

ABSTRACT

Title of Document:

**STORIES OF INFLUENCE:
CRITICAL VALUES IN THE NARRATIVES
OF ETHICAL DECISION MAKING FOR
SENIOR STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICERS**

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The intent of this study was to understand what senior student affairs administrators (SSAOs) identify as critical values in ethical decision-making. Through an interpretive approach, narrative inquiry, SSAOs were invited to share professional stories about ethical decision-making.

Dewey (1908) discussed two dimensions of ethical decisions. He identified the public side that is shown to others and the private side that silently tests the individual. This private side, through the dialogue of data collection, was exposed and summarized in this dissertation. This interpretive study explored the values, not often discussed openly or shared with others, ten SSAOs considered in ethical dilemmas.

Nash (1996) wrote that ethics are a set of principles that govern one's conduct be it privately or publicly. Through this study's examination of the private side of ethical decisions, I was able to learn what these SSAOs considered in their decision-making process. Analysis of the participants' interviews revealed two conclusions:

1. SSAOs consider a wide variety of ethical principles and values in the administrative work, including faith and spirituality, power and powerlessness, reputation and livelihood, and integrity and humanity.
2. SSAOs rely on cultivating relationships with others, especially with their presidents, so that others understand the ethical basis for a decision. These SSAOs were quite concerned not only with the perception of themselves as administrators, but also with how closely-linked relationships between supervisors and supervisees are to the actual process of ethical decision-making.

Implications for this study include a recommendation that more graduate programs in higher education provide opportunities for graduate students to reflect upon their actions and the ethical behavior of others within internships and classes. Although prompted, these SSAOs relied on stories from their past to guide their ethical decision-making processes and enjoyed reflecting on their backgrounds as insights into their ethical decision-making. Racial background and gender played a role in the ethical decision-making processes of the SSAOs.

Second, SSAOs are in need of supportive colleagues and confidants and should identify such individuals. Last, SSAOs need to examine the stories of their lives to recognize the values and principles that inform their ethical decision-making.

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By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

What is it to make a moral judgment, or to argue about an ethical issue or to live according to ethical standards? How do moral judgments differ from practical judgments? All of these questions are related, so we only need to consider one of them; but to do this we need to say something about the nature of ethics. Suppose that we have studied the lives of a number of different people, and we know a lot about what they do, what they believe and so on. Can we then decide which one of them are living by ethical standards and which are not? (Singer, 1993, p. 9)

Senior student affairs administrators often face situations that stimulate a series of personal inquiries. These are the kinds of questions student affairs administrators may be asking. What is the *right* thing to do in this situation? How do my values coincide or conflict with the issue at hand? Is the most educationally sound option the most ethical one? Where can I find a basis for the decision I need to make? Are there sacrifices, either personal or professional, that I am willing to make in this situation? How have my values been shaped? Given the issue, how can I be the educator that I want to be? For administrators who, because of their roles, are considered to be mindful of ethical standards, the process of making ethical decisions and understanding the ethical lessons learned can be particularly challenging.

Ethical dilemmas are present in a wide variety of issues that affect student life. What critical values do senior student affairs officers utilize when faced with a difficult choice? More broadly stated, what ethical values do senior student affairs administrators consider when making administrative decisions and which principles guide their decisions?

This study sought to understand what senior student affairs administrators identify as the most critical values in ethical decision-making and why. Through an interpretive approach,

specifically, narrative inquiry, these senior student affairs administrators were invited to share, in a confidential manner, their professional stories about ethical decision-making. Using the stories of senior administrators, I sought to develop an understanding of the principles and values of ethical decision-making for senior student affairs administrators. The research question of interest was not an evaluation of the quality of the decisions made by senior student affairs administrators, but rather a journey into the principles, stories and values that serve as the foundations for the decision-making process. Brown (1990) asserted that well-reasoned ethics and thoughtful consideration lead to better decision-making. Philosopher and educator John Dewey (1908) stated that important ethical decisions have two important aspects – the public side, which other people can observe, and the private side, that which forms, reveals, and tests the self. This study examined the private side. Thus, the primary purpose of this interpretive study was to explore the values, not often discussed openly, that senior student affairs administrators consider in ethical dilemmas. As a result of this inquiry, this study may provide greater insight into senior student affairs administrators' experiences with ethical decision-making in their professional lives.

Through an analysis of the data derived from interviews with participants, patterns and themes emerged that provide greater insight into ethical decision-making by senior student affairs administrators. As a point of context, a variety of questions were used to explore the ethical values of senior student affairs administrators, to understand the tensions of making ethical choices, to identify the critical values used in decision-making, and to understand the role of stories in ethical lessons learned.

Determining Ethical Values

Since this study focused on participants' first hand experience with ethical dilemmas, it was necessary to identify what ethical values are. The Greek philosopher Aristotle began this journey into ethics with a two-pronged approach. First, according to Aristotle, there must be a proper end or goal in mind. Second, he believed, the individual should follow the most appropriate route to reach that goal. According to Thompson's (1976) interpretation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle maintained that some goals are more important than other goals, the greatest goal of which is *good*. "Every art and every investigation, and similarly every action and pursuit, is considered to aim at some good. Aristotle's notion of 'Good' has been defined as 'That at which all things aim'" (Thompson, 1976, p. 63).

Kant, a German philosopher, believed that ethical standards were just if the person performing the action did so in an effort to perform his or her moral duty, regardless of the issue of good (Ross, 1954). Conversely, Mill (1859), a British philosopher, believed that ethical standards were guidelines that brought about the greatest good for the greatest number of people. These ethical standards come to life for individuals, and student affairs professionals, as they make professional decisions. Indeed, values and ethical standards converge in a variety of ethical dilemmas facing senior student affairs professionals.

The foundations of ethical standards lie in the decision-making process for each individual (Badarraco, 1997). Often, however, the values, assumptions, judgments, observations, and beliefs remain unspoken and are invisible. Still, determining ethical values is a difficult process. In an effort to be ethical, what one thinks about, how one thinks about it, and the stories one reflects on may be as important as the choice one eventually makes (Brown, 1990).

Kohlberg (1976) maintained that the most developed ethical stage of moral development has its basis in the understanding of fairness and inalienable rights or a justice framework. For Kohlberg, ethically and morally mature individuals would resolve a dilemma through the use of universal principles, rather than a comprehension of fairness as seen through the eyes of one's own experience. Alternatively, Gilligan (1982) suggested that individuals, particularly women, utilize a perspective of care rather than a justice perspective in decision-making. Gilligan's research expanded the narrow notions of self and morality previously established by Kohlberg (1969) to include feminist conceptions of maturity in decision-making. According to Gilligan, decisions are made not only using rights and principles, but also relationships and care. Her research highlighted a missing piece in the conversation about ethical behavior and personality development based on a model (Kohlberg, 1969) that presented only one point of view, justice, as a universal orientation. In Kohlberg's (1973) research, he highlighted experiences in games that boys play and wrote that the opportunity to respect rules in games that girls play was lacking. Thus, Gilligan's research on women shed new light on what was previously known about ethical decision-making.

Although some notions of morality were formed primarily in the field of psychology (Dewey, 1922; Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1969; Perry, 1968; Piaget, 1948), the area of philosophy has contributed to the ethics literature as well. Biomedical ethicists Beauchamp and Childress (1979) presented an analytical framework to view ethical behavior. They identified four principles that serve as foundations for ethical behavior. The four principles are autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice. They believed that these principles are general, abstract ideals that guide an individual's behavior. Although their work is most closely

connected with biomedical ethics, diverse groups such as educators, philosophers, and business leaders have utilized their research (Gibbard, 1990).

The work of Beauchamp and Childress (1979) served as the foundation for Kitchener's (1984, 1985) research on ethical principles and decisions in student affairs work. Kitchener maintained that ethical decision-making was dependent upon the situation and the particular facts of that situation. Thus, an ethical decision in one scenario might not be the ethical decision in another because the rules, principles, and theories for justification differ.

It is only recently that studies have focused on the ethics of administrators in higher education and student affairs. Some examples are a number of doctoral dissertations produced in the past few years. Prior to these studies, researchers had been concerned primarily with administrators in the primary and secondary schools and their experiences with ethical decision-making in educational settings. Although not focused on higher education, two studies analyzed the role of values in ethics and decision-making in educational settings. Van Woert (2000) examined the role of values in administrative problem-solving for middle school principals. With the use of case studies and problem reconstruction, Van Woert concluded that time and experience in the role of school principal was more critical to successful problem-solving than the values of order, honesty, speed, and control. Van Woert also found that cultivating relationships, fostering school culture, and leading the process of education were values held by the middle school principals.

Harkness (2000) examined the ethics of decision-making in public schools regarding the use of genetic information. The survey asked educators to respond to a series of hypothetical situations about employee and student issues. The findings

indicated that among a national sample of state school board members, directors of special education, personnel directors, district superintendents and principals, when given the four choices of justice, autonomy, nonmaleficence and beneficence, the principle of justice was most important in decisions around genetic technology. Additionally, Harkness found no differences between men and women or differences by position.

Other studies have focused on ethics in higher education and student affairs administration in particular. In one study, Wiley (2000) examined the ways in which ethical behavior influenced the careers of higher education professionals. Wiley found that when colleges and universities have institutional leaders who are successful in identifying ethical considerations in teaching, curricular and administrative issues, those institutions are more nimble and can adapt to change more quickly than institutions without such leaders. Wiley concluded that higher education is in need of educators who possess the aptitude to evaluate and confront the myriad ethical issues faced in the modern college and university.

In another study, Copeland (2000) examined the perceptions of ethical practice in the professional lives of entry-level, mid-level, and senior-level student affairs administrators in one region designated by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). Using descriptive statistical analyses, this study compared variously situated administrators to discover the extent to which administrators believed that ethical behavior and practices were present in the profession of student affairs. Copeland concluded that student affairs professionals were interested in being better prepared to influence the ethical behavior of students and colleagues. The study indicated

that administrators, especially at entry-level, desired informal exercises and discussions to promote skills associated with ethical practice.

Busher (1996) studied the extent to which student affairs professionals, specifically residential life staff in the state of Ohio, were in compliance with the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) statement of ethical principles and standards. In the study Busher used an open-ended questionnaire, with face-to-face interviews; Busher concluded that most of the professionals were in compliance with the principles and standards of ACPA. The findings also indicated that, on the whole, these residential life professionals understood the statements more than professionals in other areas of education or clinical psychology as compared to previous studies on ethical compliance in education and psychology. An additional conclusion was that residential life professionals seemed to be more familiar with certain principles and standards rather than the entire statement itself.

Sailer (1990) examined the decision-making process for student affairs administrators across various departments through the use of large focus groups. Sailer analyzed whether or not ethical considerations entered the decision-making processes of student affairs professionals and if the availability of focus group discussions enhanced a campus environment that embraces dialogue on ethical issues. Sailer found that student affairs professionals at a university in New England do ponder ethical issues, and providing forums for this to happen can be most valuable if the larger institution is supportive of such discussions and opportunities.

Although researchers in these six recent studies concluded that an examination of ethics is important, none of the studies allowed the participants to use narratives and

stories to freely identify the values and principles most critical to ethical decision-making. Additionally, none of the recent studies focused solely on senior student affairs administrators, and none resulted in a framework for examining ethical decision-making in student affairs. An exception to the studies previously mentioned is one conducted by student affairs leaders Margaret Barr, Jim Lyons and Jim Rhatigan (2000). In this professional conference presentation, three former senior student affairs officers shared their stories and lessons specifically on leadership in student affairs. These stories highlighted the successes, challenges, tensions and trials of leading a division of student affairs when faced with a myriad of ethical choices. Yet, Barr et al. did not focus on ethics or decision-making in particular. With this study, I sought to fill a void in the area of ethical inquiry in higher education and student affairs administration. Indeed, a study that examines the values and principles in ethical decision-making for senior student affairs administrators is needed.

Literature Base and Conceptual Framework

This research is based on the assumption that senior student affairs officers hold positions with complex responsibilities. In any given situation, the responsibilities within student affairs may conflict with personal or institutional values (Sandeen, 1991). Further, these individuals are often involved in situations where personal and professional responsibilities are incongruent with the larger organization, association or environment. More broadly stated, “human beings live in a web of moral relationships” (Callahan & Bok, 1979, p. 25). Identifying and understanding the values involved in the ethical decision-making process becomes an important function because of the ethical complexity of the work for senior student affairs administrators. They are the

campus administrator most often concerned about the relationships between and among students and the connections between the curricular and co-curricular experience (Sandeen, 1991).

Much of this study was grounded in principles-based, ethical decision-making models in student affairs. Until recently the research on values and ethics has not examined the use and place of narratives and stories in the ethical decision-making process. This study differentiated itself from previous studies in that it focused on what senior student affairs administrators share via the use of stories and narratives of the lessons learned about ethical decision-making. The lessons learned are the collection of ideas and perspectives that bring deeper clarity and understanding to the idea of ethical decision-making in student affairs.

Additional grounding for this study was found in literature from postmodern ethics (Nash, 1996). Much of the data are in the form of stories from senior student affairs administrators. Their own autobiographical and philosophical stories, which Newton (1995) described as narrative ethics, serve as the foundation from which the values can be found.

The framework that guided this study was driven by concepts from ethical theory literature and is composed of five sections. The first section of the framework focuses on justice and caring approaches to ethics. The second component summarizes various models of ethical decision-making in higher education and student affairs administration. The third section summarizes narrative approaches to ethics. The fourth component examines the codes and ethical statements for the student affairs profession. The fifth section analyzes the study of values and the environment of the senior student affairs administrator. Together, this conceptual framework of the literature aids in the creation of a theory to understand what values senior student affairs officers utilize when faced with an ethical dilemma and why.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore, through the use of stories, the values and principles utilized by senior student affairs administrators in professional decisions. This study sought to gain greater understanding of the experiences of making a critical campus decision when faced with an ethical dilemma. Further, this study also examined the values and principles that most inform the decision-making process for senior student affairs administrators. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What do senior student affairs officers think are the critical values when making an ethical decision and why?
2. What do senior student affairs officers identify as the lessons learned in ethical decision-making, and how do those lessons guide the decision-making process?
3. How is ethical decision-making informed by the stories and narratives of senior student affairs administrators?

It is important to note that the purpose of this study was not to evaluate the quality of the decisions made by senior student affairs administrators. Rather it was to critically explore the principles, assumptions, values and stories that serve as the foundation of the decision-making process for senior student affairs administrators. An important objective of this study was to aid educators in understanding the values and principles used by senior student affairs administrators to confront the thought provoking, practical, theoretical, and personally challenging dilemmas of student affairs work.

An Overview of the Methodology

This study used narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as a way to identify and interpret not only what values and principles are significant in the decisions of senior student

affairs officers when faced with an ethical dilemma, but also to discover the lessons learned, and the ideas and perspectives that provide deeper clarity within the stories of senior student affairs administrators. Clandinin and Connelly offered that experiences are personal in that they involve the individual and social in that they involve the way in which the individual interacts with others.

The participants were 10 senior student affairs administrators from a broad range of institutions with comprehensive student affairs programs in the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions of the United States. The participants were asked to share their own stories about a time when they were challenged with an ethical dilemma in their role as the senior student affairs administrator. Through interviews, participants responded to a series of open-ended questions about the dilemma that they faced on their own campus. The dilemma the senior student affairs administrator was instructed to discuss was one in which the administrator had to choose between multiple and competing factors. The data that were most crucial are the principles, assumptions, values and stories upon which the administrator based his or her decision. For the purposes of this study, I as the researcher did not judge the quality of the decision, but chose to focus on the content and ways in which the administrator discussed the foundation upon which the decision was made.

Underlying Values and Assumptions

There are three values and assumptions I brought to this study. In addressing areas of student and university life I presumed that *simple* resolutions would not be acceptable to presidents, colleagues, subordinates of senior student affairs administrators, and senior student affairs administrators themselves. Rather, I believed that defensible solutions with sound philosophical bases are needed to make choices among a myriad of ethical

dilemmas facing U.S. higher education. Singer (1993) maintained that issues like equality and discrimination by race, sex and ability, as examples, have deep philosophical roots and that concerted thinking about these issues can lead to sound ethical decisions. Issues such as college access, multiculturalism, student diversity, assessment of educational outcomes, and the quality of student life are subjects that often require the attention of senior student affairs administrators. I believe that these issues involve ethical decisions.

The factors and components that administrators deem critical are important because of the gravity and complexity of the consequences of their decisions (Badaracco, 1997). Through the use of stories, understanding what values and principles form the basis of those decisions was the purpose of this study. It was my expectation that senior student affairs administrators reflect upon their work and possess an ability and willingness to articulate those reflections via their stories with me.

Third, I believe the study of ethics is important. Senior student affairs officers must often make difficult decisions. This study assumed that continuous self examination and investigation of the principles and values that undergird an ethical dilemma will eventually lead to more successful, more responsible, more thoughtful, and more ethically committed senior student affairs administrators.

Significance of the Study

Brown (1985) strongly encouraged all student affairs administrators to give significant time to the consideration and examination of ethical issues in higher education. Therefore, this study is important for several reasons. First, this study assists in addressing not only why senior student affairs administrators make the decisions that they do, but also in what ways, if any, they think about ethical principles in their work. Additionally, a goal of this study was to produce

findings that are of importance to educators, administrators and students of ethics interested in the values and principles deemed critical to decision-making in student affairs work. This study shows how existing frameworks for understanding decision-making can be used to understand the ethical decision-making processes of senior student affairs administrators.

This research focused on ethical decision-making and the values most important to senior student affairs administrators when faced with an ethical dilemma. The research also illustrated the ethical complexity facing senior student affairs administrators, as they make decisions where the welfare of the institution and its students are at stake. This research has the potential to contribute to a re-examination of the current professional codes used by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA).

Last, I believe this research is significant because it analyzes senior student affairs administrators' ethical decision-making in higher education. To the extent that information from this study can be applied to similar situations and similar positions in student affairs administration, it will be of theoretical and practical value.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The study of ethics is quite vast. Ethics literature can be found in fields such as philosophy, psychology, education, and biology, among others. This chapter concentrates on the ethics literature related to ethical decision-making. This area includes philosophical approaches to ethical decision-making, justice and care paradigms, ethical decision-making models and codes, narrative approaches to ethics, and an understanding of the position of senior student affairs administrator. To provide a rich and full understanding of values and principles in ethical decision-making among senior student affairs administrators, this review explores various components of the study of ethics. Next, the chapter examines the use of ethical codes and standards utilized by senior student affairs administrators and concludes with an examination of the values in the historical context of student affairs. Each section concludes with a review of applicable studies focused on that component of the framework.

Theoretical and Applied Approaches to Ethics

This section includes theoretical and applied approaches to ethics. Broadly defined, applied ethics are, as Beauchamp and Childress (1979) wrote, the “application of general ethical theories, principles and rules to problems...” (p. 9). Aristotle’s (1963) virtue, Kant’s (1959) deontology, and Mill’s (1985) utilitarianism are important theories because of the role that each philosopher had in shaping the study of moral behavior and thus what is known about ethical decision-making. In addition, Kohlberg’s (1969) approach to moral orientation and Gilligan’s (1993) expanded conception of moral development are also theories that have shaped the study

of ethics. Together, these approaches are critical because principled approaches to ethical decision-making possess the ability to be applicable to any situation and any circumstance (Fried, 1997). Additionally, the study of ethics has been mainly based on principled frameworks (Nash, 1996).

Being Virtuous

Numerous theories of decision-making have shaped the conception of ethics and morality. Together, Aristotle, Kant and Mill provide theoretical and philosophical conceptualizations that are comprehensive and yet incomplete. No one theory fully addresses the complexities of ethical decision-making, but each theory provides deeper understanding of the overall issue. Noddings (1984) argued that ethical behavior begins with the decision-making process of individuals often asking themselves “what is right?” in a given situation.

Before Noddings made this assertion, Aristotle’s (1963) work on decision-making was well documented. Aristotle’s theory on ethics is twofold. First, an individual must determine the proper goal, and second, the individual must determine the correct actions by which to achieve that goal (Brown, 1990). I believe Aristotle’s central question is not what ought one to do in any given situation or when faced with a dilemma, but what kind of person ought one to be. Thus, Aristotle indicated the kinds of choices a person ought to make. At the nucleus of his argument, Aristotle was most concerned with the virtue of being just (Kreeft, 1986).

