical leaders. It is evident by the research that ethics is a difficult subject. It is clear that the ancient philosophers were correct in thinking it took a lifetime for one to be considered ready to understand ethics.

“The unexamined life is not worth living.” (Socrates).
References


Shapiro, J. (2006). Ethical decision-making in turbulent times: Bridging theory with practice to prepare authentic educational leaders. *Values and Ethics in


Appendices
Appendix A: Code of Ethics for School Administrators

An educational leader’s professional conduct must conform to an ethical code of behavior, and the code must set high standards for all educational leaders. The educational leader provides professional leadership across the district and across the community. This responsibility requires the leader to maintain standards of exemplary professional conduct while recognizing that his or her actions will be viewed and appraised by the community, professional associates, and students.

The educational leader acknowledges that he or she serves the schools and community by providing equal educational opportunities to each and every child. The work of the leader must emphasize accountability and results, increased student achievement and high expectations for each and every student.

To these ends, the educational leader subscribes to the following statements of standards.

The educational leader:

1. Makes the education and well-being of students the fundamental value of all decision-making.

2. Fulfills all professional duties with honesty and integrity and always acts in a trustworthy and responsible manner.

3. Supports the principle of due process and protects the civil and human rights of all individuals.

4. Implements local, state, and national laws.
Appendix A (Continued)

5. Advises the school board and implements the board's policies and administrative rules and regulations.

6. Pursues appropriate measures to correct those laws, policies, and regulations that are not consistent with sound educational goals or that are not in the best interest of children.

7. Avoids using his/her position for personal gain through political, social, religious, economic or other influences.

8. Accepts academic degrees or professional certification only from accredited institutions.

9. Maintains the standards and seeks to improve the effectiveness of the profession through research and continuing professional development.

10. Honors all contracts until fulfillment, release or dissolution is mutually agreed upon by all parties.

11. Accepts responsibility and accountability for one’s own actions and behaviors.

12. Commits to serving others above self.

— Adopted by the AASA Governing Board, March 1, 2007
Appendix A (Continued)

Code of Ethics for Florida Educators

The Code of Ethics for the Education Profession in Florida, was adopted from the National Education Association’s Code of Ethics, in 1965. The Florida Code of Ethics for the Education Profession was amended several times and in 1982 became the State Board of Rule (SBER) 6B-1.001, Florida Administrative Code. The Florida Code of Ethics for the Education Profession is as follows

- The educator values the worth and dignity of every person, the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, acquisition of knowledge, and the nurture of democratic citizenship.
- Essential to the achievement of these standards are the freedom to learn and to teach and the guarantee of equal opportunity for all.
- The educator’s primary professional concern will always be for the student and for the development of the student’s potential.
- The educator will therefore strive for professional growth and will seek to exercise the best professional judgment and integrity.
- Aware of the importance of maintaining the respect and confidence of ones colleagues, of students, of parents, and of other members of the community, the educator strives to achieve and sustain the highest degree of ethical conduct (SBER) 6B-1.001.
These standards of ethical conduct position the education profession apart from other professions. In order to pass the certification test for their teaching certificate, which is where future assistant principals and principals begin their careers, prospective teachers must demonstrate knowledge of ethics on the professional educator’s examination. It is important for educators in Florida to understand that Florida is not a Nexus State, meaning any ethical violation, whether professional or personal, could be punishable in Florida.

Requirements for Administrators in Florida

The state of Florida requires educators who desire to become an administrator to complete additional course work and each school district implements their own requirements for the administrative track. According to the Florida Department of Education, “To be eligible to receive certification as a school principal, an individual shall satisfy each of the following requirements:

1) Hold a valid professional certificate covering educational leadership, administration, or administration and supervision.

2) Document successful performance of the duties of the school principalship. These duties shall be performed in a Department of Education approved district school principal certification program pursuant to Rule 6A-5.081, F.A.C., designed and implemented consistent
Appendix A (Continued)

with the principal leadership standards approved by the State Board of Education. In addition, these duties shall:

a) Be performed as a full-time employee of a district school board in a leadership position through which the candidate can fully demonstrate the competencies associated with the Florida Principal Leadership Standards.

b) Be a formally planned professional development program designed and implemented to prepare the individual to effectively perform as a school principal.

c) Be comprehensive of all the duties of the school principalship.

d) Be performed under the direct supervision of a currently practicing school principal or district manager who has been approved by the district school board to serve as the supervising principal or manager for this program.

3) Demonstrate successful performance of the competencies of the school principalship standards, which shall be documented by the Florida district school superintendent based on a performance appraisal system approved by the district school board and the Department pursuant to Rule 6A-5.081, F.A.C.