The virtue, according to Aristotle, that paves the way for the other virtues is justice (Kreeft, 1986). Justice is concerned with the equity or fairness in interpersonal relations. Kitchener (1985) described justice as having three components: impartiality, equality, and reciprocity. The three components are illustrated in Rawls’ (1971) theory of distributive justice. Rawls maintained that justice is based on the value of utility as the basis for societal contracts

and that justice cannot be given away. The value of justice in student affairs is further illustrated in the Statement of Ethical Principles and Standards from the American College Personnel Association (ACPA, 1990). The statement reads, “justice requires honest consideration of all claims and requests and equitable distribution of goods and services” (p. 12).

Aristotle (1963) believed that humans have the capacity to be virtuous and just in their decision-making. However, one needs to nurture the capacity to be virtuous and may accomplish this through the making of virtuous decisions. Aristotle wrote, “anything that we have to learn to do we learn by the actual doing of it: people become builders by building and instrumentalists by playing instruments” (p. 286). Aristotle continued his comments on humans' capacity for moral goodness by stating, “similarly, we become just by performing just acts, temperate by performing temperate ones, brave by performing brave ones” (p. 286). Therefore, virtuous people become so as they continue to make virtuous decisions.

Being virtuous or just is only one component of ethical decision-making. Immanuel Kant (1959) provided the basis for the second of the three major philosophical perspectives on ethical decision-making, that of deontology. Deontologists and those who follow Kant's beliefs typically maintain that a person doing his or her duty is in the act of completing his or her part of an agreement (Hill, 1999). Agreements must be kept because a promise has been made, and promises must be kept—not because of the consequences of not keeping the promise, but because it is the right thing to do (Beauchamp, 1982).

Kant and the deontologists who followed him argued that ethical behavior was based on the overriding principle of maintaining social agreements (Pojman, 1995; Ross, 1954). An example of such a principle is to “be honest.” Honesty is important not because of what it might yield in future interactions, but because honesty is needed in upholding agreements. Hill (1999)

maintained that happiness was only attainable through the fulfillment of contracts and agreements. Thus, decisions are ethical if and only if the overriding principle is met. As an example, lying is wrong at all costs, because telling the truth and being honest are societally agreed upon behaviors. Other examples of agreements that society creates for socially accepted conduct are relationships between parent and child, physician and patient, and employer and employee (Beauchamp, 1982). Relationships such as these are dictated by societal rules that indicate the general manner in which the relationship is to be maintained.

Deontologists on the whole maintain that doing unto others as you would have done unto you, or The Golden Rule, which relates directly to what Kant called the Categorical Imperative, should be the essence of ethical behavior (Beauchamp, 1982). Kant stated, “I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law” (as cited in Beauchamp, 1982, p. 402). The deontological perspective represents half of the major bodies of work in philosophical ethical theory.

In summary, deontological theory indicates that the good or bad, correct or incorrect behavior is evaluated by the responsibility or obligation that serves as the catalyst to the action (Pojman, 1995). Deontology theory means that the end result or, the consequences are irrelevant to the action that needs to be taken. Beauchamp and Childress (1994) asserted that individuals who are deontologists recognize ethical mandates in any and all behavior. For student affairs professionals, contributing to the holistic education, safeguarding rights, fostering growth and development, and enhancing institutional and divisional programs, create the deontological ethical mandate that guides campus policy (Coomes, 1994).

The other major portion of work in philosophical ethical theory is utilitarian ethics.

Utilitarianism was most advanced by the writing of John Stuart Mill (1859). Utilitarianism conceives the moral life in terms of intrinsic value and means-to-ends reasoning.

An act or a rule is right insofar as it produces or leads to the maximization of good consequences (Bentham, 1789; Hume, 1975; Mill, 1859). The example of Stanley Milgram (1961), a Yale University professor, illustrates this philosophy best. This researcher's experiment on obedience through the use of a shock generator was seen as having a beneficial end because it explained the phenomenon of adhering to the rules, although some deception took place and participants were minimally harmed. Milgram believed knowledge gained from his experiment far outweighed the deception that took place. For Milgram, the means to obtain his data justified his ends.

Utilitarianism maintains that an action is right or wrong as determined by the benefit received or the harm induced on the people (Beauchamp, 1982). It is based on two premises: (a) that an act is ethical if it brings about the greatest possible good and (b) the best ethical decision illustrates the right choice (Beauchamp).

In summary, a utilitarian approach to ethical decision-making indicates that the consequences of an action should decide the action; this contrasts with a deontological approach to decision-making in which the end result is irrelevant. In student affairs administration, where student learning and development and the development of moral and ethical values are primary goals (Student Personnel Points of View, 1949), an ethical decision may depend upon the extent to which the action facilitates student learning (ACPA, 1992). Although the virtues of Aristotle, the deontology of Kant, and the utility of Mill explain some values in ethical decision-making, many of the values for ethical decision-making lie in justice and caring orientations.

DeMarco and Fox (1986) maintained that traditional theoretical ethicists fail to address practical issues and apply their knowledge. According to the Institute of Society, Ethics and the Life Sciences (1980), “applied ethics is moral inquiry directed to making actual choices in moral conflicts” (p. 15). In applied ethics, the critical issue is whether or not the end result was an ethical decision. Still, applied ethics is criticized because it lacks the personal inquiry of theoretical frameworks from the writings of philosophers like Aristotle, Kant and Mill. The theoretical writings of Aristotle, Kant and Mill among others provide a solid foundation to more fully understand the justice-oriented perspective of Kohlberg (1969) and the paradigm of care of Gilligan (1982).

An Ethisch of Justice

Contemporary philosophers, educators and policy analysts have expanded upon previous philosophical works. Still, the study of ethics has been seen as an analysis of particular and discrete actions as opposed to a way of being. Dewey (1902) considered ethics as the study of behavior as it is deemed right or wrong, correct and incorrect, with no compromised or gray areas of the whole person’s experience. More contemporary ethicists conceptualize ethics as based in the concept of justice (Beauchamp & Childress, 1994; Goddard, Soder & Sirotnik, 1990; Kohlberg, 1981; Sergiovanni, 1992; Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 1998).

In the 20th century, individuals such as Piaget (1948) and Kohlberg (1969) examined morality as it pertains to ethical decision-making from a psychological point of view. Kohlberg (1971, 1976) created a hierarchy of moral reasoning, which emphasized that humans morally mature in a series of stages.

Through examining the responses to moral dilemmas, Kohlberg (1976) explored the contrasts in how children approached various situations. Kohlberg (1969) believed that the most

mature moral reasoning is based in applications of universal principles, societal agreements, and fair but abstract laws. Thus, the essence of the justice perspective is both deontological and utilitarian. The justice perspective is a series of logical progressions (Noddings, 1984).

The research of Kohlberg is an important contribution towards the justice paradigm in the study of ethics. Kohlberg's (1969) stages of moral development have been used to assess one's ethical development. Divided into three levels, pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional, Kohlberg's six stages of moral development are summarized in the following manner. The pre-conventional level, comprising stages one and two, are illustrated with the characteristics of compliance and penalties as leading factors. The penalties or punishment one may face is from an authority figure, and compliance with rules and regulations is as a result of fear of a penalty or punishment. In stage two moral reasoning is characterized as self-interested and self-centered. The basis for ethical behavior is an exchange of positively perceived behavior for some reward. Together, these two stages comprise the pre-conventional morality level.

The conventional morality level is also divided into two stages (Kohlberg, 1969). In stage three, individuals, typically adolescents and young adults, want praise and approval from important others and they determine what is right and wrong based on what these important others would see as right and wrong. Their attitude is characterized by a desire to be perceived as good. In stage four, a person recognizes the importance of rules and order, which is important for order in society. The moral thing to do in this stage is what is considered right within the prevailing social order. Thus, for someone in this stage, maintaining societally agreed upon laws is most important. This stage is characterized as less about authority and more about social order and maintaining it, which is one of the characteristics that distinguishes this from the less mature stages, one through three.

Level three, post-conventional morality, consists of two stages (Kohlberg, 1969). In stage five of Kohlberg's moral development, individuals come to recognize the role of principles. Similar to utilitarianism, stage five is based upon societal agreements. In this stage moral development does take into consideration the consequences of an action for the benefit of the society as a whole. In stage five there is a greater critical acceptance of the social order combined with efforts to change the order legally, without acting outside of it. It is in this stage that a person may see multiple ways to address an ethical dilemma given the multiple societies that may exist. Last, in stage six, behaviors are highlighted with a strong commitment to principles which may or may not fit with the prevailing social order. In stage six, justice and equality are the prevailing and most mature characteristics of a principle. Kant's Categorical Imperative and the Golden Rule, for example, are applicable at this stage. It is in stage six that a person believes that ideas of justice and equality transcend multiple societies and should be applied universally.

Rest and Narvaez (1994) asserted that Kohlberg's stages "do not depict progressive separation and isolation of individuals from each other, but rather how each individual can become interconnected with other individuals" (p. 8). Kohlberg (1969) maintained that his stages occurred one stage at a time, and men and women, boys and girls, would experience each stage. Further, Kohlberg's emphasis was not on what one thinks, but rather how one thinks about a problem. There was a separation between form and content (Rest & Narvaez).

Kohlberg (1969) believed that formal education has the potential to present cognitive challenges that facilitate participants' movement through the stages. By working through cases and dilemmas participants would see the benefits of the advanced stages and would in time be able to attain them. Gilligan (1982) critiqued Kohlberg's (1969) research and stated that a focus

on only one way of constructing morality, (e.g. justice orientation) is a limitation of Kohlberg's work.

An Ethisc of Care

Many of the philosophical and psychological perspectives on ethical development were limited by only utilizing a justice perspective. Feminist scholars such as Beck (1994), Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) and Gilligan (1992) have challenged research that places cognitive development attributes generally associated with women as beneath those generally associated with men. Gilligan (1978) broke the justice orientation paradigm previously established by asserting that one's moral orientation could not be only understood by viewing dilemmas in solely a rights orientation. Rather, Gilligan (1982) brought forward another perspective that included relationships. Gilligan (1982) contended that Kohlberg's (1969) justice orientation is found in concepts like the Golden Rule, rights and fairness. As another perspective, her ethic of care is found in concepts of relationships, or "of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 62).

Many researchers (Delworth & Seeman, 1984; Ford & Lowery, 1986; Langdale, 1986; Liddell, 1990; Noddings, 1984) have argued in support of Gilligan's (1982) assertion through their studies. They claim an ethic of care is not superior or inferior to a justice orientation; it is more inclusive. Other feminist perspectives that have supported an ethic of care include but are not limited to Marshall (1995) and Gilligan, Ward, and Taylor (1988).

Gilligan (1982) found the existence of two distinct moral voices when she compared the responses of two sixth grade participants—a boy “Jake” and a girl “Amy” – in a rights and responsibility study. “Jake” and “Amy” responded to the Heinz dilemma developed by Kohlberg.

In the dilemma Heinz has a dying wife and has to decide whether or nor to steal the antidote to save his spouse.

In the analysis, the two sixth graders approached the dilemma in different ways (Gilligan, 1982). Based on deontological beliefs, Jake believed that Heinz should steal the drug because unjust laws are meant to be broken and societal agreements would allow payment for the drug to occur at a later time. Amy on the other hand believed that Heinz should not steal the drug because of the influence of stealing on the relationships between Heinz and his spouse and others who might be involved. Amy saw the dilemma not as “a math problem with humans but a narrative of relationships that extends over time” (Gilligan, p. 28).

The purposes of Gilligan’s (1993) research were varied. First, she wanted to “bring women’s voices into psychological theory and reframe the conversation between women and men” (Gilligan, p. xiv). Second, Gilligan wanted to “learn what it means for women and men to live in relationship and what to do amid conflict” (p. xiv). Third, Gilligan sought to “understand the differences between women and men’s moral ‘voices’” (p. xiv). Fourth, Gilligan wanted to “transcend the age-old opposition between selfishness and selflessness, which have been staples of moral discourse” (p. xix).

Although debate continues regarding the question of gender differences in moral reasoning, Gilligan (1993) and other feminist ethicists (King & Kitchener, 1994) have argued that previous research had assumed that women’s morality was inferior to and less developed than men’s because women did not articulate their reasons for a particular choice in the same way men stated their beliefs. “The father might sacrifice his own child in fulfilling a principle; the mother might sacrifice any principle to preserve her child” (Noddings, 1984, p. 37). The question remains, why might this be so?

Gilligan's (1982) ethic of care sheds greater light on ethical decision-making. Yet, feminist ethicists raise the question, "What is caring?" (Kaminer, 1990; Welch, 1990). Callahan (1991) asked if caring is like empathy? Compassion? Love? Nash (1996) questioned if the ethic of care is "simply another general action guide - a principle like autonomy or beneficence - dressed up in gender correct language" (p. 159). Nevertheless, Gilligan's (1982) research aided students of ethics in understanding ethical decision-making because it took another approach to understanding relationships.

In summary, the essence of the caring perspective is a perspective that focuses on relationships and responsibilities for and with another person (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984). The caring perspective is a manner of behavior characterized by generosity and compassion, nurturing of relationships, and responsiveness to self and others in a situation (Gilligan, 1993).

Gilligan (1982) challenged Kohlberg's (1969) stages, Kant's deontology and Mill's utilitarianism to insist that caring, nurturing, and relation based approaches to moral development is a more inclusive perspective on moral development. "The contrast between a self defined through separation and a self delineated through connection highlights different values and principles to resolve dilemmas" (Gilligan, 1993, p. 35). Broadly defined, a self delineated through connection is Gilligan's challenge of caring. This challenge comes about because caring allows for the nuances of the situation to be explored and felt. This allows individuals to fully embrace the diversity of the dilemma at hand regardless of the reason for difference. This is important to student affairs work because notions such as Aristotle's "good" is contextual in ethical decision-making.

Aristotle's (1963) perspective suggested that the best action or behavior is the one that will bring about the cultivation of the value of being just. For student affairs professionals being

just may conflict with a value of care. Still, the value of justice is connected with the value of promises exercised by Kant (1959).

Noddings (1984) maintained that the caring perspective indicated that there is a sense of obligation to a person and not some inanimate object or notion such as a law or societal agreement as indicated in the justice perspective. Noddings believed that it is crucial to moral reasoning to fully explore the qualities and factors that bring about the dilemma. She rejected the notion of universalizability, a component of the justice perspective, in stating “that condition which makes the situation different and thereby induces genuine moral puzzlement cannot be satisfied by the application of principles developed in situations of sameness” (p. 85).

Sailer (1990) summed the differences between the justice perspective and the caring perspective in the following manner. Justice is about reasoning, autonomy, worth of self, fairness, abstraction, justification and avoidance of wrongdoing, whereas the caring perspective is about attitude, relationships, worth of activity, care, context, and motivation.

Still, decision-making may not be so easily compartmentalized into perspectives of justice and care. Kitchener (1985), Nash (1996), and Fried (1997) suggested that decision-making can be more than issues of justice and care and that often practicality, ethical obligations, political preferences, background beliefs, and individual narratives further enhance the decision-making process. Ethics in education and particularly in student affairs administration have embraced more integrative approaches to the issue of ethical decision-making and thus have incorporated more room for a broader range of models on applied ethics besides justice and caring.

Models of Ethical Decision-Making in Student Affairs

The reality of ethical decision-making in student affairs administration demands that educators and practitioners change the manner in which they have previously thought about ethics, values, and decision-making (Fried, 1997). Fried wrote, “Both intellectual and emotional flexibility are necessary to maintain professional effectiveness in this environment” (p. 108). An evolution of models from Kohlberg (1969) to Gilligan (1993) and from Kitchener (1985) to Nash (1996) illustrates the expanding research on moral development to include ethical inquiry.

Winston and Saunders (1991) maintained that ethical behavior depends upon an individual’s ability to discern which “acts or behaviors are right or ought to be done as well as determining the epistemological justifications for ethical statements or assertions” (p. 331). Many of the ethical situations that arise for senior student affairs administrators may be of an urgent or complicated nature where personal integrity is involved. Although it is easy to choose between right and wrong actions, it is difficult to choose between two actions that are both right (Badarraco, 1997).

In this section, three models of ethical decision-making in student affairs are explored. The first is Kitchener’s (1985) model which has been widely embraced by student affairs professionals and serves as a foundation for the ACPA (1990) statement on principles and standards. The second framework is Nash’s (1996) contribution to ethical decision-making. He presented three moral languages to assist educators and human service professionals in grappling with ethical choices. Last, Fried’s (1997) commentary on creating a new paradigm for ethical decision-making which embraces one’s whole identity is discussed.

Kitchener’s Contribution to Ethical Decision-Making

Ethical complexities in student affairs work can be understood through the work of Kitchener (1985). Although Beauchamp and Childress' (1979) research on ethics serves as the basis for her writing, Kitchener's work is used today by many student affairs professionals. Beauchamp and Childress identified four principles in their work as applicable to bioethics. The principles were maleficence, beneficence, respecting autonomy, and justice. In addition to these principles, Kitchener's work also identifies honesty as a necessary principle of cognitive development. Kitchener's work combined with that of Beauchamp's and Childress' have given student affairs professionals a framework to view ethical situations: (a) respecting autonomy, (b) doing no harm, (c) benefiting others, (d) being just, and (e) being faithful.

The first principle of autonomy holds that student affairs administrators will respect the wishes of others and, within legal parameters, will not overrule fellow staff, administrators or students (Kitchener, 1985). The second principle of doing no harm instructs student affairs professionals to refrain from activities or decisions that may cause physical or psychological harm to another person. The third principle of benefiting others balances the principle of autonomy by instructing student affairs professionals to do what is in the best interest of the student or fellow staff member. The fourth principle of being just prompts student affairs administrators to examine how proposed actions are different from or similar to actions in the past, under comparable situations. The fifth principle of being faithful mandates that student affairs professionals be truthful and honest.

Despite the wide usage of Kitchener's (1985) research by student affairs professionals, Upcraft and Poole (1991) suggested that the applicability of Kitchener's principles for settings in education is limited. Indeed, research from Crawford and Nicklaus (2000), Davis (1999), and Rest and Narvaez (1994) suggested that the work of Beauchamp and Childress (1979) upon

which Kitchener's work is based may not entirely fit with educational environments, and that different models may be more appropriate.

Nash's Contribution to Ethical Decision-Making

One example of a model that is based in an educational setting is the research of Nash (1996). Nash took a context sensitive approach to expanding the framework for ethical decision-making. Nash created three moral discourses for educators and human service professionals, which guide them in ethical dilemmas.

Nash (1996) argued that background beliefs, the first moral language, were the core beliefs of an individual. The beliefs were the foundations upon which individuals based their beliefs about right and wrong or ethical and unethical behavior. Because no two people have the same life experiences, the beliefs will differ from one person to the next. He maintained that understanding and recognizing background beliefs enabled professionals to defend their situations in both the second and third moral languages. According to Nash (1996), background beliefs are metaphysical, or hidden, because those beliefs are not shared widely.

The second moral language is the language of the smaller communities that make up one's life. The communities that Nash (1996) referred to may be instrumental, sentimental or constitutive. This type of language included the families, churches, schools, friendships, education, vocation and religions of an individual person. In Gilligan's (1982) work, she illustrated the importance of smaller communities in relationships when she wrote "the vision that everyone will be responded to and included, that no one will be left alone or hurt is found in this tangible memory of the small communities in one's life" (p. 63). Stories of caring, and memories of what caring looks like, can be found in the stories of the second moral language.

The third moral language is what Nash (1996) referred to as the language of moral principles and theories. This is the language much of the discussion on ethical decision-making has used until recent years. Educators who want to build a case for a particular decision use this type of language. Human service professionals use this type of language in order to appeal to others and secure an agreement that a decision is ethical. According to Nash, this language can be a sterile way of communication between individuals and is most often used in secular-pluralistic society. Summarily, justice perspectives are often found in the third moral language. Together, these three languages of background beliefs, smaller communities, and moral principles and theories provide a framework for student affairs professionals to explore their own moral stories and thus ground their ethical decisions.

As a way to integrate the three languages into a framework, Nash (1996) proposed the following questions: (a) What are the competing choices in this particular case? (b) What are the consequences and outcomes of each decision? (c) What are some of the important background beliefs that play a role in this particular scenario? (d) If a decision was to be made in character, what decision would it be and why? (e) What expectations has the student affairs profession established regarding this ethical dilemma? (f) How would this decision be defended, and (g) What is the final decision concerning this ethical dilemma?

Nash's (1996) moral discourses enables educators to probe deeply, share their own religious, autobiographical, and philosophical stories as well as what personal and professional values they deem important. Similarly, utilizing a framework of probing personal stories and beliefs, Daniel (2001) examined decisions made according to the personal ethics of practicing school principals. Through the use of two focus groups of educational administrators, the result of this research was a deeper understanding of the link between the societal and background

forces that shaped practicing school principals' thoughts and ethical development theory. An unanticipated result was the discovery that many of the principals lacked insight into their own motivations and ethical development. It was discovered that the administrators believed ethics were firmly rooted in faith. A recommendation of the study is that more in-depth training be provided for potential administrators around not only the issue of ethics but also how ethics are applied in personal lives.. Daniel suggested that a better understanding of the role of ethics in personal lives will lead to greater use of ethical principles in practice.

Fried's Contribution to Ethical Decision-Making

Also recognizing the importance of stories is Fried (1997). The introduction of a “new paradigm” (Fried, p.10) took into account the personal stories and narratives of individuals to better understand the context of ethical situations. Fried wrote, “ethical and educationally sound practice … requires open discussion …because many of these policies were based on the unacknowledged acceptance of principles...” (p. 10). Fried asserted that ethical decision-making in environments as diverse as higher education is not an easy task. Further, she believed that student affairs professionals must fully involve themselves by reflecting on personal values and connecting themselves to the ethical dilemmas before them. It is through this personal reflection that educators can better understand the complex issues before them and make sound, defensible decisions.

The New Paradigm (Fried, 1997) is the belief that stories should not be taken literally but rather as metaphors. It is in these stories that student affairs professionals can come together and find some commonality in each other’s stories. “In this process, stories, metaphors and proverbs serve us well. They can provoke a shift in awareness from logic and linear thinking to intuition and circular or web like insight” (p. 108).

Fried's (1997) contribution to ethical decision-making built upon Kitchener's (1985) approach to ethics. Fried believed that it is crucial to move beyond the principles and discuss the importance of relational based models with, as Nash (1996) asserted, background beliefs. As Fried stated, the use of "stories, pictures and poetry stimulate our intuition and present new possibilities for ethical sensitivity" (p. 2).

Fried (1997) argued that educators should embrace culture as part of the decision-making process if they hope to consider themselves ethical decision-makers. She noted, that "making ethical decisions has become incredibly difficult and complicated because notions of right and good are embedded in cultural and community consensus about values" (p. 6). Thus, as the environments of higher education and student affairs in particular become more and more diverse and pluralistic, the inclusion and recognition of culture is important in creating frameworks to understand assumptions, values, and principles.

Reinforcing Fried's narrative approach, Selby (2000) provided a framework for clarifying ethical foundations and relating ethical decision-making to the realities of work in a political policy driven environment. This research was conducted with administrators and professors in the Midwest where the participants were asked to provide responses to a text on schools as dynamic and unique organizations. Selby utilized Borg and Gall's educational research and development framework, an industry based development model, as a methodology to design a new training guide for aspiring and practicing principals. Results included the realization that ethical decision-making is important to meaningful school leadership, actual training materials are limited, aspiring and current leaders see ethics as important, and principals believed that the opportunity to reflect, write and then discuss issues is a powerful and important experience. Similar to Selby's work, this current study allows participants to reflect on critical incidents in

their own past when they were faced with an ethical dilemma. Research endeavors of this type allow senior student affairs administrators the opportunity to carefully and deliberately revisit through reflection an important moment in one's career.

Narrative Ethics

Polkinghorne (1988) wrote that narratives and stories bridge theory and practice. Jackson (1992) stated that the term narrative "is not easily defined, partly because it is derived from several research traditions and partly because of the variety of terms that, if not quite identical in meaning, are closely related" (p. 133). Primarily, narratives are used as methodology. Cook (2000) described scholarly narrative as a means "to construct a story that has ... [a] cohesive concept" (p. 35) around a common theme. Foster (1986) wrote, "each administrative decision carries with it a restructuring of human life: that is why administration at its heart is the resolution of moral dilemmas" (p. 33).

The use of narrative in the social sciences began with Polkinghorne's (1988) text, describing the foundation of narrative work. He wrote that men and women are "active in shaping their own lives and that to study the events in a person's life required a method that would provide information about the person's own self interpretation of his or her actions" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 104). His research focused on the ways in which individuals understand the process of making decisions. The use of narratives in ethical decision-making conceptualizes ethics in a way that integrates individual backgrounds and beliefs that previous approaches to ethics have not allowed.

Glesne (1999) identified an ethical principle qualitative researchers should adopt. Glesne discussed the importance of understanding how the researcher makes sense of the socially constructed reality. Some examples of how researchers define socially constructed reality

through narratives are provided by Clanndinin and Connally (2000) and Bentz (1988). Clanndinin and Connally found that ethnographers and other qualitative researchers have utilized stories and narratives in educational literature since the time of John Dewey's (1916) Democracy and Education text. Bentz used narratives or conscious experiences of children as an interpretive method to analyze and establish a grounded theory of mature and immature child-parent relationships.

Nash (1996) argued that narratives are the foundation of one's ethical beliefs. Narratives make up the "most fundamental assumptions that guide our perceptions about reality and what we experience as good or bad, right or wrong, important or unimportant" (p. 36). It is these narratives and stories that make up the foundation of ethical decision-making. Brooks (2001) argued that the meaning derived from life, daydreams, and an individual's sense of self are narratives constructed as stories. He maintained that individuals use stories to better understand themselves, their motivations, and the motivations and actions of others.

Much of what has been understood about the actions and motivations of others has been related to the assumptions that individuals make about others. Schultz (1973), and later Schein (1985), maintained that everything one experiences as an individual is taken for granted, is unquestioned, and is unproblematic until it conflicts with another individual. Those moments of conflict are what Taylor (1992) identified as notions of a "background of intelligibility" (p. 37). This phrase refers to the point at which experiences and poignant points in one's past take on a special meaning in one's present. Nash (1996) referred to these experiences as the stories of the "background beliefs" or the "First Moral Language."

According to Widdershoeven and Smits (1996), the practice of using principles and standards to explain ethical decision-making is seen as "top down, general and rationalistic" (p.

227). Therefore, the study of ethics has expanded its focus in recent years. The inclusion of individual stories has changed the conversation and study of ethical decision-making. In the past, the study of ethics focused on actions and behavior, but through the analysis of stories, researchers are able to give actions and behavior a deeper context (Widdershoeven & Smits). Narrative stories provide context for both the story and the storyteller. Nussbaum (1986) asserted that narratives allow others to learn more about ethics than standards or principles can because narratives contain the intuition needed for ethical decision-making. Stories assist ethicists in understanding the behavior of others. Further, Lightfoot and Davis (1997) highlighted that writers, anthropologists, sociologists, and educators have used the voices and visions of individuals to create a portrait that only a narrative can provide.

Assumptions that cannot be proven or seen are said to be in a realm of moral authority (Nash 1996). Moral authority, as referred to by Nash and by Hunter (1991), points to assumptions about the very core of being that allow individuals to make sense of the world around them and provide some order and foundation for their lives. McGrath (1994) made a similar reference when she referred to mathematical axioms, the givens of science, as an example of the first moral language.

Because stories provide context, emotion, and insight into ethical dilemmas, stories as told by practitioners need to be examined in great detail. This examination helped me determine the values that senior student affairs administrators utilized in ethical decision-making. It is through analyzing stories and experiences of decision-making that the principles and theories originated. Thus, this study delved deeply into stories related to ethical dilemmas told by senior student affairs professionals.

Codes and Standards of Ethical Practice

Canon and Brown (1985), Delworth (1989), and Canon (1996) focused many of their writings on the issue of ethics in student affairs administration. Much of their writing during this time related to the development of ethical codes, standards and statements created in the early 1980s. As Canon (1989) explained, each of the codes developed by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association for Women in Education (NAWE) spoke to very specific audiences and represented the climate of the organization in which it was created. These codes served as the basis for ethical behavior for student affairs administrators in higher education.

Winston and Dagley (1985) studied the statements and their uses and limitations. As a premise, they maintained that the creation and existence of an enforceable code of ethics is not only at the very core of what it means to be a profession, but they inferred that the codes gave a level of credibility, professionalism, and power to the professional organizations. Further, Winston and Saunders (1991) stated that the profession of student affairs was a fledgling profession in regards to creating and establishing ethical behavior.

Canon and Brown (1985) argued that student affairs is predicated on the notion of “caring for individual students and on the need for supporting those who are reasonably effective in establishing close and meaningful relationships with students” (p. 86). Brown (1985) held that the mission of student affairs administration is to be the “moral conscience of the campus” (p. 68). These ideas served to reiterate what was written in the 1981 ACPA code of ethics and in the revisions in 1989 and 1993. Like Brown’s (1985) call to student affairs leaders to be a moral leader on the campus, the codes served to summarize the nature of behavior that is expected of student affairs professionals.

Winston and Dagley (1985) held that the ACPA code of ethics was the best code in their comparative analysis of statements of ethical standards. The 1981 code of ethical standards mentioned four areas of ethical responsibility: (a) professional responsibility and competence, (b) student learning and development, (c) responsibility to the institution and (d) responsibility to society. Each of the four areas of responsibility served to satisfy two goals. Winston and Dagley (1985) wrote that the 1981 code served “to develop a base of consensual agreement regarding the profession’s guiding principles and dominant values and to establish professional identity” (p. 53).

Although the ACPA code was deemed more helpful to student affairs practitioners than those of NASPA and NAWE, statements of ethical behavior had five limitations (Winston & Dagley, 1985). The limitations listed were (a) the statements were often adversarial, rather than being supporting, (b) the statements were reactive, rather than proactive, (c) the statements were not based in reality and rather were idealized, (d) the statements were based upon antiquated policies, rather than being forward-thinking, and (e) the statements revealed inconsistencies in the statements themselves (Winston & Dagley).

Another limitation is that few student affairs professionals fully read their profession’s code of ethical behavior in its entirety (Canon, 1985; Nash, 1996). This is problematic because of the role codes play in student affairs administration. Lebacqz (1985) said that codes are “guideposts to understand where stresses and tensions have been felt within the profession, and what image of the good professional is held up” (p. 68). These guideposts also should serve as ways to bound student affairs professionals’ narratives regarding ethical behavior and provide some shape to the practice of ethical decision-making by senior student affairs administrators.

Additionally, Blimling (1998) stated, “most ethical standards for a profession represent a series of compromises and generalities offered for various situations” (p. 66). Blimling’s assertion is that no one can expect ethical standards to speak directly to his or her own experience; rather standards can serve as a vague road map to help resolve an ethical issue.

Cogan (1953) stated that emerging professions in need of a core, nucleus and identity often create associations and codes of ethical behavior. Consensus was formed to create the ACPA ethics statement in 1981 (Winston & Dagley, 1985). Although the uses of ethical codes do provide some framework for contemplating ethical dilemmas, Badarraco (1997) asserted that the use of codes and standards presents two fundamental problems. First, the statements are too vague. Second, standards attempt to simplify the complex. Still, ethical codes provide a series of useful guidelines for educators and human service professionals in making ethical decisions. These guidelines, for example, include an indication of how a person should or ought to behave in a particular situation. They also summarize the ideals of the organization (Nash, 1996). Senior student affairs officers may have little else from their profession to point to for ethical considerations.

Sailer (1990) found that opportunities to discuss ethical issues were welcomed by student affairs professionals. Sailer examined whether or not student affairs professionals consider ethics in decision-making and whether or not student affairs professionals utilized the codes within their environment to aid them in decision-making. Through the use of focus groups, Sailer found that student affairs professionals consider ethics to an extent but Sailer was unclear if the codes helped the participant’s in the process.

Later, Busher (1996) examined the degree to which residential life staffs were familiar with the ACPA statement on ethical principles and standards. Busher found that the residential

life staffs were quite familiar with some sections of ACPA's ethical principles and standards. Through study groups of graduate students and residence hall directors, Busher's findings also ascertained that participants welcomed the opportunity to discuss ethical issues with each other.

Although not focused on senior student affairs administrators, Ain (2001) explored how social workers make ethical decisions. In Ain's study, 1200 New York City members of the National Association of Social Workers were sent surveys with closed and open-ended questions, with the central focus on how social workers sought to resolve ethical dilemmas in professional practice. Although only 25% of those sampled responded to the survey, the social workers who did respond showed great enthusiasm and dedication for working through ethical dilemmas in the manner in which they answered the open-ended questions.

Ain (2001) research found that few social workers depend upon professional codes or formal ethics education. Rather, social workers consulted colleagues, supervisors, trusted friends, and significant others. Although respondents commented on the importance of the value systems of the client, social worker and the profession, few social workers had a foundation for their own values system. Similarly, human service professionals such as senior student affairs professionals may rely on each other more than professional codes (Nash, 1996). Young and Elfrink's (1991) plea for further study regarding the critical values in student affairs administration illustrates the belief that ethical inquiry in student affairs is needed. Future study may help to clarify the basis of ethical decision-making in student affairs and for senior student affairs professionals in particular. My study sought to provide greater clarity about senior student affairs professionals and ethical decision-making by analyzing the stories and narratives of their experiences with decision-making.

Ain's (2001), Busher's (1996), and Sailer's (1990) studies served as background knowledge that aided me in understanding senior student affairs administrators' willingness to discuss their stories regarding ethical issues. Additionally, these studies indicated that many senior student affairs professionals, through their professional affiliations with NASPA and ACPA, were familiar with student affairs professional codes on ethical behavior and the principles on which they are based.

Context of the Student Affairs Profession

Student affairs began in 1869 when Charles Eliot, president of Harvard College, appointed Ephraim Gurney to the position of Dean of the College (Rudolph, 1962). Because Charles Eliot wanted to concentrate on goals of improving academic life and increasing support for Harvard, the hiring of another individual allowed him to be free to engage in other pursuits. According to Rudolph (1962) and Sandeen (1991) the separation of academic issues and student life issues became necessary because the complex issues grew too numerous for one person. Thus the values and the role of the senior student affairs officer began to take shape.

By the beginning of the 1900s, most colleges and universities had created the positions of dean of men or dean of women (Barzun, 1945). Additionally, these deans of men and women took on the roles of student advocates and "social welfare workers" (Sandeen, 1991, p. 12). Both Rudolph (1962) and Kerr (1963) suggested that, over time, colleges and universities became more specialized and concentrated on research. A consequence of this specialization and concentration would mean the loss of the familial, ethical and service values for students (Rudolph, 1962). So that those values would not be lost completely, the humanizing values for students were placed in the hands of the dean of students. At its basis, the senior student affairs officer position is a position of service (Sandeen, 1991). Brown (1985) maintained that, "the

common mission of the student services profession is being the moral conscience of the campus” (p. 68).

Many divisions of student affairs include areas such as athletics and recreation services, academic support programs, centers for health and well being, admissions and financial aid, housing and residential life, student activities and leadership programs, and judicial affairs (Sandeen, 1991). And, like any other organization, there are often competing demands and conflicting advice in student affairs on accomplishing a certain goal. Senior student affairs administrators in collaboration, with other campus colleagues, may in part address such issues as access, diversity, or pluralism by utilizing professional codes (American College Personnel Association, 1990; National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2001). Blimling (1998) asserted that the reality of successful administration in student affairs depends upon professionals’ ability to “pick their battles wisely and compromise as necessary on all but the most important core ethical decisions” (p. 67). The challenge for senior student affairs administrators is to decide which decisions reflect core ethical values that cannot be compromised.

Student affairs administration is the act of transmitting values (Sandeen, 1985). Student affairs professionals, regardless of role, operate within the profession’s stated values and principles (Blimling, 1998). Therefore, senior student affairs administrators need to understand their own value systems because they need to realize how their beliefs interface with those of others.

According to Rokeach (1973), a value is an “enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence” (p. 5). Rokeach’s research explored two types of

values systems, instrumental and terminal. Each type contains numerous values that are related to the work of student affairs professionals.

As Rokeach (1973) explained, an instrumental value is a value concerning moral values, which relate to interpersonal relationships. Self-actualization values have a personal focus. A terminal value denotes desirable end-states of existence that may be self-centered, or society centered, intrapersonal or interpersonal in focus (Rokeach). Terminal values include equality, a world of beauty, a freedom, wisdom, and so forth.

Young and Elfrink (1991) found that the field of student affairs was a profession laden with values. They began an inquiry into the essential values found within the student affairs profession. Young and Elfrink found the professions of nursing and student affairs to be analogous. Recognizing the resemblances of the espoused values (equality, justice, truth) of the two professions, they set out to discover the values of student affairs work. Young and Elfrink stated that the values in nursing programs: (a) altruism, (b) equality, (c) aesthetics, (d) freedom, (e) human dignity, (f) justice and (g) truth are related to the values in student affairs work. Their work resulted in the compilation of eight values, the seven listed as values in nursing programs and the additional value of community.

Regarding ethical standards and principles in student affairs administration, Canon (1996) wrote, “the resolution of ethical problems is an imprecise task requiring personal reflection, community concern and above all, tolerance for ambiguity and appreciation for the complexity of the human social condition” (p. 107). Canon (1996) stated that ethical issues can be addressed in three ways: (a) employing ethical principles, (b) producing codes and standards and (c) elaborating a general consensus supported by a profession or a community.

On the whole, the study of ethics in student affairs has increased through the years.

Despite this increase, the works of Kohlberg (1969), Gilligan (1982), Kitchener (1985), Nash (1996) and Fried (1997), among others, have not served to fully open the door of ethical inquiry. Rather, no one approach is sufficient. Therefore, a holistic perspective of ethics which incorporates elements of ethics of justice, care, principled values, and narrative approaches to ethics provided a comprehensive foundation for this current study into ethical decision-making.

Principled approaches to ethics, doing ethical things (Canon, 1996; Lampkin & Gibson, 1999), is limiting because it fails to recognize the nuances and complexities of real life. Virtue ethics, being an ethical person (Lampkin & Gibson, 1999), is insufficient in that it does not solve any ethical dilemmas, yet does take into account the particularities of the person and the situation. Narrative approaches to ethics still need to consider the foundation of principled ethics and virtue ethics as a way to better integrate various approaches to ethics and decision-making. Nash (1996) argued that no one approach will be able to address moral action; however, purposeful reflection regarding one's behavior will lead to moral discernment.

Educators in human service professions are beginning to conduct such purposeful reflection and to embrace the importance of background beliefs in their professional roles (Gardener, 2002; Margolis, 2001). Lampkin and Gibson (1999) argued that the stories of the past are the concepts in student affairs administrators' hearts and souls that allow professionals to make meaning of the world because of past experiences. As Nash (1996) wrote, the purpose of the first moral language is to "go as deeply as possible into the metaphysical basement in order to understand their [individuals'] unique, inescapable horizons of meanings, their ethical centers of reference" (p. 40).

This study focused on the position of senior student affairs administrator. With the use of stories, I explored what Fried (1997) identified, as the “connectedness of events, people, places, and activities” (p. 108). Through the exploration of their stories or what Nash (1996) identified as background beliefs, I was able to learn what principles and values these senior student affairs administrators identified in ethical decision-making. Through their stories and narratives the values and principles most crucial in ethical decision-making were revealed.

Calls for Future Research

“The practice of morality need not be motivated by religious considerations...The most salient characteristic of ethics—by which I mean both philosophical morality and moral philosophy—is that it is grounded in reason and human experience” (Pojman, 1995, p. 3). The landscape regarding understanding the values and principles individuals utilize when faced with an ethical decision is largely uncharted territory (Badaracco, 1997; Young & Elfrink, 1991). In the field of higher education, and student affairs administration in particular, little is known about the role of values and stories that administrators find most compelling when faced with an ethical dilemma. I assumed that administrators bring their convictions and their sense of the world into their offices each day. “Ethics is humanity’s way of making sense of life, the world, and the purpose of our being” (McGrath, 1994, p. x).

Regardless of whether or not the perspective is based in philosophy, psychology or narrative ethics, more than one paradigm may be needed to address ethical decision-making in student affairs. “Today, with the complexity of situations and cultures, it seems more important than ever for educational leaders to think more broadly and go beyond ‘self’ in an attempt to understand others” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001, p. 7). What is called for is a reflection on the values that guide the decisions of senior student affairs administrators.