4) An individual who holds a valid Florida Educator’s Certificate covering administration or administration and supervision issued prior to July 1, 1986 and served as a school principal prior to July 1, 1986 for not less than one (1) school year may apply for certification as a school principal under the provisions of Rule 6A-4.0085, F.A.C. Principal Leadership Standards for Florida.
Appendix A (Continued)

The state of Florida has recently adopted Principal Leadership Standards for aspiring administrators. The ten standards include measures for the administrator’s vision; instructional leadership; managing the learning environment; community and stakeholder partnerships; decision making strategies; diversity; technology; learning, accountability, and assessment; human resource development; and ethical leadership.

Standard ten for ethical leadership states that high performing leaders act with integrity, fairness, and honesty in an ethical manner. The Florida Principal Leadership Standards for Ethical Leadership includes:

10.1 Manifests a professional code of ethics and values
10.2 Makes decisions based on legal, moral and ethical implications of policy options and political strategies
10.3 Creates, models and implements a set of values for the school
10.4 Develops well-reasoned educational beliefs based upon an understanding of teaching and learning
10.5 Understands ethical and legal concerns educators face when using technology throughout the teaching and learning environment
10.6 Develops a personal code of ethics embracing diversity, integrity, and the dignity of all people
10.7 Acts in accordance with federal and state constitutional provisions, statutory standards, and regulatory applications
Appendix A (Continued)

10.8 Demonstrates ability to make decisions within an ethical context

Code of Ethics

January 2002 the National Policy Board for Educational Administration published the Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership for Principals: Standards for School Building Leadership. Included in the seven standards are expectations of school leaders developing a vision, promoting a positive school climate, managing the organization, collaborating with families and community members, promoting success of all students, and completing an internship. Nowhere in the standards is the word assistant principal mentioned.

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards developed six standards, each followed with the knowledge, disposition, and performance required for the success. Again, the emphasis is on the school leader or administrator, but the word assistant principal is not mentioned.

As a professional organization, education has developed a code of ethics for administrators stated as: Statement of Ethics.
The AASA Statement of Ethics for School Administrators states

An educational administrator’s professional behavior must conform to an ethical code. The code must be idealistic and at the same time practical so that it can apply reasonably to all educational administrators. The administrator acknowledges that the schools belong to the public they serve for the purpose of providing educational opportunities to all. However, the administrator assumes responsibility for providing professional leadership in the school and community. The responsibility requires the administrator to maintain standards of exemplary professional conduct. It must be recognized that the administrator’s actions will be viewed and appraised by the community, professional associates, and students (Harris & Lowery, 2002, p. 117).
### Appendix B: Summary of Ethical Frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Framework</th>
<th>Synopsis</th>
<th>Scholars Reviewed</th>
<th>School Administrators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Justice through self-governing</td>
<td>Starratt, Stefkovich, Shapiro, Gross, O’Brien, Strike, Haller, Soltis, Furman</td>
<td>Respect individual students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rules and Laws</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Equitable treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique</td>
<td>Confront moral issues</td>
<td>Starratt, Stefkovich, Shapiro, Gross, Furman</td>
<td>Question the laws when making decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on inequities and injustices in society</td>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledgeable and sensitive to inequities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identification and barriers of unfairness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenge status quo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social discourse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>Caring for individuals</td>
<td>Starratt, Shapiro, Stefkovich, Furman, Noddings</td>
<td>Help meet individual student needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nurture students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dignity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>Serve best interest of the student</td>
<td>Stefkovich, Shapiro, O’Brien</td>
<td>Student at the center of decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional judgment and decision-making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Moral leadership</td>
<td>Furman, Stefkovich, Shapiro</td>
<td>Moral agent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix C: Summary of Methods of Implementation of Ethical Coursework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Ethics implementation in coursework</th>
<th>Affirmations</th>
<th>Criticisms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applied ethics</td>
<td>Relevant for basic understanding of ethical philosophers and ethical theories</td>
<td>Required rote learning of philosophers and ethical theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules and principles approach</td>
<td>Helps make sense of difficult ethical situations</td>
<td>Incomplete for full ethical development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character and structure approach</td>
<td>Answered questions concerning decision</td>
<td>Allows for intuition in decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs and ideals approach</td>
<td>Allows for highest ethical ideas put into practice</td>
<td>Based on past experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral indoctrination approach</td>
<td>Develops understanding of ethics</td>
<td>Rote learning based on threat of failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Counterproductive indoctrination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Results in modest gain in moral reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral engagement approach</td>
<td>Critical deliberation of differing views</td>
<td>Students equate critical thinking with being critical of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtue-approach</td>
<td>Better aligned with teacher commitment to ethical behavior</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focused on the good of teaching</td>
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</table>
### Appendix D: Summary of Findings of Principal Preparation Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Levine (2005)               | High standards with balanced curriculum  
|                             | Field experiences with rigorous evaluations  
|                             | Eliminate Ed.D. in Educational Leadership  
|                             | Restructure educational leadership program more like Law or MBA programs                                                                 |
| Fossey & Shoho (2006)       | Supported Levine’s findings  
|                             | Graduate level educational leadership programs should be more like those of Law or MBA programs                                            |
| Ballenger et al., (2008)    | Substantiated need for restructured principal preparation program  
|                             | Selective admission process  
|                             | Cohort groups with problem based learning  
|                             | Increase field experiences  
|                             | Universities evaluate principal preparation programs to ensure quality standards                                                        |
| Leonard (2007)              | Integrate values and ethics in higher education coursework  
|                             | Autobiographical writing and action research  
|                             | Case studies of real-world ethical dilemmas                                                                                             |
| Petzko (2008)               | Surveyed beginning principals to determine essential skills necessary for success but ethics not mentioned in the survey                  |
| Pijanowski (2008)           | Interviewed department chairs  
|                             | Found eight different methods of delivering moral instruction  
|                             | Case studies and in-class discussion most frequent method of implementation of moral instruction                                              |
| Lauder (2000)               | Principal preparation programs must appeal to teacher-leaders  
|                             | Resigned requirements need to be aligned with demands of the job  
|                             | Cohort models  
|                             | Performance based standards  
|                             | Development and assessment of skills  
|                             | Programs evaluate implement change                                                                                                         |
Appendix E: Summary of Ethical Leadership