The stories of senior student affairs administrators are crucial in finding the values and principles most utilized in ethical decision-making because of the power of the stories themselves. As Nash (1996) reflected on the importance of narratives and stories, “a religious story can be invoked to give some answers to the anomalies of human existence, so too, personal stories can be retrieved to help individuals understand what their moral commitments are about” (p. 77).

Research that investigates the values and principles senior student affairs administrators reflect upon when making an ethical decision is long overdue. The values and principles as expressed in the narratives and stories of senior student affairs administrators were the focus of this study.

Summary

This literature review presented a summary of theoretical and applied approaches to ethics which included both justice and care perspectives. Models of ethical decision-making in student affairs were reviewed including contributions of Kitchener (1985), Nash (1996) and Fried (1997). Next, narrative approaches to ethical decision-making were also examined. The literature review concluded with a history and summary of the role of values in the environment of senior student affairs administrators. This range of literature provided a comprehensive and connected map for exploring the values and lessons learned in ethical decision-making for senior student affairs officers.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this interpretive study was to explore the values senior student affairs administrators utilize in ethical decision-making as found in their own narratives. Narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) was used to understand principles and values of senior student affairs administrators when faced with an ethical dilemma and to identify their shared perspectives and narratives. This research provides an opportunity to better understand how values and stories influence ethical decisions of senior student affairs administrators.

The decision to use qualitative methods and narrative inquiry in particular was one that did not come lightly. Narrative inquiry is the process of sharing stories of the human experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This study is an exploration of the principles and values that serve to undergird the ethical decision-making of senior student affairs administrators and an analysis of the stories that make up that experience. This research strove to better understand and describe the nature of values contemplated in senior student affairs officers in higher education. Qualitative methodology, and in this study narrative inquiry, is most concerned with describing and understanding the experience of individuals (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Thus utilizing qualitative narrative inquiry allowed me, the researcher, to learn more about senior student affairs administrators who make ethical decisions every day that affect the lives of students.

Qualitative Inquiry

Understanding people's lives, stories, and behavior is a function of qualitative research (Brown et al., 2002). This study utilized a qualitative methodology of inquiry, the purpose of which is to "resolve the problem of accumulating sufficient knowledge to lead to understanding or explanation... [and to] form the problem into some kind of analysis" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985,

pp. 226-227). Qualitative research involves what Denzin and Lincoln (1994) called the study of “things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 2). Qualitative inquiry in its broadest sense gathers data that consist of words (Whitt, 1991). While quantitative methods produce data in the form of numbers (Kuh & Andreas, 1991), Ragin (1987) proposed that qualitative researchers use few cases but must consider many variables in data analysis.

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) presented five components of qualitative research that are particularly helpful in understanding the methodology undergirding this study.

Feature 1. Qualitative research is naturalistic because it has its roots in biology. The primary focus of the study was the behavior of the participants in the participants' own environment. “Qualitative researchers assume that human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs, and whenever possible, they go to that location” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 5). This study focused on what leaders of divisions of student affairs regard as the critical values when making an ethical decision in the setting of a college or university. The values may be different depending upon the setting. Thus, I paid close attention during the times I was able to observe the participant on his or her campus.

Feature 2. Qualitative research is most concerned with words and is thus descriptive. “The data include interview transcripts, field notes, photographs, videotapes, and personal documents, memos and other official records” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 5). The narrative of the story of what values student affairs administrators consider in ethical decision-making was the focal point of the data in this study.

Feature 3. Qualitative research is concerned with process. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) maintained that meaning and process are important factors in adding depth to qualitative

research. The nature of conducting qualitative research is time intensive, it may be necessary to revisit phases of the study. Thus qualitative research is research that allows for some flexibility and/or variety in the nature of the interviews. Each interview with the participant is expected to provide greater insight for the researcher. Some questions did not evolve until later interviews, allowing me to revisit or follow-up with participants interviewed early in the process. Thus, adherence to rigid protocols will not allow the researcher to fully examine the values in ethical decision-making for senior student affairs administrators. In this study, I conducted a pilot interview to hone my questions and the interview guide for the subsequent individual interviews I conducted with the 10 participants.

Feature 4. Qualitative research is inductive. After the data are collected and analyzed, more clarity is formed. The researcher does not begin the study in the hopes of proving or disproving a hypothesis. Rather, the theory emerges towards the end of the process. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggested researchers embrace deductive thinking in an effort to facilitate inductive thinking. They instructed researchers to “turn to deductive thinking and hypothesize possible situations of change, then go back to the data and look for evidence to support, refute or modify that hypothesis” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 148). In this study, I had to suspend much of my own thinking about important values in ethical decision-making in so far as they would lead me in directions that the data are not supporting.

Feature 5. Qualitative research is dependent upon accuracy of meaning. “Qualitative researchers are concerned with making sure they capture perspectives accurately” (p. 7). How individuals make sense of a given situation, an incident, and an interaction is a hallmark of qualitative research. In this study, there were at least three points of contact between the researcher and the participant; the initial interview, a follow-up interview if the story was unclear

or I needed additional information, and a third point of contact, member checks, which allowed the participants to read their own words and see what conclusions I made regarding the data.

Narrative Inquiry

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) asserted that narrative inquiry is the process of understanding the phenomena of the human experience through the use of stories. In this study, senior student affairs officers shared their personal accounts of values they considered while being faced with an ethical dilemma in a professional setting.

There are seven characteristics of narrative research design (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Those characteristics include (a) the experiences of the individual, (b) past, present and future experiences, (c) oral accounts of the experience, (d) retelling the story, (e) coding the texts for themes, (f) incorporating the text into the story, and (g) an exchange between the researcher and the participant regarding the story.

This study possesses each of these seven characteristics of narrative inquiry. In particular, the story of the senior student affairs officer is retold by the researcher in collaboration with the participant. In addition, the specific issue of an ethical dilemma in the professional lives of these educators is shared through a theoretical lens that illuminates the value and importance of story in the decision-making process. Specifically, the tenets of narrative design (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) are met in the following ways as outlined by Creswell (2002): (a) the individual experience of the senior student affairs officer is explored, (b) each participant shared information about his or her past, present and future as it related to ethical decision-making in student affairs, (c) the participants shared their own stories directly with the researcher, (d) the researcher chose specific ways in which to retell the story which included making decisions about how much of the story to tell and how much context to provide for the

reader, (e) the researcher identified themes within each story and then again across stories, (f) each participant's voice and specific words were used throughout their own story, and (g) there was an exchange where the participant was offered the opportunity to comment and collaborate on the retelling of their story.

Participant Selection

My goal was to select 10 participants for this study. In order to obtain an adequate pool of potential participants, I employed purposeful sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Patton (1990) urged researchers to use certain criteria to select populations that will be “information- rich” to achieve the goals of the study. The sample for this study was drawn from a population of senior student affairs administrators from institutions throughout the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions of the country. In an effort to have a rich pool of participants, maximum variation sampling was used to select participants from diverse backgrounds (race, ethnicity, gender, age, etc.) based on the nominations received.

I solicited nominations for participants for the study from the following sources: from members of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Region I Advisory Board and from members of the Council of Student Affairs within the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC) who were asked to nominate individuals to be included in the study (Appendix A). These groups of leaders had the opportunity to submit the names of senior student affairs administrators who they believed were deeply engaged in student affairs work. I requested that the nominator identify senior student affairs officers who, in their everyday actions at work, think deeply and complexly about the administration and ethics of student affairs. Thinking deeply and complexly about the administration and ethics of student affairs is operationally defined as serving as the “moral

conscience” of the division and the college (Brown, 1985, p. 83). The nominator had the opportunity in the nomination form to illustrate examples, if examples were known, of times the senior student affairs administrator used deep and complex thinking about ethical issues in student affairs work (Appendix B).

As criteria for participants for this study, the nominator was asked to consider those senior student affairs officers who (a) had responsibility and oversight for the division of student affairs, (b) had terminal graduate degrees, and (c) had at least one year of prior experience in that level of position. Beyond these criteria, the participants were selected based upon the diversity they represented (gender, age, racial/ethnic background) and the diversity of student affairs units they led, including a blend of the following: public and private institutions; institutions with small, medium and larger student enrollments; and institutions with religious affiliation and non religious affiliation.

Nine individuals, almost all from NASULGC, responded to my request for nominations. In total, 16 senior student affairs officers were nominated to participate in the study. Of the 16 nominated, two declined to participate because of schedule constraints, two did not reply to my requests for participation, and I had to turn down two persons who did not meet the requirements for the study, because they did not possess a terminal degree. A pool of 10 participants remained, and all agreed to participate in the study.

Profile of Participants

The participants, senior student affairs officers, included six women and four men. The senior student affairs officers were from five public and five private institutions. Additionally,

five of the participants identified as White or Caucasian and five identified as Black or African American. All ten participants had the title of vice president, and three also held the title of dean of students, as well. Specifically, each of the participants was the senior student affairs officer on his or her respective campus. In Table 1 are the pseudonyms for the participants and their institutions, both chosen by the participants themselves, the participants' sex and race, number of years participants were employed in the role of senior student affairs officer, and size, type and religious affiliation of institutions.

Table 1

Profile of Participants

| Pseudonym | Institution | Gender/Race | # years exp. | Inst. Size | Institution Type |
|------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------------|
| Joan B | Heritage U. | Female/Black | 4 | 7,000 | Private |
| Kyle M. | U of NJ | Male/Black | 2 | 13,000 | Public |
| Cynthia P. | Latin College | Female/Black | 4 | 9,000 | Private/Catholic |
| Richard S. | Hamptons U. | Male/Black | 10 | 15,000 | Public |
| Tina C. | Bell U. | Female/Black | 4 | 30,000 | Public |
| Alexis E. | Legacy C. | Female/White | 6 | 2,500 | Private/Christian |
| Paul O. | St. Mary's | Male/White | 28 | 2,500 | Private/Catholic |
| Amanda C. | Turner U. | Female/White | 5 | 30,000 | Public |
| Sharon D. | Round Hill | Female/White | 15 | 5,000 | Private/Catholic |
| Wesley E. | Airburg U. | Male/White | 9 | 4,000 | Public |

Procedures

To conduct a pilot interview, I found, through personal contacts, one senior level administrator to be interviewed during the early part of the Fall 2003 semester. The pilot interview was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the questions used in the interviews. Additionally, the pilot interview informed me of the approximate time commitment needed to conduct the subsequent interviews. In essence, the pilot interview allowed me to hone interviewing techniques and refine questions to deepen the discussion around values and principles used in ethical decision-making in student affairs. This pilot interview was useful in gaining helpful feedback regarding the sequence of the questions to be asked during the interviews as well as the effectiveness of the questions themselves. During the pilot interview there were some responses that would address a variety of questions and probes while other probes did not elicit much response. Those questions were removed or refined.

I considered the narrative of stories, the essence of phenomena, and the understanding of experiences to be the focal point of research, thus a qualitative inquiry approach as utilized (Merriam, 1998). In particular, narrative inquiry, a method of qualitative inquiry, was used. Stories of ethical dilemmas in the decision-making processes as told by senior student affairs administrators were collected during either face to face on-campus interviews or telephone interviews when the participant could not arrange for a campus interview.

Interviews

Dexter (1970) stated that interviews are the preferred method for data collection because interviews can get better and more data at less cost than other methods. Merriam (1998) added that often interviewing is the only way to collect data about various phenomena. Merriam's work may be most appropriate in this study, as interviewing was determined to be the most effective

method to get at the heart of one's values and ethics in decision-making. The stories people tell and the way they make sense of situations are useful methods to get some insight and understanding into the life and experience of a process or situation.

All of the interviews were conducted during the Spring semester of 2004. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews. Each of the 10 participants received, prior to the interview, an overview regarding the interview process (Appendix E). At the beginning of the interview process, I asked participants to tell the story of an ethical decision that caused them to think deeply and critically about their work in student affairs. Second, the participants were asked to respond to a series of questions designed to elicit greater discussion about the incident and themselves (Appendix F).

Six of the senior student affairs administrator interviews took place in their campus offices during site visits. The remaining four interviews were conducted over the phone. The participants in the study signed a consent form to insure that they were well informed about their role in the study. The form included important information such as (a) the purpose of the study, (b) interview topics and length and the opportunity for each participant to review interview transcripts, (c) how confidentiality would be maintained, (d) the participant's voluntary status and that he or she may withdraw from the study at any time, and finally, (e) my name and contact information (Appendices C & D).

Prior to the start of each interview, I reviewed the focus of the study and addressed any questions, problems or concerns of the respondents (Appendix E). The interviews included questions about the participants' recollection of a specific ethical dilemma. I explored the respondent's experience with ethical decision-making (Appendix F). During the interviews, I attempted to recognize the non-verbal communications of my participants and myself to gain a

fuller meaning of their stories. Nodding, inquisitive smiles, tone of voice, perplexed reactions, and verbal expressions of discomfort are all aspects that I noted in the behavior of participants as well as that of my own. I kept written notes during the interviews. Additionally, with permission, I tape-recorded each interview and had the interviews transcribed verbatim. The transcript of the interview was sent to each participant for the purposes of verifying the words of the participants but also as a means to provide the participants with an opportunity to change, add, or modify their initial words. Yin (1994) and Merriam (1998) argued that a proper undertaking of content analysis requires that the researcher have the actual communicated words to use as data. Yin and Merriam agreed that a tape of the interview is more than a transcript because it allows for deeper understanding and analysis. In this study, an audio tape recorder was used so that all of the interviews could be transcribed.

It should be noted that, after the initial contact, the participants were asked to choose a pseudonym to provide anonymity for the participants and their institutions. After the official interview and follow-up session (if it was necessary), I mailed a thank you card to the participants. Last, I reserved the possibility to conduct follow up phone interviews to confirm and verify the findings at a later point (Appendix G). The interview tapes remained in my possession, locked in a drawer, and were discarded six months after the study was completed.

Data Analysis

An analysis of the narratives and stories of senior student affairs administrators involves great responsibility. The responsibility involved understanding my own interpretive biases as well as protecting the vulnerability of the participants. Therefore, data were analyzed in the following manner. First, to get an idea of the interviews and stories in their totality, I read the transcripts. Second, I organized salient portions of the interview into broader categories,

including small units of data that could stand alone (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Third, the constant comparative method (Conrad, 1993), the process of organizing smaller units of data, was used as a method of systematically organizing the data to be analyzed. The use of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) resulted in the reduction of themes, phrases, and words. As the data are analyzed, each section can be separated into words, phrases and thoughts. From these parts, codes to further analyze the data can be created. By constantly asking questions of the data, flexible labels can be created to organize the data. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained, distinct categories or the unitized data can then be created. This process continues until all smaller units are included or excluded from a certain category, thus illustrating the emergent patterns (Delamont, 1992; Reinhartz, 1993). This was the process I followed to arrive at emergent themes.

Charmaz (2002) instructed that stories be analyzed on the basis of emergent themes. Glaser and Strauss (1967) instructed researchers to begin analysis of the data after each interview. An analysis of the direct quotes for contextual meaning eventually led to emergent themes. Strauss and Corbin (1990) emphasized the need for fluidity in the analysis process and a constant review of components and properties of the categories identified. I constantly reviewed the stories after each interview and searched for direct quotes of the participants to connect their meaning to an emergent theme.

The unit of analysis includes words or short phrases spoken in response to the interview questions. With an analysis of the data, patterns may emerge and categories may be formed. The assignments were initially conducted in what Glaser and Strauss (1967) called a “feels right” and “looks right” manner. Again, the use of the constant comparative method allowed me to develop categories that each represented a particular theme, principle, or value. As a part of data analysis,

Strauss and Corbin (1990) also instructed that follow-up sampling for clarity and accuracy, for example, may be required based on the words of the participants. I did follow up with each participant through member checking as a way to check clarity and the accuracy of the data.

However, the “feels right and looks right” manner was sometimes insufficient. In an effort to analyze rather than describe the data, Strauss and Corbin (1990) recommended the flip-flop technique. This technique allowed me to think in a way that reversed conventional thought, for example, if the participant used the word “good,” I reversed the word and considered “bad” in my analysis. This process of flip-flopping challenged my assumptions and promoted creativity in how I viewed the data. This technique enabled me to better understand the words of the participants by turning their statement inside out.

Abes (2003) stated that “no uniform approach exists for analyzing the data in a narrative analysis inquiry” (p. 63). I analyzed the context of the participants’ stories in words, lines and complete paragraphs. I first began by listing the themes found in their narratives. Once I had a list of emergent themes, I moved to coding the data. “Coding represents the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 57). Charmaz (1983) stated that coding in qualitative research is the process of creating categories and then subcategories based on the researcher’s interpretation of the data. This process is distinctive from other kinds of coding such as, quantitative coding. Strauss and Corbin (1990) presented three types of coding: open, axial, and selective. For this study, I used open coding.

Open coding consists of examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding can be done in one of three ways: line by line analysis, sentence or paragraph analysis, and the entire document. This analysis is done in an

effort to identify key words or phrases that may prove critical to the participant's recollection of the experience being analyzed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described this process as unitizing. "Units are best understood as single pieces of information that stand by themselves, that is, that are interpretable in the absence of any additional information" (Lincoln & Guba, p. 203). In an effort to understand each piece of information I collected from the participants, I used open coding to best retell the stories and remain true to the narrative expressed throughout the entire interview.

Establishing Goodness

The term "goodness" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) is used to determine the value of a qualitative endeavor. Arminio and Hultgren (2002) described goodness as "a way to define quality in qualitative research" (p. 447). In addition to hallmarks of goodness that Arminio and Hultgren outlined, such as epistemology and theory, methodology, method, researcher and participants as multicultural subjects, interpretation and presentation, and recommendations, this study also followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four techniques to ensure the rigor and quality or "goodness" of naturalistic inquiry. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability serve as a means to provide a study that is trustworthy and loyal to the hallmarks of qualitative research. Discussed below is a description of each approach and how it was utilized in this study.

Credibility

The design of this study provided opportunity for triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checks. Jick (1979) maintained that bias on the part of the researcher, the research design or the data would be appropriately addressed when the researcher has additional researchers, additional design methods, and different data sources. The concept of triangulation is addressed in the following manner: multiple sources of data (10 senior student

affairs administrators) and multiple methods of data collection (10 initial interviews, and follow-up interviews). Thus, multiple methods of data are a mode to achieve triangulation. The task to triangulate the data is one that includes finding where the data cross each other, discovering the meeting points and recognizing the gaps.

Patton (2000) maintained that peer debriefers are helpful in adhering to the methodological requirements of qualitative evaluation. I gained the assistance of two doctoral students in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at The University of Vermont. These peer debriefers were chosen for a number of reasons. First, these students have backgrounds in student affairs administration. They are also knowledgeable of the student affairs literature and were able to look at my analysis with critical eyes. Additionally, these debriefers came from diverse backgrounds in terms of race and ethnicity, gender and employment backgrounds. Further, these individuals had been engaged in the study of ethics and student affairs administration. Last, my peer debriefers were dedicated to seeing this study through to completion, because they had recently advanced to candidacy and were engaged in qualitative studies of their own. From the construction of the interview format to data analysis, the peer debriefers reviewed the study for accuracy and the logic of the arguments.

Stewart (1998) stated that multiple sources of data would permit the researcher to uncover disconfirming data. This study focused on ethics, and it was important that the rigor of interpretive study be met. Thus, I was obligated to seek out hypotheses that may or may not be in alignment with my initial thoughts. I first sought the truth in what I oppose and the error in what I espouse before finding the truth in what I espouse and the error in what I oppose (R. Nash, personal communication, November 6, 1996). Seeing the strength in views that I do not

agree with obligated me to continually revise my thoughts to ensure the representation of each case.

Transferability

To the extent that the information from this study can be applied to similar situations and similar positions, it will present valuable and practical information to other administrators and learners of student affairs work. Lincoln and Guba (1985) illustrated this point in their “means of thick description” (p. 316). Additionally, although not applicable to all senior level positions in higher education, other researchers should be able to make decisions regarding the appropriateness of transferability to other senior administrators in education.