As leaders

People wanted leaders who acted morally and behaved in ways indicating self-interest not the driving motivation behind the leadership; moral consciousness the essence of contemporary leadership; moral leadership developed through nurturing; leaders needed to learn how to self-reflect (Branson, 2007)

Leadership effectiveness linked to honesty and trustworthiness; ethical leaders modeled ethical behavior; leadership positively related to trust; questioned if ethical individuals were developed by the organization and if so how (Brown et al., 2007)

Ethics and moral leadership oxymorons; both terms a desired ideal; business leaders revealed ethics interfered with their career; workers are as ethical as they perceive their leader to be (Gini, 2004)

Public trust eroded in non-profit organizations resulting in loss of charitable donations; managers did not believe ethical behavior necessary for success; strong link between ethical behavior and actual success; correlations between ethical behavior and trust (Deshpande, 1996)

Ethical failure in organizations attributed to the culture which failed to promote trust; code of ethical behavior enforced by the profession result in ultimate goal of trust (Brien, 1998)

Trust more about trusting than being trusted; cautioned leader against blind trust (Houston & Sokolow, 2006)

As School Leaders

Values, ethics, and valuation processes related to leadership; leadership focused on people; ethics and school leadership highly relevant (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007)

School leaders compared to moral architect who planned, designed, and constructed ethical framework resulting in credible, informed, and civil society (Wagner & Simpson, 2009)

Schools are ethical organizations; school administrators confronted with variety of ethical dilemmas; resolution depends on the administrator’s training, value system and approaches to moral decisions (Denig & Quinn, 2001)

School administrators faced with complex dilemmas and decisions justified decisions in the best interests of the student (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005)

School leaders sought refuge from social issues in ethics; leaders should know their own values and ethical predispositions, leaders use values as a guide for resolving ethical dilemmas; cautioned ethical postures might not be ethical as a leadership tool for supporting an action taken or decision made (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007)

Leadership began with the understanding and thoughtful interpretation of the valuation processes by individuals (Begley, 2006).
Appendix F: Hypothetical Scenario Survey

Introduction

You are participating in a doctoral candidate’s dissertation research to examine the reasoning assistant principals’ use when decision-making to solve ethical dilemmas. Participation in this survey is voluntary. If you decide not to take part in this study, that is okay. You should only take part in this study if you want to take part. You are free to withdraw from this survey at any time without penalty.

Federal law requires us to keep your study records private. All research data collected will be stored securely and confidentially. All replies are confidential and will only be used by the researcher. Participation is anonymous and there are no indicators on any of the surveys to determine who participated. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them confidential. The only people allowed to view these records are the researcher and regulatory entities such as the USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

By beginning the survey, you acknowledge that you have read this information and agree to participate in this research, with the knowledge that you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

There is a demographic questionnaire on the next page if you desire to participate. Thank you for taking the time to share your ethical reasoning with this researcher.

To progress through the survey, use the following navigation links.

Continue to the next page of the survey by clicking the Continue to the Next Page link.

Go back to the previous page in the survey by clicking on the Previous Page link. This will allow you to move back in the survey to look over the previous answers.

Finish the survey, by clicking the Submit the Survey link on the Thank You page.
Appendix F (Continued)

Hypothetical Scenario Survey

Demographic Questions
Number of years experience as an educator:
Number of years as an assistant principal:
Current School Level:
Elementary School
Middle School
High School

Please indicate your gender:
_____Male _____Female

Ethnicity (please select one below):
White Non-Hispanic
African American
Hispanic
Asian
Native American
Other (please specify)

Age
Under 30
30-39 yr
40-49 yr
50-59 yr
60+ yr

My Bachelor’s Degree is in: (please specify)

Highest Degree attained:
_____Bachelor’s _____Master’s _____Specialist _____Doctorate _____Other
Please specify area of specialization:

Current employment:
_____Public School _____Private School _____Charter School
_____Other (Please specify)
Appendix F (Continued)

Hypothetical Scenario Survey

The following pages consist of four hypothetical ethical dilemmas that an assistant principal might encounter during their work. Each situation and name is hypothetical and any resemblance to a real situation or person is coincidental.

Hypothetical Scenario 1: Riley and the Knife

Riley Smith, a first grade student and his kindergarten sister ride the bus to and from school each day. The Smith children live with their father, who works a ten-hour day that begins at 7:00 am, and their grandfather. Riley and his sister are responsible for getting to the bus stop on their own, although Mr. Smith’s elderly father keeps an eye on the children each morning until they board the bus. When the bus arrives at school, Jonathan, a second grade student who also rides that particular bus, whispers in your ear that Riley has a knife and that he had it out on the bus. You immediately tell Riley to go to your office. Upon questioning, Riley admits that he has a knife and that he found it in his backpack. Further questioning reveals that Riley’s kindergarten sister put the knife, which was a small 2-inch pocketknife, in his backpack on the way home from tiger cub scouts last night. Riley is very upset and remorseful about the knife and promises to “never do it again.” You call Riley’s father and explain the situation. You also explain that the school district has a zero tolerance policy for weapons and drugs. Mr. Smith is equally upset and concerned that Riley will be expelled from school. You explain that although Riley will not be expelled from school, he could face a possible three-day bus suspension. You also tell Mr. Smith that you must complete a threat assessment, which is required when a student has an item defined as a weapon on school board property, before you administer the discipline consequence. After conferring with your threat assessment team, who determine this incident is an innocent mistake on the part of Riley and his sister, in that neither child intended any harm to others or themselves, you call Mr. Smith to discuss the discipline consequence. You tell Mr. Smith that Riley will be suspended from the bus for three days, meaning he can still come to school, but Mr. Smith will have to provide transportation to and from school. Mr. Smith is very upset, and explains that he cannot drive the children to and from school because he will then be late for work, which could cause him to lose his job. Mr. Smith assures you that he supports the need for a discipline consequence, but asks if it would be possible to suspend Riley out of school for one day rather than for three days from the bus. This is not the usual consequence for this infraction. What would you decide to do?
Appendix F (Continued)

Directions: Please rate each of the four solutions according to the scale below:
1 - Not at all like what I would do
2 - Slightly like what I would do
3 - About halfway like what I would do
4 - Mostly like what I would do
5 - Very like what I would do

You would:
A) Follow through with the three-day suspension from the bus, because that is the district’s recommended discipline consequences for this situation and you follow all district policies to the letter.
   1  2  3  4  5
B) Decide that Riley will be given a one day out of school suspension as suggested by Mr. Smith, even though this is not the usual discipline consequence.
   1  2  3  4  5
C) Call the district office and request leniency in the discipline consequence due to Riley’s age and the innocent mistake, because zero tolerance should be for severe violations. You also mention the potential financial hardship this would create for Riley’s father, if you follow the district’s discipline policy.
   1  2  3  4  5
D) Give Riley a stern talking to and accept his promise “not to do it again.” You and Riley think of a fair punishment for the discipline consequence. You also involve the guidance counselor and ask the school’s social worker to check on the children’s home situation. Lastly, you involve the threat assessment team to determine if some intervention strategies need to be implemented.
   1  2  3  4  5

What sources would you use to help you make a decision regarding this dilemma? Please rank the following in the order of importance with, 1 = Least important, 2 = Slightly important, 3= Halfway important, 4 = Important, 5 = Most important.