Dependability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) encouraged the use of an inquiry auditor to further strengthen the case for dependability. In this study, the inquiry auditor did “examine the product – the data, findings, interpretations and recommendations and attest that it is supported by data and is internally coherent” (Lincoln & Guba, p. 318). The inquiry auditor’s own dissertation focused on understanding female presidential leadership and demonstrated his knowledge of interpretive design and analysis, specifically grounded theory. He has a background in student affairs administration, is employed at a different institution, is knowledgeable of the literature on ethics and ethical decision-making, and is of a different racial/ethnic background than I.

Confirmability

It is important for all researchers to recognize their own biases and prejudices as they engage in any study. It is more so the case for qualitative researchers who see the study and data through one particular lens; thus qualitative researchers’ own subjective lenses must be kept in check (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1985) cited Halpern for operationalizing the

audit trail. Halpern's categories included (a) raw data, (b) data reduction and analysis products, (c) data reconstruction and synthesis products, (d) process notes, (e) materials relating to intentions and dispositions, and (f) instrument development information. The inquiry auditor tracked and reviewed the process, steps, and conclusions I reached in completing this research. Documentation from my inquiry auditor detailing his audit of my study, including the process and procedures, is provided in Appendix I.

The Role of the Researcher

Integrity is one area in which Creswell (1994, 1998) and Bogdan and Biklen (1998) emphasized caution for qualitative researchers. As they wrote about the multiple roles of the researcher, they presented probes that the researcher should ask at the beginning of the design, during collection of data, during analysis, and in the reporting of any qualitative research. The questions they asked focus on issues of identity, how the researcher sees him or her self, how others may see the researcher, and past experiences that may inform how the researcher interprets the data. As Bogdan and Biklen asserted, “you may have to be more reflective in thinking about how to handle yourself and precisely what role to play if who you are has special meaning to your subjects” (p. 85). In naturalistic inquiry, the researcher serves as the main conduit for gathering the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, it is important to note how my own identity and story, both past and present, contributed to this study.

One story that shapes my moral identity revolves around the value of trust. As the youngest member in a fairly close-knit household, I depended upon the words of others to establish trust. My parents often spoke of trust being the bedrock of any successful family. This story about the awesome power of one's word carries over into my work and is ever present in

my personal relationships. For me, my word is a framework for living. It is how I was brought up, and it enables me to see direct linkages between my own values and my work.

The story involves a colleague who was interviewing a series of potential candidates for a position within his department. I had the opportunity to see all of the folders for the potential candidates and, when he presented the list of candidates for me to review, I noticed a glaring omission. None of the candidates he had chosen were people of color. Then another candidate came forward; without asking I added this new candidate to his list of interviewees. This person had little experience but met the posted qualifications for the position. Further, I saw potential in the written application and decided that the candidate was, at a minimum, worthy of an interview. My colleague, however, did not agree and informed me with the news that he did not wish to interview this person. When asked why, he responded that the candidate had little full-time experience and he needed someone who could hit the ground running. Still, the position had not called for significant prior experience and was at best an entry-level position.

I was faced with the choice of either confronting this colleague on what I deemed was a violation of philosophical and institutional affirmative action policies and higher divisional goals, or allow him to turn away this candidate. I chose to confront his actions. I tried to reason with him and explain my philosophy on why this candidate should at least receive an interview. He was resistant. I explained divisional and institutional philosophy and he resisted. He then looked me in the eye and informed me that he would interview this candidate if he were told to do so but that the candidate would never get the job.

I was then faced with the dilemma again. I chose to remove the candidate from his pool and, at the same time, inquire if it was possible to remove the position from this department altogether. To me, he violated a trust – the trust of the institution, the trust of the division, and

the trust of the student affairs profession by rejecting a candidate of color before conducting the interview. I did not believe that he could treat the candidate with the same kindness, dignity and respect that he might other candidates and thus, he should not interview this person. Further, I believed that the candidate would be successful in another candidate pool elsewhere in the division of student affairs. This is a snapshot of a longer story that shapes my values and continues to mold my professional identity.

Through much reflection regarding the issue of race in my professional life, I have experienced a deepened commitment to issues of diversity, specifically race and sexual orientation. This commitment allows me to see the ways in which the behavior of colleagues can manifest itself in the form of challenges becoming excuses that inhibit ethical decision-making. This incident has helped me to value the time spent on decisions and serves as a window into the decisions I make every day. For me, when an opportunity to diversify a staff fails, whether that diversity takes the shape of gender, sexual orientation, and in this example, race and ethnicity, it is an injustice to students, the program, the office, and the profession. For me, a trust has been violated when attempts fail and challenges are accepted as excuses not to hire women, people of color, individuals of gay, lesbian, or bisexual orientation, age, ability, or whatever the marginalized group may be.

In my professional role as the Associate Dean of Students, I see first hand how my values and principles translate into policy that affects student life on campus. In my position where I have responsibility for University policies and procedures, spiritual and religious life groups, research and assessment activities, and student ethical development, my own values and how I interpret the world come through in my actions every day.

As I conducted this research, I was aware that I was likely to be viewed as a student (completing my doctorate), an educator (at the University of Vermont), an African American man (skin color and gender), and married (by notice of a band on my left hand). There was a myriad of ways in which others may have perceived me because of their own stories and their background beliefs. I was upfront with my biases, acknowledged them and asked my peer debriefers and inquiry auditor to check my interpretation of the data for my bias.

CHAPTER IV

SENIOR STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICERS' ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING NARRATIVES

The purpose of this chapter is to tell the story of ten senior student affairs administrators' experiences with an ethical dilemma in their professional work. Through the use of story, the values and principles utilized by senior student affairs administrators in professional decisions are illustrated. Through the individual narrative of each participant, I present the central ideas of the many stories that each shared about his or her values and principles when faced with an ethical dilemma.

My analysis of the participants' interviews shaped the construction of the narrative; and is not intended to be interview summaries. Rather, to portray how each participant understood his or her ethical dilemma I share short sections of each narrative along with the values and principles each person described as important to him or her.

The themes that emerged from the participants' interviews guide the way in which I share the narratives of each senior student affairs officer. These themes typically involve the issues with which the participants wrestle daily. In addition, some issues the senior student affairs officers believed they resolved earlier in their careers are also presented. Though the themes differ for each participant, there are four consistent themes shared among participants, those being faith and spirituality, power and powerlessness, reputation and livelihood, and integrity and humanity.

The narratives focus primarily on the content of the participants' descriptions of their professional stories. However, while analyzing the data and composing the narratives, it became clear to me that the content of the participants' descriptions of their stories could not be separated

from their own identity and experience that guided the way in which they perceive themselves in their own professional roles. Specifically, it was clear that some participants constructed their stories by relying on phrases, words, or ideas about ethical behavior while others internally generated their own sense of self. I maintained that language as I retold the participant's story.

To demonstrate the relationship between the content of each participant's description of his or her story and reflection on critical values and lessons learned in ethical decision-making, each narrative includes a brief synopsis of the lingering thoughts or perspectives from that particular senior student affairs officer. The chapter is organized by first presenting the five stories of the senior student affairs officers who identified as Black or African American. Presenting these stories first was a decision I made because each of their narratives involved, in some way, an issue around identity, either race or sexual orientation. It should be noted that although not identified as a value or principle in relation to the research questions, racial background and gender identity were raised as factors in many of the participants' narratives. Next, I present the five stories of participants who identified as White. Following the stories of each of the 10 participants, I provide further analysis of the participants' narratives. The participants chose pseudonyms for themselves and their respective universities.

“Three Or Four Or Five Sides To Every Story”

Dr. Joan Baez at Heritage University

For the past four years, Dr. Joan Baez has been the Vice President for Campus Life at Heritage University, a prestigious institution in the Northeastern region of the country. Joan was anxious to be a part of the dissertation study because she had been thinking about a particular incident in more depth in recent months, while a friend on the West Coast had grappled with a

similar problem. Joan's story and background illustrated her decision-making style of utilizing fables from the Bible, in particular the story of King Solomon.

Joan began our campus interview by sharing with me that many of her thoughts are shaped by her current institution. The institution strives to not only be one of the premier research universities in the country but also the most outstanding undergraduate college in the world. Joan continued by describing Heritage as a community of communities where the beauty of the place is that everything is interconnected and permeable. It is the interconnectedness of Joan's identity, her position and its responsibilities that she says made her dilemma a peculiar challenge.

Joan described herself as "confident" in her ability to discern issues of justice and fairness. She indicated that the more difficult part for her was to do the right thing, not to just recognize what she should do. She continued:

Growing up we weren't necessarily the recipients of a just society when I was a child, because I was in the segregated South. But, within our family and within our community, I think my parents had a very strong feeling that it was important for us to weigh issues and try to be fair and be open to hearing that there's at least two, but usually three or four or five sides to every story.

Joan recalled her parents talking in great lengths about the need to provide justice and fairness to others because "it" had to start somewhere. Joan offered that she wanted to share two stories, both connected because both were issues that involve her race. As an African American senior student affairs officer she believed she had additional lenses on ethical behavior and higher education, with which to view incidents. She thought her lens on a particular incident could result in a more fair and just outcome.

“Should This Black Student Really Be Suspended?”

Joan shared this question posed to her by parents, students, fellow administrators, attorneys, and the president of the institution. She said that one of the campus newspapers took some pleasure in claiming the African American students on campus were there because of a special partnership program with inner city high schools or were admitted because of affirmative action. Joan believed the political climate made the issue very complex and she found that, in many instances, all eyes were on her as a sympathizer to students of color or a fellow recipient of affirmative action.

To explain her ethical dilemma, Joan offered that a Black student, while walking on campus, picked up multiple copies of the student newspaper because he was very dissatisfied with the way African American students individually and collectively were being portrayed. While gathering this stack of newspapers, the Black student was confronted by a White student, who happened to be, unbeknown to the Black student, the editor of that particular newspaper.

Joan recalled that the interaction may have gone as follows: the White student asked, “What are you doing with those papers?” The Black student replied, “They’re trash, and I’m going to dump them.” The Black student then proceeded to take a dozen or more of the newspapers. The Black student didn’t put them in the trash, but he put them next to a trash can. The White student ran to find campus safety and filed charges. The Black student had a hearing adjudicated before an all White student judiciary and was found guilty of violating free speech. The Black student was sanctioned to a suspension for a year. After the case became public and the Black student obtained legal counsel, Joan became involved.

Joan made a point of noting that the incident itself shouldn’t have produced much of an ethical dilemma for a senior student affairs officer. Institutions typically have standard judicial

procedures and, since Heritage has strict interpretations of free speech and individual rights, the case was, on the surface, quite clear to resolve. Additionally the student boards believed they had determined a fair and forthright punishment, although Joan noticed that the staff and students in the judicial office also were White. Joan realized that “maybe” because of her background and her own personal thoughts and feelings about speech, she “sensed that it wasn’t completely justifiable that the judicial board/organization did what it did.” Thus, Joan felt the need to intervene and review the case, especially since the appeal was made to her as senior student affairs officer.

I wanted to affirm the judicial board and not just arbitrarily or capriciously overturn a decision that the students felt had been fairly determined to be a right case. I also wanted to protect the individual student who might have been harmed. I wanted to make sure that the institutional message that we were giving was one that I could live with, would convey a message that even though people have a right to free speech they don’t necessarily have a right to control. This was about a Black student being kicked out of school, and based on the political climate of the place, justice was not being served.

Joan conveyed to me that she struggled to see any educational benefit of the judicial board’s actions. The goal of using the judicial process as an opportunity for instruction and educational benefit was not being met in her eyes. Joan expressed that this incident forced her to reflect on whether or not she was reviewing the case “just because my race was the same as the student’s who was offended.” She continued the questions by asking if she would consider reviewing the case “if it were a different circumstance or a different issue.” Joan found that she appreciated the opportunity to intervene in the case because it gave her a chance to consult with others, a value that she mentioned as important in her decision making process. Consulting with colleagues at other institutions on cases allowed her to get additional views on any given topic. Joan also expressed a desire to contribute to the archives of the institution because, with all eyes

on her, she had to be able to write a finding that would stand the test of time. Additionally, Joan wanted her finding to be viewed as fair.

The concepts of justice and fairness are very important for Joan. I inquired as to why that might be the case and she replied:

I have two parents and four siblings. We didn't have much money. What we did have was honor and integrity. My parents made some choices to be fair and right even when it cost us money or even when it cost us relationships. I grew up in the South. At home, there was just a great emphasis on justice...Within our family and within our community there was [justice].

Illustrating this idea of justice at home, Joan recounted the following about growing up in a family of seven and being in the position of the mediator.

As the third child of five in my family...I was always the mediating one. On a personal level and funny story, I remember a long conversation about who was going to get what piece of chicken at the table; we had a family of seven and had one chicken that had nine parts including the back and the neck. But then I digress but conversations like that were all about fairness and justice in a place of few resources.

As a life-long mediator of sorts, consulting others whom Joan trusted was important for her. She indicated that she typically draws on two areas when she needs "sage" advice: the law and the Bible. She indicated that she wanted to come up with a balanced, just and fair decision in the case of free speech, not only because it was the right thing to do, but also because everyone was looking to see what the "Black vice president was going to do."

I was really honored because a colleague told me I made a Solomonic decision. You know, like King Solomon figures out how to solve some problem without cutting the baby in half. I was very honored to have this particular person say that because I'm Black and people are always watching...checking me out...putting extra hoops and hurdles in front of me...so my stuff is always thorough. That's why it was really important for me to do a lot of research and to include it in my decision, you know, the rationale for coming up with the decision that I did.

Smiling, she shared with me that she gave the Black student a sanction of probation which, in essence, modified the sanction of suspension and yet still held him accountable. She recalled that her decision required both students to enter into ways to have dialogue about the issue, the newspaper and the portrayal of students in the paper. Joan shared with me that the President was so pleased with her rationale that the records of this case is now a part of the institutional records for other boards to consult, but more so, in Joan's words, "for the story of the institution."

Joan then offered that while much of her decision appears to have focused on the Bible, she does value the law because of the unbiased way in which it can be applied to any situation. She continued:

You know, in consultation with someone from the law school, I got a lot of information about technicalities and free speech...and the newspaper, since it didn't say, "One Copy Free," which that particular newspaper now does, there was no rule that said you couldn't pick up multiple copies of the paper and subsequently do what you want with those copies.

After reviewing the transcripts, Joan wished to offer an additional lesson learned that she believes is important in her process of decision-making around ethical dilemmas. Joan shared that a valuable lesson learned was that colleagues often wonder, and on occasion have even asked, if she was going to be more supportive of the Blacks, because she was Black. She continued that "I am always aware that I am, in a way, under a microscope. It is not such a bad thing because my values and stories are a badge of honor. I have strengths and attributes that some others don't." Joan admitted that it took years to understand the added scrutiny in which she has been placed by others. She experienced scrutiny as the senior student affairs officer and as a Black woman. She realizes that the stories which inform her identity give her a dimension of intelligence that is unique and special and makes her more qualified to do what she does.

Last, Joan claimed to be morally outraged at some of the actions that continued to take place on her campus. At the same time, she stated that she could not always let others know how she felt because of how she would be perceived. Joan offered that as Black woman with influence and power on a campus like Heritage, she finds she often has to “be in the neighborhood of an emotion, rather than wear it on her sleeve.” In other words, she often has to mask her personal feelings about a situation because it could be interpreted as weakness, rather than strength. Joan shared that she had to hold herself to a higher standard of ethical decision making because of the tendency for her to be questioned by supervisors, colleagues and subordinates. This behavior she kindly referred to as “a game.”

“Solomon-like Decisions”

Joan chose to discuss an ethical dilemma of whether or not to suspend a Black student who violated university policy. During our conversation she stated that she wanted to make a Solomon-like decision and that she relied heavily on the Bible. Joan made numerous references to her faith. At the same time, Joan found that she struggled with issues around her reputation and the consequences of her decision. When referring to issues of integrity, Joan spoke mainly of the colleagues and students with whom she worked. Joan also discussed her family and the lessons about truth instilled in her as a child by her parents. All four themes, faith and spirituality, power and powerlessness, reputation and livelihood, and integrity and humanity, were found in Joan’s story. The theme of faith and spirituality was the clearest theme through Joan’s many references to the Bible. Power and powerlessness was evidenced by the fact that Joan held some power as the senior student affairs officer on her campus, but at many times she felt powerless because she perceived people were always watching her to see what the “Black Vice President was going to do.” She believed she had to be very careful to maintain her

reputation as fair to all students. Thus, Joan thought that her livelihood, her staying power in the position was predicated on the fact that colleagues, parents, and students belief that she was a person of integrity as well as someone who was humane and took students' feelings and unique situation into account when making decisions.

“In The Middle, Between Two Masters”

Dr. Kyle Mitchell at the University of New Jersey at Burlington

During the study, Dr. Kyle Mitchell served as vice chancellor for student affairs at a satellite campus of the University of New Jersey. He had recently been promoted to the role of chancellor of another branch campus. Kyle was excited to participate in the study but shared that he was also a bit apprehensive. Kyle was excited because he had recently been asked to write an article about ethics. He stated that he was apprehensive regarding the study because the interview overview allowed him to reflect more deeply about an incident that was quite painful to go through a year earlier.

Kyle had only been in the role of senior student affairs officer for two years, although he had spent over ten years as the second in charge. I had the pleasure of interviewing Kyle, not on his campus and not over the phone, but on the morning of his keynote at a conference I attended.

Kyle grew up in a poor African American family where he became a classical violinist, a star lacrosse player, and eventually a student activist during his college years. Kyle offered that he has enjoyed a very “blessed” career in student affairs and is honored to work on a campus that values the practical applications of learning outside the classroom just as much as it does learning inside the classroom.

The dilemma Kyle chose to share with me involved his experience of being made aware of a major cultural change on his campus and feeling caught, as he stated, “in the middle

between two masters: the students and the entire cabinet.” His dilemma involved the demise of the Center for Black Students and the creation of the ALANA Institute, an academic support facility which provided counseling, academic and career advising, research assistance, and tutoring and workshops in the development of reading, writing and study skills for all students of color.

Kyle admitted to me that one of the hardest questions he has to consider each day in his role as senior student affairs officer is when to inform others of a decision that may have an influence on their quality of life. Kyle stated that sharing information with others, especially students, is similar to “walking an ethical tightrope.” In the dilemma Kyle shared, he believed his integrity, his reputation and his word could have been compromised.

“When Can I Tell The Students?”

Kyle began our time together by telling me about his weekly cabinet meetings with the president and the senior staff. The decision of what to do with the poorly maintained building, the Center for Black Students, was on the horizon, and no one outside of the president’s senior staff was invited to the conversation for information or consultation. In fact, Kyle was told not to mention anything to his staff or the students. He explained:

The Black Center where I had spent much time as an undergrad was the topic of conversation. The cabinet was considering whether or not it would continue to exist as it was currently standing. To be honest, the building was in bad shape. There was a lot of deferred maintenance, old and badly in need of renovation. It was an eye sore. At the same time, the building was symbolic to the many struggles that occurred on this campus and was a beacon of hope to many of the Black and Latino faculty, staff and students.

Kyle shared that as a result of ongoing conversations in the cabinet, it was apparent that some institutional leaders found the Center to be a negative symbol and a reminder of the institution’s past. To them, the building reminded them of a time when students were activists,

angry and misguided. Kyle also offered that because students had been relatively passive over the past ten years, the cabinet thought this would be an excellent opportunity to tear down the Center and create an Institute that would redefine what it meant to be a person of color at the University of New Jersey. Additionally, it was decided that because large sections of the campus had undergone major renovations in the past three years, and because the campus racial climate had improved, there might not be the need for a Center.

The administration offered six options to the campus. None of the options included leaving the facility standing where it was. Everyone felt hit over the head because this was the first they had heard about it although the conversation had been going on for almost four months. I felt torn because I know we should have told people earlier. At the same time, I live in both communities...I know some of my faculty colleagues saw me as a sellout. And I am sure the students felt I was not there for them either. Still, I needed the Cabinet to see that I could lead at an institution and see the bigger picture for the “campus transformation,” as they put it.

Kyle admitted that he reflected a great deal about honoring those of the past and educating those of the future. He shared that he found himself in a quandary between wanting to honor the memory of those students, faculty and staff that fought the administration to create the building 25 years ago. At the same time, he was told by another vice president that the building “represented nothing more than 25 years of trouble and would be taken down, plain and simple.”