Call another AP
Consult with your Principal
Call the District Office
Refer to District Policy
Other: for other I would: ________________________________________________
Hypothetical Scenario 2: Carla and the Trade Day

Carla Edwards is a teacher at your school. She and several other teachers attended training on their own time over the summer. In lieu of an hourly stipend for attending professional development during the summer teachers earn a Trade Day certificate, which enables them to “trade” time spent in training over the summer, for one of three designated professional development days during the school year. One of the days eligible for “trade” is the Monday before Thanksgiving. Teachers who do not have a “trade” day must attend training provided by the school district. It is Thursday afternoon and you are looking forward to one more day of work and then a weekend for much needed rest. Over the past few weeks, Deborah Young, your secretary and bookkeeper, has repeatedly reminded teachers to submit their trade day certificates, if they planned to use one for the Monday before Thanksgiving. According to county trade day guidelines, the deadline for submitting a certificate for this particular trade day expires today. Trade day certificates must be submitted to the district office at least one month prior to usage. Deborah comes into your office and informs you that Carla Edwards has planned to use her trade day certificate, but Carla cannot locate the certificate. Deborah continues that it seems Carla is in the process of selling her home and thinks the certificate might be packed in a storage unit where her personal possessions are stored while her home is being staged for resell. It will be very difficult for Carla to find the certificate at this time. Deborah informs you that without the certificate, Carla will have to attend the district’s training or take a day off without pay, because she has no available personal days, which would allow her to take off from work without losing a day of pay. You know that Carla has already planned to drive across the state in order to spend the week moving her ailing parents into an assisted living facility. You know that Carla is the sole provider for her family and a day without pay would affect her financially. You also know that Carla attended the training and earned a “trade” day certificate because you also attended the training with Carla and a group of your teachers. Carla has just walked in your office, is upset, and asks if there is anything that you can do to help her with this trade day certificate situation. What would you decide to do?
Appendix F (Continued)

Directions: Please rate each of the four solutions according to the scale below:
1 - Not at all like what I would do
2 - Slightly like what I would do
3 - About halfway like what I would do
4 - Mostly like what I would do
5 - Very like what I would do

You:
A) Explain to Carla that the trade day process is a payroll requirement, not just a formality for paperwork, and that without meaning to she is putting everyone into a position of committing a potential violation of professional standards, by asking to be allowed to take the day off without proper documentation.

B) Call the supervisor, explain the situation, and carefully state the inequities of the trade day policy when there are unusual circumstances surrounding a teacher’s life. You assure the supervisor that Carla was indeed at the training and should be allowed to secure a duplicate certificate.

C) Assure Carla you understand the unusual circumstances in her life, and that you will agree to sign a letter written to the payroll office verifying Carla attended the training and request she be allowed to take the day off as a trade day.

D) Offer Carla sympathy, but also inform her there is little you can do legally, because district policy mandates that teachers are to submit earned “trade” day certificates at least one month in advance of anticipated trade time off, and Carla clearly has not followed the procedure.
Appendix F (Continued)

What sources would you use to help you make a decision regarding this dilemma? Please rank the following in the order of importance with 1 = Least important, 2 = Slightly important, 3 = Halfway important, 4 = Important, 5 = Most important.

Call another AP
Consult with your Principal
Call the District Office
Refer to District Policy
Other: for other I would:

_______________________________

Hypothetical Scenario 3: Joanne and the Recommendation

You are a first year administrator at an elementary school known for its high student achievement and parent involvement. Joanne Brawner was a fourth grade teacher at your school. Her colleagues respected her and thought she was a good teacher. Your predecessor had completed Joanne’s evaluations stating she met all of the district’s minimum expectations. Early in the fall semester, Joanne began to arrive late to work, leave early, and appeared disheveled and confused. You noticed that when you walked through Joanne’s room, there were no visible lesson plans, students were doing outdated worksheets, and there was little evidence of implementation of the newly adopted math curriculum. Several of Joanne’s colleagues begin to come to you stating concerns about Joanne. One close friend of Joanne stated concerns that perhaps Joanne was depressed over the recent loss of her husband of twenty-two years. One teacher stated that she walked into the office the two of them share and that Joanne was crying and asked the teacher to “just leave her alone.” You scheduled a conference with Joanne and planned to mention the district’s wellness program for employees facing difficulties in their personal life. Without any warning, the morning of the scheduled conference, Joanne called your secretary and stated she has submitted her retirement paperwork, would not be back at school, and would use her sick days for a substitute teacher until the retirement was officially processed. Now three months later you receive a letter from a nearby school district stating Joanne has applied for a teaching position with their district. Joanne listed you as a reference and the district is requesting that you complete an evaluation regarding Joanne’s teaching abilities. You have just received an email from Joanne Brawner, stating she is seeking employment in the nearby district, and that she needs you to give her a good employment evaluation. What would you decide to do?
Appendix F (Continued)

Directions: Please rate each of the four solutions according to the scale below:
1 - Not at all like what I would do
2 - Slightly like what I would do
3 - About halfway like what I would do
4 - Mostly like what I would do
5 - Very like what I would do
You:
A) Call Joanne and explain that you have serious reservations about writing a letter of reference. You express your concern and understanding of the difficulties she has been through, especially the tremendous grief she has experienced. You then suggest she contact the previous administrator for the letter of reference, because many people have stated she was well respected in the school and community.

B) Decide not to mention anything about the concerns about Joanne. At this point you only have speculations and concerns prior to Joanne’s abrupt retirement. Her evaluations state she met all district expectations. You are aware that there are laws protecting her privacy and if you were to violate those laws, you could face serious consequences.

C) Decide not to say anything about Joanne’s personal situation when you complete the reference. You determine this because equity would dictate that Joanne’s special circumstances must be taken into account as not to penalize an otherwise fine teacher. You reaffirm that a previous administrator completed the evaluations indicating Joanne was a competent teacher.

D) Call the personnel director in the nearby district and state that you prefer not to complete the employment evaluation, because you did not personally complete any evaluations about Joanne. You also share this decision with Joanne.

1 2 3 4 5
Appendix F (Continued)

What sources would you use to help you make a decision regarding this dilemma? Please rank the following in the order of importance with 1 = Least important, 2 = Slightly important, 3 = Halfway important, 4 = Important, 5 = Most important.

- Call another AP
- Consult with your Principal
- Call the District Office
- Refer to District Policy
- Other: for other I would:

Hypothetical Scenario 4: Third Grade

It is late Friday afternoon. Today has been one of those days and you cannot wait to go home. The phone rings and it is Mrs. Riggins, Daniel Riggins grandmother. Daniel has only been in your school three weeks and this is the fifth phone call from Mrs. Riggins. She has called previously to complain about the location of the bus stop, the lunchroom noise, your tardy policy requiring parents to walk their child to class when arriving late to school, and that at Daniel’s other school he was given extra help and she wants him to get extra help at your school. Daniel had previously attended a Title I school, which meant he qualified for free after school tutoring, but your school is not a Title I school and has no funds for after school tutoring. As you answer the phone, Mrs. Riggins is livid. She is accusing another student of bullying her grandchild, Daniel, and wants to know what are you going to do about it and that if it is not stopped she will go to the school board. She further states that she is certain you are allowing her grandson to be bullied because he is the only African American in the classroom. You try to assure Mrs. Riggins that you do not allow any student to be bullied and that you will find out what is going on, but because all of the students and teachers have gone home, it will be Monday morning before you can find out what happened. Mrs. Riggins continues that she called the teacher and told her but that nothing happened to the girl who is bullying her grandson. When you ask what the other student has allegedly done to Daniel, Mrs. Riggins states, “That girl picked up a staple off the carpet and scratched Daniel on the arm with it.” She wants something done to that girl and continues that she will be at school Monday morning to find out what is going to be done about this bullying. After another ten minutes or so, you assure Mrs. Riggins you will follow the district’s policy regarding bullying and that you will investigate the incident on Monday. You decide to call the parent of the girl who allegedly scratched Daniel on the arm with a staple. When you speak to Mrs. Johnson, the girl’s mother, Mrs. Johnson states that her daughter came
Appendix F (Continued)

home crying because Daniel told her he does not like her. Mrs. Johnson further states that this boy is bullying her daughter and she wants to know what are you going to do about it. What would you decide to do?

Directions: Please rate each of the four solutions according to the scale below:
1 - Not at all like what I would do
2 - Slightly like what I would do
3 - About halfway like what I would do
4 - Mostly like what I would do
5 - Very like what I would do

You:
A) Know that some of the problem has to do with the fact that Daniel is the only African American in the classroom. You will offer Mrs. Riggins the opportunity for Daniel to transfer to a classroom that has a teacher with prior experiences as an advocate for minority students. You want to be careful with how you present this to Mrs. Riggins, because she has made it clear that she feels that because of her race, there will be inequities to overcome no matter the situation.