Kyle said that he had not felt conflicted about the conversation regarding the Institute until the conversation moved from the private sphere to the public one. He had been led to believe that the other senior staff members were consulting with the appropriate groups and constituencies. Only later did he discover that they had only spoken with him because he was Black and this was the Black Center.

Now that is when I became angry. I had to tell them that I am not the spokesperson for the people of color on campus. I also felt alienated because you find out really fast that you are culturally different from everyone else. These people saw me linked and as a spokesman for the

community even though that is not my role. The cultural centers did not even report to me. In fact, at the time, none of the units in the diversity and equity unit reported to me. They had not done their homework and they were not going to hang me out to dry!

The campus was in a major political battle and Kyle was told by the president to resolve the matter and be the point person on behalf of the administration. Kyle informed the president and other senior staff that he would assume the role as point person for the issue but he was going to initiate a plan of dialogue and action. At a campus rally at which Kyle was not present, Kyle was identified as the person who wanted to close the chapter on the life of the Center and start a new story with the creation of the Institute. Many of the comments Kyle had made in private were taken out of context and Kyle was portrayed, in his opinion, by members of the cabinet, as someone who had intentionally not informed the students, staff and the faculty.

Kyle admitted that the incident hurt him deeply. He reflected upon his value of integrity, a value that he said he learned from his family and others he has admired throughout his life. He shared experiences with me of watching mentors and teachers be honest when it would have been easier and less painful to lie. One such story included an academic dean who admitted to Kyle that she did not hire a woman of color for a faculty line because of racist attitudes. This mentor acknowledged her feelings and expressed a desire to confront her biases. Kyle was impressed that she shared this with him for he would have had no way of ever knowing the truth. Kyle also offered that some of these same mentors and role models often gave him constructive criticism about his career and his work. He stated that he admired these people because they valued integrity and honesty.

Drawing upon past lessons learned and feeling unconnected from colleagues and students at work, Kyle decided he had to talk to his partner who was pregnant with their second child. He told her that he was going to confront the President in a private setting and publicly share his

thoughts about the Center and the entire process. Kyle and his partner had a game plan about what they would do if the plan went sour and Kyle was fired. Kyle noted that his partner was making “good money” so they were not too worried about the consequences but they realized they would have to make major lifestyle changes without a double income. His livelihood, he believed, could have been at stake based on how he responded to the President.

Privately, Kyle told the President that he was wrong to twist months of private conversations out of context. Kyle informed the President that he was going to publicly give his support for a seventh option about which the president knew nothing. Kyle talked about the values of power and integrity that enabled him to have this conversation openly and honestly with the President. “I have a great deal of power in my position; some comes from people who believe in me and I know will go the distance for me. The other part comes from knowing that I will go even farther for them.” Kyle continued his conversation with the President and stated:

You compromised my integrity and my reputation in the eyes of so many people who look to me for guidance. If I give that away to you then I have lost everything I have. I don’t have those other chips that you, Dan and Jeff fall back on. I am not the president, the provost or the vice president for administration. I am however the vice president for student affairs and I was hired to do a specific task and that is exactly what I am going to do. Telling tales and selling out to you is not in my job description and I am going to tell everyone that at 2 o’clock today.

Kyle recalled leaving the President’s office feeling relieved that he was honest but afraid of what the consequences might turn out to be for him, his family and his career. In the end, the President came to him and apologized for his behavior and that of other members of the cabinet. The President asked him what this seventh option might be and Kyle gave his suggestions. The President then decided that Kyle should continue with his 2 o’clock meeting and offer the seventh option, which included using part of the old structure in the creation of the new building

as a sign of honor, as endorsed by the President. Kyle remembered the President saying that he was impressed by Kyle's integrity and would honor him for his courage in the near future.

After reading the transcripts and hearing me re-tell the story, Kyle shared the following:

This process allowed me to reflect about something that hurt me very deeply. I was able to reflect on it with more mature eyes. At the end of the day, it was as I told students it would become. It was an inspiring tribute to the promise and potential of tomorrow but also a reminder of the past we cannot forget. I feel good about that. You allowed for me to identify this honesty, this integrity piece for me. I don't think I saw that before. I appreciate that.

Kyle shared that the value of honesty was one that he carried with him since he was a child but had not identified its role in his life until he had the opportunity to relive this ethical dilemma.

"The Conflict For Me Was Basically The Integrity Part"

Kyle's story focused mainly on the destruction of the Black cultural center and the perception of colleagues and students that Kyle was supportive of the center's demise. For most of his story, Kyle discussed the issues of integrity and humanity and reputation and livelihood. He made frequent references to these themes. Kyle believed that his relationship with the Black students on campus would be ruined if he did not correct the misperception about his behavior. At the same time, he suspected that he might be terminated from his position if he exposed the President's feelings. Although to a lesser extent, Kyle did mention notions of power and powerlessness but often these references were in relation to the possibility of his losing his job. Regarding issues of faith and spirituality, Kyle made a couple of references during our conversations about his faith.

"God Answers Prayers"

Dr. Cynthia Pippin at Latin College

Dr. Cynthia Pippin, for the past four years, has been the Vice President for Student affairs at Latin College, a medium sized Catholic university. Latin is an institution focused on the emotional, spiritual and character development of students. The diversity within the staff and faculty mirrors that of the student body, with the vast majority of students being White and Irish. The staff and faculty are heavily male dominated, and Cynthia is an African American woman who is not Catholic.

Cynthia grew up with a large family where she attended church on a regular basis until she became an adult and became disenchanted with organized religion from time to time. She shared that she was often the mediator in many family disputes especially in later years when organized religion played a lesser role in her family's life. Last, Cynthia admitted that she had a number of struggles as a child.

As a child you're taught that God answers prayers. As a young child I had to deal with some very difficult issues in my life. There was no one to help me deal with those issues. I know it sounds horrible but all I had was God and my faith. I had been taught that you could depend on God. I know I carry that with me throughout my life.

Cynthia also noted that one of her goals is to provide opportunities for students and others to share the moments of pain that they carry throughout their lives. Cynthia believed that these moments of pain are opportunities for growth. When faced with a difficult decision, she often ponders the chances for healing. She continued:

I think most about how my decisions are going to affect people, not tomorrow but next year. That is why personnel decisions are the hardest. When you are turned down for a position, it stays with you, for good or for bad, but it stays forever.

During our conversation in her office, Cynthia offered that her dilemma focused on a new position, Director of Research, Budgets and Planning, in the Office of the Vice President. This

particular position was newly created and combined the complex attributes of two positions previously maintained in the Office of the Vice President. The two positions that were combined included the Director of Assessment & Planning and the Coordinator of Finance & Budgets. The position, Director of Research, Budgets & Planning, would be responsible for managing the division of student affairs' human and financial resources, and also directing the planning and assessments efforts for all of student affairs at Latin. Cynthia offered that her search to fill the position led her to two internal candidates. One candidate, a Black woman, worked as an assistant director in one of the student affairs units. The second candidate was a White man, who was most recently employed in the institution's budget office and was a relative of the institution's vice president for human resources.

Cynthia described her dilemma as this:

Do I hire this Black woman who in terms of background in student affairs, assessment work, demeanor, and style would fit really well with the associate vice president and I [sic]. Or, do I hire this White man who has proven himself through his work with budgets, and is the top choice for the Directors and for the Vice President for Human Resources. The woman has little experience with budgets of this size and the man has no student affairs assessment.

To complicate matters, Cynthia informed me that her associate vice president is also a Black woman. Hiring the woman would make all three positions in the Office of the Vice President held by Black women. Hiring the man would make the leadership of the Division heavily male dominated, 9 men and 5 women.

Further, she has been adamant with her directors about the importance of diversifying their own staffs, noting to me that she had never seen a division of student affairs with so many White men. Of the 12 current members, only three people were people of color, she, the associate vice president/dean of students and the director of multicultural affairs. Thus, while she

wanted to diversify her office staff with a White man, she also wanted to diversify the larger divisional leadership by adding a woman, a Black woman, to the team.

“Am I Going To Practice What I Preach?”

Cynthia shared that she had been raising issues of diversity in hiring with her staff for two years now. She felt conflicted because on one hand she could hire a Black woman into a position traditionally held by White men and add to the gender and racial composition of her divisional leadership. On the other hand, she could hire the White man into an office that was all Black and all female, including the two secretaries. Additionally, the Vice President for Human Resources was indirectly pressuring Cynthia to hire the White man.

Cynthia also remarked that many of the directors within the division were encouraging her to hire the man because they “would get along” well with him. Although the female candidate had high marks on all individual evaluations, Cynthia found her name was seldom listed as the first choice to hire. Cynthia commented that women were often shut out of positions at Latin and that this was a hard place for women to succeed.

She had in fact experienced this herself at another institution. Cynthia then described how painful a moment that was for her.

Early in my career, I had a situation in which I wasn’t hired for a job and my immediate supervisor, in an effort to help me not feel disappointed about not getting the position, shared with me that I was the top rank candidate in the process, that I had done well, better than any of the other individuals on all measures. But because there was a Latino facilities person that said he would not report to a Black woman....I’m sure he didn’t say Black, he probably said, the “n” word...I wasn’t hired for the job. The relationship between a director and the facilities person was paramount.

I asked Cynthia why she shared the story with me and she offered that the moment of pain is a reminder of how she does not want someone else to feel. She also admitted that while honesty is

a value she often considers, she also tries to weigh the benefit of someone hearing “the truth” in a situation where they are discriminated and there is no recourse.

I asked Cynthia whom she was planning to hire and she shared that she did not know. She reiterated that she had been talking with all of the directors about diversity and building diverse candidate pools and had seen little results from any of them. She then described an email of a hall director who chose to challenge her expectations around diversity. The email contained eight reasons why Cynthia was wrong to want to diversify the staff and highlighted various laws that were not supportive of hiring affirmatively. She noted:

Of course, I was angry and then rather amused and then I just decided not to answer the eight points that he had listed, but to reference that if he had run a search and diversity had been a priority, we wouldn’t be at the place that we are now. And I just left it at that. It was at that moment that I decided I should offer the position to the woman.

After reading the transcripts, I was surprised to learn that Cynthia had, against her comments to me, offered the position to the White man. She shared that all of her directors were against hiring the woman and because this person would be a colleague of the directors, she did not want to go against them. She wanted to bring in someone with whom her current directors would work. In the end, she did not want to go out on a limb and hire someone whose life would be made miserable by some of the directors. She explained:

In the discussion with the directors, even though they both could do the job, they thought the male candidate would be stronger because he knew the people in the central budget office. Because he knew them, he would be able to interact with the treasurer and the vice president of finance. I explained to them that this position would not be interfacing with those individuals; that is my job. This position provides recommendations to me. I take those recommendations and I’m the one that interfaces.

In addition to respecting the dynamics of the peer group and the autonomy of her directors, Cynthia also told me that she had previously made a hire that went against the

directors. This previous hire did add to the ethnic and racial diversity of the staff but not the gender composition. However, this hire did not fit in well with the director and resigned after a year at Latin to take a better position at a college on the West coast.

Cynthia closed our interview by sharing how this personnel decision has affected her. She stated, “It gave me a very pragmatic and real life experience of how difficult it is to hire affirmatively. When you talk about hiring affirmatively people always go to ‘we won’t get along’ or ‘the fit is just not there.’” Cynthia continued by remarking that she decided to not take on this particular challenge because she had a larger battle coming for a critical position elsewhere in the division. She explained that she needed to pick and choose her battles wisely.

I intend to challenge their notions of fit. I am going to make cultural competency a part of the performance appraisal and tie merit and raise increases to the outcomes of hiring for research, scholarship and practice that demonstrates a commitment to diversity. Yeah, that will get them. Let’s hear the fit conversation now.

I thanked Cynthia for her optimism and energy around this topic. She then offered that this idea came to her in a dream. She said that she looks at spiritual signs all throughout her life, including her work. She admitted that, after reading the transcripts, she began to reflect upon not getting a job very early in her career because of her race. Our conversation, which she said was a “gift from God,” encouraged her to think about her current job in a way in which she had not previously considered. In an email after the interview, Cynthia wrote the following:

I try to look at the objective information and evaluate it and balance it. But, I actually pray about it. I really ask for God’s guidance to assist me in doing what’s right and what’s best. I told you, God answers all prayers. Sometimes he helps us to turn our pain into action...our pain is sometimes someone else’s healing.

I again thanked her for being so candid and forthright with me and sharing the multiple ways her decision making process is influenced when faced with an ethical dilemma.

“I Ask For God’s Guidance To Assist Me”

Cynthia’s ethical dilemma focused on an issue of employment that involved her need to choose between a Black woman, whom Cynthia believed was qualified, and a White man, who had the support of her colleagues and directors. Cynthia was very direct about her considerations when faced with an ethical dilemma. Cynthia stressed many times that she prays in order to get guidance from God before making a decision. She discussed the strength of her faith and spirituality in her life. To a much lesser degree, Cynthia referred to issues around her own reputation and livelihood. Surprisingly, she believed her reputation would be enhanced by hiring the male candidate, even though it was against her better judgment. Cynthia too mentioned feeling power and powerlessness when faced with this ethical dilemma. She held the power to hire whom she wanted but also experienced powerlessness when faced with going against her directors from whom she would need the support for additional hires. Finally, whenever she mentioned integrity and humanity, it was an indirect reference to past discrimination directed towards her. Cynthia knew that because of the way she felt when not offered a position because of racism, she did not want the African American female candidate to go through something similar. Thus, due to her humanity and integrity she would not let the candidate know all that went into her decision-making.

“All People Deserve Honesty”

Dr. Richard Sanders at Hamptons University

Dr. Richard Sanders has served for ten years as Vice President for Student Affairs at Hamptons University, a public university. Though he was eager to participate in the study, Richard had to reschedule my phone interview four times. He kept finding time for the interview

because he was looking forward to sharing his dilemma with someone in a confidential setting, such as dissertation research.

Richard grew up in a strong Baptist family where values were discussed at a very early age. He described his childhood as “poor to middle class” and had opportunities to work around good people early in his career. Richard’s first vice presidency ended early because of what he perceived as a very unethical president. Although this is his second vice president position, Richard has been in various positions that have placed him in the office of the most senior student affairs officer for almost 35 years.

Richard is very proud of his tenure at Hamptons, a regional University with its mission to be an alternative to the state’s flagship institution. Richard stated that the institution has been successful because the presidents have had a talent for choosing good people on their leadership teams. He indicated that he valued the opportunities to learn from the various presidents for whom he worked over the years.

“I Was Hired To Be A Hit Man”

Richard admitted that he struggled with how to explain his dilemma in a way that would be fair to the study, but also fair to his institution. He explained that although he was excited about the study, he was aware that this dilemma was of a sensitive nature and could not and should not be traced back to him or his institution.

Richard recalled that he had been hired to be the Vice President for Student Affairs, at another institution, and was excited about this new position. He indicated that he was somewhat anxious because his one-on-one with the President which was to occur every two weeks had been canceled. On the fourth week, he walked into the President’s office and was told by the president that he had to terminate his Dean of Students. Richard admitted to being speechless at

what he perceived to be a direct order. Richard inquired why the Dean of Students had to be fired and the president stated, “I want you to fire the Dean of Students because I think she is a lesbian and it is not appropriate to have a Dean of Students in that position with that lifestyle.”

Richard recollected being in shock when he first heard the president’s comments and remembered thinking, “Was I hired to do this?” “Is this because I am Black?” “Why wasn’t anything mentioned to me during my interview?” Richard said he was torn in a variety of directions. First, he had just had a young child and had recently purchased a far too expensive home for his family. He remembered thinking that the area and the institution were ideal and he wanted to stay for a long time. He shared:

Since we’re being absolutely honest, I actually started seeing a therapist to help me work through this thing. It really shook me up badly. I found that my relationship with the president was growing more and more distant and we never seemed to agree on anything. I had visions and an anxiety attack about being fired, and I had never been fired from any position.

Richard admitted that he thought most about his family and livelihood and how a decision to stand up to the president and not fire the dean would affect them. He remembered developing a plan of action. “First, start a job search. Second, sell the house. Third, pay off as many bills as possible.” Richard shared with me that he read every book on ethics that he could get his hands on. Unfortunately, he remembers that none of them helped. His desire to provide for his family, protect his career, honor the integrity of the Dean of Students, live up to his responsibilities to his supervisor, and challenge discrimination, even though he had everything to lose, were in conflict. In the end, Richard did not terminate the Dean of Students. He said:

One of my basic values is a belief that people are people, regardless of what they do in life, and all people deserve honesty. I could not be honest with her and fire her. It didn’t matter to me that this person had a different lifestyle than mine or the President’s. What did matter was that she was doing the work that was required.

Richard admitted to having a deep sense of honor for the lives of other people. He noted that as a Black man, he has seen White people “trample on people’s lives in a variety of ways and neither group ever really see what is happening.” For him, decision-making involved ethics:

I’ve always considered myself an ethical person. So to make these kinds of decisions was really against everything I believed in doing was right. And, how could I lead students? How could I mentor students and staff? How could I lead anyone if I was going to be entering into this kind of behavior as a professional?

Richard told me that he talked to the President and informed him that he was not going to fire the Dean on the basis of sexual orientation and that he needed “time to actually work with this individual to see the performance level.” In this situation, Richard discussed the need to trust his “gut.” He shared that he could never enter an institution and terminate a person in a major position without first assessing his or her performance level. He also remarked that fellow vice presidents knew this was an issue for the President and were waiting to see if Richard would stand up to the President. Richard admitted that deep in his heart, “I thought I was going to get harassed by the president and eventually fired because I am hired at his will but I knew I could not live with myself.”

When I inquired as to what did happen, Richard said that he was harassed by the President. The harassment included disparaging remarks about the field of student affairs, being uninvited to many meetings and ceremonies, and if he was invited, he was ignored. Richard also stated that he reassigned, not fired, the Dean to a different position in the division based on performance issues. Richard left the institution after three years. When I asked why this issue was the one he chose to share, he indicated that he had received a directive from his current president to fire someone and his current dilemma is in many ways informed by his past experiences. He explained:

I am a Black man. I am also a Christian, even though I don't wear it on my sleeve. I think about how I treat people on a daily basis. I thought then, and still think now, a lot about my own children, my family, my colleagues and what kinds of things I want to be remembered for. I want everyone to know that, good or bad, we are all here to choose. I am not going to fire someone for the President. If he wants someone fired, he needs to do it himself.

Richard closed by sharing that he values time. For him, time allowed him to put things in perspective and most often, not make a rash decision or conclusion about a person or an idea. He said that time has allowed him to be more comfortable in his role as a senior student affairs officer. Richard also offered a part of a conversation he had with a staff member who challenged his honesty and ethics.

If I am not honest with you, then I am wasting both of our time. I am comfortable in this role and when I tell people that I am being ethical, I don't worry about what they think, because I know myself and I know what I want to stand for...and that did not come overnight. All of this takes time. You have to value that.

I thanked Richard for the care he took to highlight how much time and energy goes into his process for ethical decision-making.

“People Are People, Regardless Of What They Do”

Three of the themes played major roles in the considerations of Richard. In his story, Richard was asked to terminate the Dean of Students because the President suspected the Dean was a lesbian. Richard mentioned how threatened he felt by the President. In fact, Richard sought the assistance of counselors to assist in managing how he would respond to the President's directive. At the same time, Richard made numerous references to the power dynamic in which he found himself. He had the power to fire someone without due cause, but because of his own notions of integrity and humanity he decided to not follow the President's directive. Though he knew he made the honorable choice not to fire the Dean of Students, he felt somewhat powerless when the dilemma occurred because he did not know his standing up to the President would

impact his livelihood or reputation in the field. To a lesser degree, Richard claimed his faith and spirituality played a role in his decision because he relied on his Christian background in a Baptist church to inform his notions of right and wrong. According to Richard, his ethics largely informed his decision-making and he has learned how to grapple with dilemmas over time.

“I Have Done Everything In My Power Not To Forget”

Dr. Tina Collins at Bell University

Dr. Tina Collins has been Vice President for Student Affairs for four years at Bell University, a cosmopolitan university in the heart of a city. Tina apologized profusely because this interview had to be rescheduled four times. It was interrupted twice and she changed her dilemma three times only to return to the first dilemma she shared. Tina admitted during our phone interview that a number of recent events have caused her to think about what her role means as the senior student affairs officer on her campus and how she can be more effective.