B) Call the district’s anti-bullying office and talk to the director about the phone calls. You want an outside opinion to confirm whether this is determined bullying.

C) Meet with both students separately on Monday morning and listen to both sides of the story. Then you will meet with the students together and discuss how to handle their differences in a more acceptable manner.

D) Although this behavior is not bullying, it is unacceptable. Both children intentionally hurt the other, and you think that perhaps you should write a discipline referral for both. You decide that an acceptable consequence will be for each to write the other an apology letter.
Appendix F (Continued)

What sources would you use to help you make a decision regarding this dilemma? Please rank the following in the order of importance with 1 = Least important, 2 = Slightly important, 3= Halfway important, 4 = Important, 5 = Most important.

Call another AP
Consult with your Principal
Call the District Office
Refer to District Policy
Other: for other I would:

The following open response questions will allow you to share your decision-making and thought processes with me. Please write your responses to the following questions.

1. What are the barriers to doing what you think is right during an ethical dilemma?
2. What do you see as the most pressing ethical issue in school leadership today?
3. If you could design an ethics-training program, which topics would you include?

Your time and opinions are greatly appreciated. If you have any other comments you would like to share please do so below.

If you are willing to be interviewed by telephone to expand this discussion, please email your contact information (phone number and your name) to: btroy@mail.usf.edu
Appendix F (Continued)

Thank you for responding to this survey. To finalize your response, click the Submit button on this page.

Hypothetical Scenario Survey

The choice column indicates the ethical framework embedded into the solution. This information will not be shared with the survey participants.

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Appendix G: Hypothetical Scenario Survey (Expert panel letter)

Dear (Retired Principal/Assistant Principal),

I am a doctoral candidate in the process of researching the following questions:

1) When presented with an ethical dilemma, which ethical framework, the ethic of justice, care, critique, and the profession, do selected public elementary school assistant principals use for ethical decision-making?

2) What resources other than the ethical framework of justice, care, critique, and the profession, do public elementary school assistant principals consult during decision-making? (Ex: Principal, other assistant principals, district policy, district personnel, other).

3) How do public elementary school assistant principals describe their decision-making process while discussing various ethical dilemmas?

I am developing a survey based on hypothetical dilemmas assistant principals may face during their work. There will be solutions with the ethical frameworks of justice, care, critique, and the profession embedded in each.

If you would be so kind, please read each scenario for clarity. If you notice any discrimination in any of the four scenarios please feel free to note that. After reading each scenario, please write a sentence or two explaining what your decision might be in that situation.

According to research, one of the steps necessary to validate a self-developed survey, is a panel of experts to critique the scenarios and give their input for the solution. If your solution is consistent with one the four possible choices I have included in the hypothetical scenario solutions, the validity of the survey is then increased.

Assistant principals who participate in the survey will be informed of their consent. As a member of the expert panel, validating this survey, you do not need informed consent, because I am not collecting any data from you. However, if you are willing, I would like to acknowledge you as a member of the panel of experts. Your expert opinion is greatly appreciated. I value your time and any consideration you may give this request.

Sincerely,
Brenda Troy
Appendix H: Noted Author Email

Jacqueline Stefkovich [jas71@psu.edu]

To: Troy Brenda

Brenda,

I love your survey and would be very interested in what you find out. Here’s some feedback – hope it will help. If you find it useful, great – if it doesn’t ring true, then ignore.

Scenario 1: A & B look fine. Under C, I’d add something about the father’s financial circumstances – marginalizing the (economically) poor is part of a critical theory analysis. Under D, add some consultation with the threat assessment team (or at least with their chair).

Scenario 2: B&C look fine. For A, leave out the word “legal.” Fraud is OK but if there is a way you can make “fraud” sound more like a violation of professional standards than an outright legal violation, that might be better. Then, it would be more clearly distinguishable from “justice” which is often equated with legal violations – I like the idea that you mention breaching others’ professional responsibilities -- this clearly centers the answer in the ethic of the profession.

If A is changed this way, then D is fine – might even want to mention legal violations in D (if omitted from A).

Scenario 3: A, B, & D look really good. It’s a little hard to construe C as critique unless you can provide some reasoning behind taking these actions. Perhaps mention (in the answer) that you would take this action because equity would dictate that Joanne’s special circumstances must be taken into account so as not to penalize an otherwise fine teacher. Discrimination based on a temporary mental disability (that Joan has overcome? – maybe say that in the facts) would be subject to an analysis of critique.

Scenario 4: B, C, & D look fine. I can see your concern to #A. As it stands, the answer would be according to the critical frame, but I am not sure that it’s a great solution in the sense that it may stereotype Daniel due to his race. Might be better if the teacher (rather than another student) was African-American or perhaps better yet if the teacher was white but had had prior experiences as an advocate for minority students. You have been very careful in your phrasing.
and will need to continue to do so to ensure that the underlying logic behind the answer is clear.
Thanks so much for your patience. Hope I wasn’t too late and that this helps!
My schedule is much better now if you need to reach me again.

Jacqueline A. Stefkovich, Ed.D., J.D.
Associate Dean
Graduate Studies, Research & Faculty Development
The Pennsylvania State University
241 Chambers Building
State College, PA 16802
814-863-1489
jas71@psu.edu

From: Troy Brenda [mailto:TROYB@pcsb.org]
Sent: Friday, April 10, 2009 10:45 AM
To: 'Jacqueline Stefkovich'
Subject: RE: doctoral student

Dr. Stefkovich,
I will be thrilled to wait for any input at all from you. My plans are to defend my proposal mid-late May and then begin the actual survey process online during June. I am so grateful for any help you may be able to give me with this, because I know how busy you are and how valuable your time is. Thank you so much for even considering my request. Sincerely, Brenda Troy

From: Jacqueline Stefkovich [mailto:jas71@psu.edu]
Sent: Friday, April 10, 2009 9:55 AM
To: Troy Brenda
Subject: RE: doctoral student

I am leaving in 10 minutes to go to see my family, then AERA and then DC – won’t be able to get back to you for a couple of weeks. If you are willing to wait that long, I’d be glad to help out.

Jacqueline A. Stefkovich, Ed.D., J.D.
Associate Dean
Graduate Studies, Research & Faculty Development
The Pennsylvania State University
241 Chambers Building
State College, PA 16802
814-863-1489
jas71@psu.edu
Appendix H (Continued)

From: Troy Brenda [mailto:TROYB@pcsb.org]
Sent: Thursday, April 09, 2009 7:30 PM
To: jas71@psu.edu
Subject: FW: doctoral student

Dear Dr. Stefkovich,

Allow me to introduce myself. I am currently a doctoral candidate in educational leadership at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

My dissertation is a study of assistant principals and their ethical decision-making. I am basing this on the ethical frameworks of justice, critique, care, and the profession that you and Dr. Shapiro have written about in your book *Ethical Leadership and Decision Making in Education*.

I have developed a hypothetical scenario survey. I plan to use the survey as a basis to determine which ethical framework assistant principals use during their ethical decision-making. There will be follow up interviews based on the survey and the thought process of the assistant principals as they determined their solution choices.

If it is at all possible, would you be so kind as to critique the attached survey. I am struggling with embedding the ethic of critique in the solutions. A panel of experts, retired principals and assistant principals, critiqued the scenarios, but they also struggle with determining if I have successfully and correctly embedded the chosen ethic in each solution. The second attachment indicates the ethic that I have attempted to embed in each solution. I would be most grateful if you can find the time to critique this survey and the solutions.

Sincerely,

Brenda Troy
Doctoral Candidate
University of South Florida
### Appendix I: Hypothetical Scenario Survey Data

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Note. E = Ethnicity, G = Gender, Ex = Years of Experience as an Educator, Yr = Years of Experience as an Assistant Principal, BS = Bachelor’s Degree, HD = Highest Degree, J = Ethic of Justice, R = Ethic of Critique, C = Ethic of Care, P = Ethic of the Profession.
Appendix I (Continued)

Scenario 1

![Likert Scale Diagram for Scenario 1]

- Justice
- Critique
- Care
- Profession

Frequency

Likert Scale

Scenario 2

![Likert Scale Diagram for Scenario 2]

- Justice
- Critique
- Care
- Profession

Likert Scale

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Appendix I (Continued)

Scenario 3

Frequency

Likert Scale

Scenario 4

Frequency

Likert Scale

Justice
Critique
Care
Profession

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About the Author

Brenda Troy received her Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education from Jacksonville State University in 1972 and a M.Ed. in Special Education from the University of Alabama in Birmingham in 1975. She began her teaching career in Alabama after graduation from Jacksonville State University. She obtained her certification in Educational Leadership from the University of South Florida in 2001.

During her educational career, she taught elementary school, as well as, middle school academics and high school mathematics and science. She also taught Specific Learning Disabilities, Educable Mentally Handicapped, Varying Exceptionalities, and Emotionally Handicapped grade levels K-12. She became an elementary school assistant principal in 2005. During her tenure as an assistant principal, Mrs. Troy entered the Ed.D. program at the University of South Florida.