Tina shared that she grew up with a disability, “poor,” in the segregated South, with a very religious family. She expressed her gratitude to numerous individuals, some of whom she indicated she did not even know, for the many kind gestures and opportunities that were given to her. These opportunities, she commented, “shaped me into the person I am today.”

After struggling to settle on a dilemma to share, Tina cautioned that she was “feeling really ethnic, these days.” She went on to offer that she is beginning to struggle with the feeling that her fellow vice presidents and the President don’t truly know enough about her to fully understand her. She stated:

I hate who we have become in higher education. We don’t share enough of ourselves with the people with whom we spend so much time. I have done everything in my power not to forget who I am, who I really am and where I came from, and yet, I don’t share that with others. And then I wonder why they don’t understand me or why I think the way I do.

I acknowledged Tina's thoughts and she composed herself before she began explaining her dilemma regarding a student discipline matter.

"I Felt Pretty Useless"

Tina said that she believed that she should be an advocate for students and she has never questioned her commitment to the profession. However, she confided that she does struggle with advocacy when students do something that is illegal or what she considers to be immoral. She continued by stating her belief in growth, development and rehabilitation and finding ways to still advocate for students in challenging times. This advocacy role, however, is what she believed blurred not only her lines of judgment but also that of her President.

The dilemma involved three students and their role in stealing from a department on campus. One student had the combination to a safe in the administrative office. This student would observe a manager put money in the safe each night, file the appropriate forms, and record the transaction in the computer. After the manager would leave each night, this student would open the safe, change the forms and the computer record log.

This thievery continued for over three months until the stealing was eventually discovered by a financial manager in the office. As the full scope of the theft was illuminated, it was discovered that three students, not one, were involved. One student was involved in stealing the money from the safe. Another student was involved in rewriting a computer program to hide the missing money, and a third student was involved in ignoring the appropriate measures that would have prevented this type of incident from occurring.

I inquired as to why she shared this as a dilemma and she commented that the dilemma is what followed the discovery of the students' identities and actions. She explained that one student's father was the CEO of a well known company, an internationally known company,

which employed thousands of people worldwide. The second student was the niece of a member of the Board of Trustees and the third student was the child of Tina's close and personal friend.

What complicated the matter further was that the President of Bell University wanted this matter to disappear. Tina offered that few people, other than the President, the Vice President for Student Affairs, the director of the department where the money was stolen, and the staff in University Police, knew of the incident. Upon reading the report, Tina recalled the President called her to say that the students should be put on probation until graduation and that needed to be the end of the matter. Tina asked if they could discuss this during her meeting with him later that day and he agreed.

At the meeting, Tina expressed her displeasure with a probationary sanction and said that she wanted the students to learn from their indiscretion. She shared:

The President said this is what he wanted done and that is how things are going to be. I was so angry and I was not going to let that be the end of the conversation. Then, the president stood up and said, "This is what I want you to do. This is how I want it handled. You will write this letter. You will sign it. We will all move on from this. And I don't want to hear another word about it. If I do, you will regret it."

During this heated meeting, Tina recalled that she felt powerless and even scared. She had never been threatened before. Further, she believed the threat was unwarranted because all of the students were in positions to repay the money. For her, the dilemma was an issue of growth, education and preferential treatment because these students had connections. I asked her if she had ever managed a situation like this before and she replied:

I have had presidents direct me to do something I didn't think was particularly right, but never before to this magnitude and he threatened me. I felt pretty useless because if a decision is going to be made at that level, I have to question the purpose of my job...the purpose of my position in this organization. What does this say about me as a person, my values, my profession, and my calling? This happens all the time in admissions, but to actually threaten me...I felt sick.

I inquired as to what Tina decided to do and she informed me that she took a calculated risk. She chose to tell her friend about her daughter's behavior. She said that she wanted to tell her friend because she valued their friendship. Tina believed she had to make a decision that was both personal and professional. "When I designate a person as a friend it is one of the most precious things to me." Tina offered that she does not call everyone a friend. For Tina, honesty in friendship is a value that is paramount. Additionally, Tina believed that her friend would have been angry if Tina had not called.

Tina had prepared herself, after informing her close friend of the incident, to walk into the President's office the next day and tell the President that she would not comply with his directive. After reading the transcripts of the interview, Tina shared with me a note she had written as talking points for her meeting with the president. It read:

I cannot do what you have asked me to do and therefore you need to give me the opportunity to resign and help me find another job or help me find another job and I will resign from this post when I get it. However you want to play it, we will. But I will not allow you to intimidate me out of doing what I think is right. And how dare you threaten me. I am a Christian woman, who is good at my job and I am a tenured professor to boot. I make good money, really good money and you will not threaten my livelihood.

In the end, she did not have to use these talking points with the President. She did tell her friend about the incident and Tina felt that her friend addressed her daughter, who was involved in the incident, in an appropriate manner. What Tina did not expect was that her friend was going to call the other parents of the students involved in the situation. When Tina arrived at the President's office, he greeted her warmly and surprisingly apologized for his behavior. Although Tina recalled the President sharing that he was surprised she did not listen to his directive, he was impressed that she did what she believed. The President complemented her on coming up with the solution of telling her friend who would then inform the other parents.

Appreciative of his comments, Tina offered that she was still angry. Angry at the “kinds of games” played in higher education, angry at herself “for not standing up earlier,” and angry that her “colleagues knew so little” about her and what she holds important in her work. Tina believed that she had let herself down and noted:

My problems stemmed more from my religious background than from something that I had learned in the academy. I felt guilt because “technically” I did something that probably wasn’t very ethical; I shared that student’s information. I wouldn’t cover up. I wouldn’t hide. And those values are important to me in my religion but not so much at work...but one has to trump the other. Again, it’s what I learned as a part of my religion and not what I learned as a part of my role in the academy.

Tina offered that another underlying value that made this situation a difficult one was that she wanted the President to see her as competent to handle this issue. She believed her reputation was at stake. Regarding the President, she said, “I think he only saw me in situations where I was doing everything I can to help students. I felt defensive that he did not see more. I suppose looking competent is a value I may hold too dear.” I asked Tina if the concept of looking competent was connected to her Black race and she paused and offered that it is her race, but it is also her gender.

Tina shared that she believes student affairs leaders are sometimes apologetic for the values of truth, process, and religion. Still, she reiterated that senior student affairs officers need to not be apologetic for the values they hold as individuals. She continued by stating that if she had done a better job of sharing who she was as a person, the President would have seen the dilemma from her point of view.

It would have helped him to understand me. I still don’t think it would have changed his decision to want to get rid of the situation. It might have changed what he ultimately asked me to do, and I do think it would have helped him to understand why I didn’t want to do it. I don’t think he ever really understood. That was almost a year ago and it still bothers me...I am not sure why.

Tina ended our conversation by commenting about how her race and religion is a factor in decision making. She discussed the concept of shame and how many churches and many people in the Black community have moved away from discussing shame. Although she claimed she did not want people to live in fear, there was a part of feeling shame that highlighted a value that could provide a foundation for ethical decision making. She closed our interview by offering the following summary of how she saw herself. She revealed:

All I'm trying to say is I received a solid foundation at home, which was reinforced in my Black community church, which was reinforced in my all Black high school, which gave me a real sense of who I was, where I had come from, what I needed to be thankful for, and what my obligations were once I was able to leave that environment. I think we need more of that today...it would help all of us.

I expressed how much she helped me by being so clear about what undergirds her decision-making process.

“No, He Did Not Just Talk To Me Like That”

Although Tina struggled with choosing an ethical dilemma, she identified the issue of reputation as a strong consideration in ethical decision-making. Even though she knew efforts would be made by me to disguise the dilemma so that it could not be traced back to her, she told me that she seriously considered how she would be perceived by others who might read the research project. Her dilemma revolved around how to appropriately address the misconduct of well connected and high profile students, especially given that the President threatened her into covering up the situation. Equally as strong in her decision-making were the themes of faith and spirituality, power and powerlessness, and integrity and humanity. In fact, all four themes emerged again, many times in our conversations. Tina stated that her strong belief in God and formal structures of religion and faith aided her to get through this particular dilemma and “hard

times,” in general. Tina also mentioned feeling power in standing up to the President and powerless from the President’s directive. She relied on the values of integrity and humanity to finally make her decision. Tina did this by staying true to what she believed was right and valuing the students involved in the situation enough to see to it that they be held accountable for their actions in order that they might grow and develop from the incident. For Tina telling her friend the truth was critical to her decision-making.

“A Very Tortuous And Unhappy Period”

Dr. Alexis Ewing at Legacy College

Dr. Alexis Ewing has served as Dean of Students, the most senior student affairs officer, at Legacy College for the past six years. Alexis was one of the first people to respond to my inquiry to participate in the study but shared in our meeting in her office that she struggled with finding a story to share.

Alexis is a White woman who grew up in an upper class family in a small affluent town in New England where she attended Sunday school each week. She described her parents as religious but not to any great extent. She confessed that although she does not currently attend church, her upbringing in the church laid a strong foundation about how she treats other people. She attended an elite college where she was very involved in various aspects of campus life including debate, residential life, and her sorority. Still juggling multiple tasks, Alexis managed to fit this interview in between a presidential reception for the administrative assistants on campus and a meeting to interview students for national academic fellowships.

Legacy College is described as an academic community of higher learning, with its origins strongly tied to a religious order. Alexis described the mission as teaching above research, scholarship above publication, and community and service first and above all. Alexis

was very talkative throughout the interview and apologized for what she considered as “going on and on.” Her perspectives offered a great deal about who she was as a person, where she continues to struggle, and her commitments to some areas of social justice.

“A Group of the Trustees Were Beginning to Rally”

Alexis shared with me that the campus was in crisis. Students, faculty, staff, and alumni were in conflict with and among each other. The President, she claimed, was supported by a small but very powerful segment of the Board of Trustees. Alexis recalled, “Senior members of the administration were being placed in a position of having to choose sides. Someone even asked me, okay, what is the worst thing you have seen the president do?”

What Alexis began to describe was a “very tortuous and unhappy period in the life of the institution and in the lives of the people there.” Alexis appeared to be very emotional during this time, and I asked her why. She replied:

So much of what this institution did was really student centered. I suppose it is based in its foundation in a religious heritage but the religious feel was not pervasive on campus. I guess I get so emotional because I had never seen anyone be such a threat to the fabric of any institution and [who] was, through a variety of different things, ripping this place apart.

For Alexis, the dilemma was one that grew over a period of 18 to 24 months. The situation became more complex and her role more clouded. The situation began with the departure of President Smith who recruited and hired all of the senior administrators. This President was loved by faculty, students, alumni and staff. When President Smith left, a new leader, President Carnegie arrived and struggled with the college’s connection, albeit small, to any religious heritage. Additionally, President Carnegie believed that the faculty should be engaged in research and less so in teaching. Last, President Carnegie believed that students were “an afterthought.” Privately, the new President stated that the institution was too centered on

community and service and vowed to end all “these types of things.” These beliefs led President Carnegie to end all activities in the chapel; to discontinue time honored traditions such as the teacher of the year award, the college colloquium on teaching and learning, and funding of the service and community programs for students.

Alexis described her dilemma as follows:

This dilemma was made over time. And the dilemma part was about what I believed were my responsibilities and how I acted around other people in their roles. I was torn between my responsibility to the institution and to the person. I am less responsible to any one person or position. Rather, I have a greater responsibility to the institution and its story. I think this was more so for me than the other deans because students and their needs are so embedded in my role.

When I asked Alexis how she managed during this challenging time, she shared that she decided to search for a new position. Alexis remembered that it was then that she realized that the quality of life she expected from her work experience was too low. Although the search took longer than she had hoped, she was fairly close to accepting another position at the start of the year, when a pivotal moment in her career happened.

Alexis recalled that the number of student leaders was quite small and over the years, she and her staff began to change the culture and made positions more attractive to all students but in particular students of color. She remembered this being a great deal of work. And then she noted:

President Carnegie came to the opening dinner for residence life. You know, the big dinner for the RAs before the halls open. Well, this president said some very different things publicly but turned to me and the dean of the faculty and said, “Why are all of the RAs Black?!” I am not sure if I said anything or if I was actually being ASKED to say anything at all. And by the way, out of the 60 RAs, only 10 were Black! So I thought to myself, that is it! That moment reaffirmed why I am in student affairs and the mission of that school. I decided to stay.

Alexis shared that the pinnacle of the dilemma had still not happened. Although she had decided to stay, she knew she had to find a way to appropriately challenge the President. Alexis

remembered saying to herself, “Well, I have already learned that my greater obligation is to the institution, so if asked, I will share my thoughts and feelings, but only if asked.” At the same time, some of the trustees, who were not supportive of the President, were beginning to explore the tension and conflict on campus and appointed Alexis to a Trustee Task Force on Identity and Mission. These trustees were attempting to mount a challenge to the small but powerful group of supporters of the President.

While on this committee, a trustee asked Alexis what she thought of the President’s leadership and ability to lead the institution. Alexis shared that, although she would have never envisioned this, “In my wildest dreams I never imagined myself quite responding to a trustee with such unbridled passion, but with unvarnished candor. In that instance, it was just what was needed.” Not only did Alexis share her thoughts verbally with the trustee, she was later asked to document her perspectives for another small group of trustees.

Alexis recalled, “To have somebody at the most senior level of the institution going after you is scary. There are professional issues, the economic issue and I can’t let the [president] run my life.” Alexis said that she does her job quite well and the compensation she receives is quite good. Although she recognized the value of being powerless, she also recognized the power in the value of integrity. She remembered thinking that even if she could survive being fired, “it was not going to do anything good for the areas that reported to me and the work we needed to do for students.” Thus, power and powerlessness as well as livelihood were prevalent themes in Alexis’ narrative.

The personal identity and the professional identity were ones that Alexis felt could not be separated. She explained:

I think a huge part of being in this field and surely being a Dean or Vice President is that the two worlds come together. You know, when the

president made that remark about the RAs, I snapped. I snapped because he offended me as a woman, a White woman, a White woman who had made it a priority to diversify the student leaders on campus. His comment was certainly professional, but it was more personal. All too often we as women, well, men too, separate those two concepts.

For Alexis, she does not believe that the field of student affairs provides enough opportunities to prepare professionals for the attack on values they will encounter in the workplace. She shared that the various codes of ethics used in the field were too abstract for use in the “real world of decision-making.” She believed that master’s and doctoral programs explore concepts of justice and care in decision-making, but she questioned if student affairs professionals, in general, and more specifically, senior student affairs officers, spend time reflecting on the values of understanding and insight, values that Alexis contemplates in decision-making. She continued:

Do we talk about values? Do we think about values? How do we help each other, not to mention students, define them? In student affairs work, an exploration cannot be just a personal orientation, but a professional one as well.

I called to thank Alexis for our interview, and she informed me that President Carnegie was dismissed by the Board of Trustees and she was enjoying the return of a vibrant campus life at Legacy College.

“I Am Not Sure How I Should Respond”

References to power such as position, hierarchy, control and authority were most evident in Alexis’ story about how to respond to her supervisor who she believed was “destroying the heart of the institution.” Her dilemma reached a climax once a trustee of the college asked her to provide feedback on a series of inquiries in writing. Although Alexis mentioned her faith, she only did so in reference to her childhood and the heritage of the college. She considered the values of integrity, humanity, reputation, and livelihood in her decision-making process. Alexis

felt a need to be honest with the trustee and, at the same time, did not know if she would be fired because of her honesty and perspective once the President traced the comments back to her.

“I Owe A Lot To These People”

Dr. Paul Onacane at Saint Mary’s University

Dr. Paul Onacane has been the Vice President and Dean of Students for almost 30 years at St. Mary’s University in New England. He was very willing to be involved in the study because he sees participation in doctoral dissertations as payback for the generosity and loyalty from others given to him throughout his career. His perspectives were rich and introspective and very much centered on the relationships he forms with his family, students, faculty and staff.

During the campus interview, Paul was confident yet humble, discerning yet self-assured. He attributed much of his personality to the lessons he learned as a child. “We learn about relationships through our first relationships, which are with family.” He was quick to point out that his childhood and home life were not ideal, but growing up poor, in a tenement house, taught him the importance of helping others. For this White male descendent of Middle Eastern immigrants, having a sense of humility has become vital to his identity.

Paul, who grew up poor and one of three children, considered becoming a minister as a child. He offered that his mother prayed often and she showed him the importance of prayer, a lesson that he has passed on to his children. Paul stated that he continues to go to church at least once a week, is an active member of the church, and even prays with students who he believes are struggling in some way.

The mission of St. Mary’s University is to contribute through higher education to the development of human culture and enhancement of the human person in the light of the Catholic faith. For Paul, the mission of the university weighed heavily in his narratives of an ethical

dilemma. Paul offered that there were two stories he wished to share. Although not a Roman Catholic himself, the context of the institution played a role in the story. Paul shared his respect and loyalty to the Christian Brothers who founded the institution and his gratitude to the body of men and women who hired him almost 30 years ago. In addition, he noted that he appreciated that Catholic higher education has not abandoned its religious principles and that society and the culture as a whole benefit from the programs and services his university provides.

“Paul And Dr. Onacane Are One”

Paul unclasped his hands imagining the headline, “Dean of Students Advises Use of Condoms.” Although he stated that for much of higher education the use of condoms and contraceptives is probably a non-issue, it has continued to be an issue for him and his Catholic college. For St. Mary’s, public posturing as a Catholic university is very important and yet, he admitted, the public posturing sometimes came in conflict with personal or private conversations. He explained, “I don’t think I have ever had a private meeting with a student where they tell me they were sexually active, where I haven’t said, ‘I hope you are being responsible or I hope you are protecting yourself’.”

Time and time again, Paul said that, on the one hand, he has respect for the environment of the Catholic college he is working in. On the other hand, in his personal, professional and ethical framework, he believes it is a bit archaic not to be clear with students when you have the chance to influence their decision-making. He said:

I bite my lip a little bit, on a personal level; I have struggled with many Christian Brothers priests over the years. Bottom line is that I think we...behind closed doors in our work with students...need to encourage good decision-making. If a student gives you that kind of intimate entrée into their thinking and decision-making and they want to know what you think, which is not often the case. I’m not afraid to say that, “hey, listen; it could be a life and death issue for you to be smart and make good, solid decisions.”

Listening to Paul share this dilemma, it was apparent that his upbringing and religion played a role in his ethical decision making process. He offered, “It started in my church going years.” Paul stated that it began with a mom who was not embarrassed about telling him she wanted him to be a minister. He recalled saying at a pretty young age, “Ah, I don’t think I want to do that, but I do want to help people in some way when I grow up.” Paul summarized much of his thoughts on values in student affairs work by sharing that on most days in his role as a senior student affairs officer he believes he is in “a position to really help students grow, help students to make good decisions, help to influence their decision-making or help to protect the integrity of a common good in a community.”

Paul believed that he learned many challenging and difficult lessons during his tenure at the institution. Growing up in conservative Baptist and Greek orthodox churches, Paul shared that he typically has great respect for rules and processes, but that sometimes rules and processes can feel constricting. He offered:

I left organized religion for five or six years of my life and sort of rejected it. Rejected everything except the basic foundation, I guess. I didn’t like the no smoking, no drinking, and no chasing women. Everything was a bit too preachy for me. My mom wanted us to have basic Christian upbringing and my dad was not a church goer, so my mom brought us to a Baptist church that was within walking distance of our home.

Paul said that a difficult lesson he learned, because of his religious upbringing, was that he began to see faith as more a verb than a noun, meaning “when it’s a noun, one either possesses it or does not but when faith is a verb, it is something on which one can act.” Using the story of a time when faith was not a verb, Paul shared an example of some overly involved parents of a young man who had been accused of rape. These parents presented Paul with an ethical dilemma with which he shared that he still struggles. The parents found Paul’s home number and called

him one evening. They asked him what he would do if it were his child, hoping that if they pulled him out of school, the female student might be encouraged to ignore the police and thus lessen the state investigation. Paul remarked, “Well, I mean, confronted with that question, I chose to answer the question. So, I said, ‘I think your thinking is sound as a parent. If he were my son, I would probably pull him out of school’.”

Paul stated that he was unsure if he should have been honest with the parents of the male student. On the one hand, he did not believe the entire story of the sexual assault but knew that if the alleged perpetrator went away, the case would end. On the other hand, Paul shared that he was always someone who believed in the process. He admitted that much of his decision may have weighed, not on integrity and honesty, but on avoiding the bad publicity for the institution and a “gut” feeling that the process would not bring about the most just decision. He shared:

This was hard for me because my mantra is “people want to know how much you care before they care how much you know.” I wanted to share that I care deeply for each of the students. I strive to be a person of integrity by working to limit the distance between my thoughts and my words and for some reason, I just did not think this case would turn out for the best...so I basically told them to pull him out.

Paul offered that as an educator and a man who believes faith is a verb he should not have answered their question. Rather, he thought he should have remained true to the process and said, “No, I think this should play itself out, whatever the outcome.” He later continued and added:

I have asked myself time and time again, would that young man have been better facing some possible consequence, facing some possible police investigation, possibly being cleared and being able to continue here as a student and giving us the possibility to work with him. I do have two sons and a daughter. And when the mom asked me the question and asked me to please respond more as a parent than as an administrator, I did. And I'm not sure I should have. That was a very strong lesson for me to learn and it has major ethical implications to our work.

After reading the initial transcripts of the interviews, Paul chose to clarify how the stories of his life influence his ethical decision making. Paul called and said:

I'm really grateful for a lot of the stuff in my life. I think I have something positive to give to students and their development. As each year goes by, now I'm 59, going on 60, I feel more confident in that as I get older. And because I'm basically fairly well centered in who I am and what I think and all what I believe, I really think that today's students and their development are searching for people who are centered, know what they think, know what they believe, are open to other people's thoughts and other people's beliefs, are inclusive, are tolerant, that know what for themselves what's important and what direction our lives, my life, my family's lives, my children's lives, know what the desired outcomes are. I think the most ethical thing to do is for us to share these stories and these experiences with others.

Paul was very humble, and described himself as such in his own story. He believes that ethical behavior is not about who he is but who he is aspiring to be. He believes that ethical behavior and decision making is a journey and he is far from its destination. Paul stated that one day he hopes to be as ethical in his decision making as he thinks others believe him to be. Paul makes an effort to share his stories of ethical decision-making with others at professional gatherings because he believes, not only are they cathartic for him, but also instructive for others in their decision making. To him, his role as a senior student affairs professionals was summarized as follows, “our story is not about what we are, it’s about what we aspire to be.” He continued and stated:

What are we aspiring to be in terms of expending human dignity? I mean, our mission has some beautiful words to them, but we're, in my opinion, as a community, nowhere near where our mission would have us be. But, the fact that we articulate it, the fact that we're aspiring to be and striving to be and that we're all trying to be better people, more knowledgeable people. Using that knowledge for good, for common good, for individual good and common good are important concepts to consider in decision making and here at St. Mary's we hope our actions are informed by our experience.

Paul admitted that he thinks a great deal about grieving, suffering, resolving conflict, promoting human flourishing, and believed himself to be a reflective thinker about doing his particular job at his particular institution. Therefore, he struggled when he found himself “stuck” in an ethical quandary regarding the parents who asked him what he would do. Paul shared that now, he tries to remind himself to go back to his purpose of constantly providing challenge and support for students so they will “academically learn and emotionally heal.” Looking back on his dilemma, Paul remained unsure if he made the right choice, but admitted that he would make the same choice if posed to him again.

He closed his comments by sharing with me that even though his job is wrought with ethical dilemmas every day and he continues to learn from each experience, he was great for the vocation he was called to perform: "I can't believe I'm getting paid for doing this. I love it so much. Therefore, I can't be in conflict with myself, Paul and Dr. Onacane are one."

“If He Were My Son, This Is What I Would Do”

Paul’s dilemma involved his conversation with the parents of an accused rapist. When asked what Paul would do as a parent, Paul made the decision to answer truthfully, knowing that his answer might not be in the best interest of the accuser, another student on his campus. Paul discussed the issue of faith and spirituality a great deal in his dilemma. He shared that he relies on values instilled by his mother encouraging him to go to church and still attends church on a weekly basis. It is this faith that he calls on to be honest in his interactions with parents and students. He also spoke of the need to balance perspectives in his professional role and serve as an “advocate for all students and their humanity.” Paul only made one reference to the themes of power and reputation. Yet, it was a significant reference because he shared that he believes wholeheartedly that if a student asks for his advice he is going to use his power and influence to

persuade that student to make a sound decision, one that could ultimately save his life. This is what he wants his reputation to be at St. Mary's, one of integrity and honestly sharing his narrative in an open manner with the community. That is what humanity means to him. Lastly, the theme of livelihood emerged when Paul reflected that his honesty could have gotten him fired. Either dilemma, advising students to use condoms if they are sexually active or advising a parent to remove their son who was accused of a rape, could certainly alarm the religious clergy with whom Paul worked.

“You Do Good Things”

Dr. Amanda Collins at Turner Valley University

Dr. Amanda Collins has been the Vice President for Student Affairs at Turner Valley University for the past five years. Amanda was very hesitant to be involved with the study because of being “burned in the past by opening up.” Additionally, she made sure to point out that much of what she was sharing was difficult to articulate in ethical terms. Although she considered herself an ethical person, she found that she often has difficulty sharing her personal reflections. This fact proved to be true throughout our phone interviews.

Although Amanda was in her current position for only five years, much if not all of her career has been spent at Turner Valley. She described herself as well known in the small world of student affairs but that few people really knew her. She described herself as knowledgeable of student issues both on her own campus but also nationally. She stated that she was acutely “sensitive to the human condition.” Amanda believed that much of her success in the field was because she could understand how others think about decisions. She explained:

A leader must have an understanding of what the person and the organization can tolerate. Could this university community tolerate letting someone go? To someone highly regarded? To someone they highly scarred? Understanding the damage that you can do not only to the person,

but the damage you can do to those who remain in the organization is important. I think you must understand individuals to understand organizations.

Throughout the interview Amanda was quite complimentary to the people with whom she had worked for 20 years. She indicated that success in decision making comes from the group around her. Although she stated that she desires to do the right thing, it is often easier when she looks at her colleagues who have been so supportive over the past two decades.

Amanda, a White woman, whose parents were also educators, believed that her parents introduced her to a world of service. She was able to see how they conducted their own lives and used that example as a guide for how to live her own professional life. This world of service was supported by her involvement with what she hopes is “one of the great institutions of higher learning in America.”

Ranked as one of the best public research institutions in the country, Turner Valley University is unabashedly driven to achieve nothing short of excellence as the State's primary center of graduate education and the best choice for undergraduate students who have proven their academic ability during the high school years. Amanda finds the institution to be filled with energy, quick to change and driven for national prominence. She then shared that the mission of her institution is one reason she chose to discuss her dilemma.

“Making Your Own Decisions Is Important”

Amanda stated that her greatest challenge in the past year was a personnel matter with a director of a prominent campus unit. Not only were the staff members within the department frustrated and disgruntled with the leadership the director was providing but Amanda began to be concerned that services to students were also being compromised. To complicate the matter,

Amanda offered that the director had been at the University “a long time and had contributed much to the campus as well as to the national scene.”

Interestingly, Amanda, who had spent the better part of her career at the institution, believed that this director had stayed too long. Amanda believed that she was torn with the choice she had to make and knew that she had the potential to cause hurt or harm to a person who contributed much service to the field of student affairs and the institution. At the same time, Amanda believed she had a great dilemma on her hands because of the conflict of “honoring an individual in his/her career, but yet it is important to move forward when you think that the welfare of students and the overall student affairs program is at stake.”

Throughout the interview, Amanda was quick to identify her value of weighing the complexity of care for the individual and concern for the community with her professional identity. She stated:

My first decision was that I would try to cajole, counsel, brainstorm options for this person to think about the next stage. I tried that for about six months and unfortunately I didn’t get very far. The mental approach of getting somebody to find their own way is a challenge. Because of examples I had seen I believe helping somebody to make the decision on their own is important.

Although Amanda was unable to provide examples of “helping somebody” make a decision, I asked Amanda if there was anything in her background that she believed aided her in making this decision. She referred again to her parents. She shared that she had two parents who were teachers and the most instructive lessons for her were to see how they conducted their lives. She stated that she hopes their example had a positive influence on young people. Amanda offered, “I think my parents introduced me to the world of education and a kind of service to others. They saw what they did, and I see what I do as so much a part of doing good.”

Amanda was very quick to inform me that there are times when the value of people making their own decisions is compromised. She continued:

I decided that I needed to get a different kind of approach, which was much more direct and wouldn't take so long; with the assistance of others who could help with the freefall, help this person manage. I created a situation where I got the person to take a time out.

Amanda stated that there is often a need for adults to be able to rehearse situations before they actually have to experience it. Amanda's self titled "act of kindness" gave this director a chance to rehearse for the change of being retired. She noted:

It gave [the director] a chance to rehearse for it. Then I kept in constant contact throughout that time period. About half way into it, we were going to sit down and talk again. We did, and then picked a permanent time for retirement halfway into it. I think the person just needed time to adjust. I think that is very important.

Time and time again throughout the interview, Amanda shared her gratitude and appreciation for the colleagues with whom she has worked for over 20 years. She stated that ethical dilemmas are in virtually every facet of her position in student affairs. Yet, she feels comfortable to meet those challenges because of the great team assembled around her.

With me, finding other people I could use as a confidant, I think it's kind of human need to have some outside objective forces helping you clarify your own thoughts. So, a lot of us working together in a team approach is helpful to me. I've been so fortunate here at the university to have around me a set of colleagues that have good strong values, that they have strong character, and people around me who are always asking me questions like, "What is the right thing to do?" That's wonderful because it reinforces your own sense that you're on the right path. I think the people around you, I think, can have a major influence on you.

The value of autonomy and political awareness and how these values have played itself out in Amanda's career was enlightening. Amanda believed that senior student affairs administrators must always have the welfare of the individual and the welfare of the institution in mind. She offered that while there are lots of books

and codes that discuss complex decision-making, you only become good at it by doing it yourself, making your own decisions and remembering that you are in a complex political world. She stated:

So, you learn to be the kind of person who can scan the environment and understand where the institution's going and begin to value the concept of political sensitivities. So an awful lot of decision making is experience and the power to remember the stories from the past, I think, is a major help to me these days.

Amanda shared that this personnel decision was a difficult one for her because she believes it foreshadows more issues on the horizon. Her humanity and sensitivity to people's need to make their own decisions guides much of her work. She believes that time to distance oneself from the stresses of an issue can provide the clarity that one needs to make the decision for him or herself.

Amanda stated that she did not think she was the best complex decision maker and offered others who she admired. These people were "values driven," "service oriented," "constructive," "wanting to contribute positively to society," and "not out for personal gain." When asked why she did not believe herself to be a complex thinker, Amanda offered:

You can spend your time doing an awful lot of things, like understanding the culture. I want to be open to understanding and in my career, I have not had to understand much different from myself and my background. Why do I say this? Because generational things separate and divide us, cultural things separate and divide us. So, listening carefully and understanding a situation before you weigh in makes you a better decision maker.

Amanda closed her comments by offering that she wishes she had had more experiences and stories to draw upon that addressed cultural and social differences because she sees it as a limiting factor in her experience. "But then, that is why it is so important to surround yourself with good people who have diverse perspectives to inform them." I thanked Amanda for her time and agreed that diverse employees would strengthen the experience and programs for students.

“Honoring Someone And Still Moving Forward Is Difficult”

Amanda’s dilemma focused on how best to convince a colleague to retire as opposed to being terminated. She struggled with making references to her own decision-making but did make references to integrity and humanity being important, not only as a child, but in her professional role as senior student affairs officer. Though she had the power to fire the director, she did not utilize her positional power in that way; instead she relied on the example from her parents to treat people with humanity and serve them well. Amanda also made significant references to her reputation and livelihood, as well as to the reputation of her colleague whom she convinced to retire, rather than terminate. She stated that she considered the honest and humane way in which to honor her colleague and continue to move the institution forward. Allowing her colleague to leave the institution in a positive manner was of the utmost importance to Amanda. Although Amanda did not mention faith and spirituality as impacting her decision-making, her use of words like “service” and “acts of kindness” resemble what other participants referred to as their faith and spirituality.

“I Think People Need To Find Their Own Way”

Dr. Sharon D’Angelo at Round Hill University

Dr. Sharon D’Angelo is the Vice President of Campus Life at Round Hill University, a highly selective, traditional school with a strong core curriculum in the liberal arts. Sharon has been at the institution for almost 16 years and has assumed roles of increasing responsibility. Previous positions held by Sharon include Director of Campus Life, Dean of the College and now Vice President for University Life. Sharon indicated she was excited to be involved in the study because for her the experience of participation sheds “light on the direction on the field.”

She also shared that being involved as a participant in dissertations reminds her of her graduate courses in the Midwest.

I was able to interview Sharon in person and her office suite contained many photos of students and awards from various units throughout her student affairs division. She noted that she enjoys seeing all of the plaques, citations, awards and photos, because she truly believes in the strength of her colleagues and the work they do. She then stated that the pictures on the wall are one of the reasons she chose the ethical dilemma she wished to share with me.

Round Hill, a Catholic university, has grown tremendously over the past 40 years. In Sharon's words, "the Division is actually quite sophisticated now. When I arrived, the only trained professionals in the Division were the Health Center director and myself." For Sharon, the mission of Round Hill is illustrated in much of the work done in student affairs. The mission, to educate the whole person and advance issues of social justice, is something with which Sharon closely identifies.

Sharon, a White woman, grew up in a family where both parents were civil rights activists. She described her parents in a way that she believes she is probably described by others:

I had parents who were nurturing but they were not overly involved. They fought their battles; you fought your own battles in the way you think best. You knew they were not going to intercede. I don't mean in a negative way but they valued our own independence and I try to do the same to the people with whom I work. I think people need to find their own way.

Sharon continued by sharing that is why the ethical dilemma presented such a problem for her. Sharon's dilemma involved a trusted colleague, who only a few years earlier was one of her peers and now reported to her. She admitted that her personal respect and admiration for this colleague might have clouded her judgment.

“I Value A Person Fighting His Or Her Own Battles”

Before Sharon began to tell her story, she closed the large double oak doors that separated her office from the office of her administrative assistant. Initially, the story involved the staff of a department and their inability to work with other units, let alone among themselves. Sharon decided to speak with the members of this large department both in small groups and individually. She hoped that this process would allow her to uncover the reason for the dysfunction.

After speaking with the staff, she began to realize that the problem might in fact be the director. The same director who had been on her search committee when she arrived as a fellow director; the very director that supported her promotion to Vice President, was at the root of the problem. She discovered there were rumors and innuendos regarding inappropriate behavior with students, a large and systematic turnover of the staff, direct intimidation of subordinates, and improper management of funds and resources.

Sharon explained:

This realization upset me a great deal; I was certainly hoping this person was willing to work on these issues and that it was a salvageable situation. The person had a long-term commitment to the university, and was well respected by the President and other senior staff. Actually, I got along with this person really well and thought we had made some progress, because I supervised him for a couple of years. I was just hoping there was some resolution that would be good for all parties.

Sharon expressed that to some degree she underestimated the complexity of the situation. She believed that it was often easy to do that. Although change was so slow to happen in many arenas, at Round Hill, most issues were resolved with great ease. Sharon shared that many areas of her job seemed effortless and that at times she encountered major bumps in the road. She continued by offering that this director has actually been at the institution significantly longer than she had and was instrumental in helping the university solve potentially explosive issues.

Although she had managed difficult personnel issues before, the situation with this director created a larger quandary for her because “he was really connected on campus and clearly could not see the negative in his own supervisory style and wasn’t even willing to look at it.”

Sharon continued and shared that his connections on campus, in addition to her own friendly relationship with him, made the situation a difficult one. This director was friendly with the President and the Provost and a number of the clergy on campus. In fact, she had been told by the President to “let this go, reprimand him and move on, he is a good guy in spite of what may or may not have happened.”

For Sharon, the final straw came at a time when she discovered that the director was singling out individuals, in particular women, and threatening them with termination should they share negative thoughts about the department. She admitted:

I had seen people make hires without ever doing a search. I had really seen some awful supervisors with inside groups and outside groups and I vowed to never be a part of that. The big thing for me here was that there were people who were working hard and were made to feel uncomfortable in their own work environment by their own supervisor. As ashamed as I am for waiting, I couldn’t sit by and hope the situation would resolve itself any longer.

Sharon decided to confront this director and even suggested that the allegations might not be true, but might be the perception of those at the University. Still, she saw no recognition of any wrongdoing. She shared the outcome of her conversations with the President and he informed her that she was the Vice President and he would respect whatever decision she felt was best.

After numerous failed attempts to encourage some self-responsibility on the part of the director and indications that the nature of unprofessional behavior was greater than initially

assumed, Sharon decided to terminate the director. She explained why she struggled with that decision:

It has always mattered to me that people have a sense of autonomy and they feel they can grow, change and do things. I think what surprised me most in this situation was how I could meet weekly with someone and think they were doing a good job, but not really have my ears to the ground in terms of what it was really like to work for a person or in that environment. I am fairly collegial and I think we do ourselves a disservice in the field by being so collegial. Higher education is a business and I missed that on this one.

When asked to review the transcripts and my analysis of the interview, Sharon wanted to add that looking back on the situation and now after having a new director in that position, she has a new found value for someone who can build a staff, diffuse a hostile work environment, create a sense of belonging for staff, and retain those people. She continued:

I don't think I realized the impact of a really hostile climate in one department and how much impact that could have on basically the whole division and in turn, the University. The director's behavior with colleagues and students took on a pervasive twist and it was refreshing to see what a new director could do.

I asked Sharon about her reference to the pictures and, as one enters the suite of offices, why were those important? Why had she mentioned them at the start of our interview? She shared that much of what she believes we do in student affairs is to tell a story. She held that as stewards of the institution, student affairs leaders tell a narrative about who the institution wishes to be on its best day. For her, the pictures and awards tell a story about the values of hard work, students first, collaboration, and diversity. I asked her to continue with how those values were evident for her in her dilemmas, and she added:

I think I waited much too long. I was more generous about giving the benefit of the doubt than I should have been. I think I saw him as integral to the story we had gotten and so I was unable to see that he was really a detriment to the story. Now I look differently on the situation and see that his termination is probably the most significant decision I have made in 15 years. It changed the institution for the better and the services for students.

So, now there is a new picture...a picture of the new staff. It is the only departmental staff photo up there.

In closing, I asked Sharon about influential moments that shaped her decision making skills, and she shared that often student affairs professionals want to learn and be around the best, most ethical and most balanced vice presidents. She shared that she has found that she valued being around professionals who were unethical as well because those were learning moments too. At the same time, she mentioned a few individuals whom she felt were highly ethical in their behavior. She noted:

My Dean of Students in my undergrad always had this saying...I wish I had this saying...But she always had this saying on her wall above her light switch, that was ...You know, if you work for a place, work for it, and basically, if you can't believe in the ethics of your supervisor or the institution you work with that you shouldn't be there and you should get out.

Sharon shared that for many senior student affairs officers, this is not an easy challenge. She said that she struggles because far too many student affairs professionals don't leave an organization for a variety of reasons and they may wait far too long before addressing unethical behavior. She stated that she hopes she does not reinforce unethical behavior by the way her actions may be perceived. I thanked Sharon for retelling her story to me.

"I Was Hoping The Relationship Was Salvageable, But It Wasn't"

Sharon's dilemma involved how best to respond to a trusted friend and colleague whose leadership style was threatening and intimidating to staff and students. Although Sharon did not express that she was a person with great faith or spiritual life, she did discuss the faith and spiritual life of the university. This was an underlying motivator for how she made decisions. Sharon's discussion of faith and spirituality was much more removed than the personal way in which other participant's reflected on their need to consult the Bible, pray and attend church.

The values of integrity and humanity were also quite strong for Sharon. She wanted to find the best way for her colleague to leave the institution and thus she used her power only when it was absolutely necessary to terminate her employee. Sharon did so because she believed the reputation of the particular office, the division, and the institution was at stake. Taking someone's livelihood, one's position, away from the person was necessary, Sharon believed, only if the integrity of the institution was in jeopardy.

“I've Made My Share Of Mistakes”

Dr. Wesley Edwards at Airburg University

Dr. Wesley Edwards sits behind a rather large oak desk at Airburg University where he has served as Vice President for Student Affairs for the past nine years. Wesley had been nominated for participation in the study by multiple colleagues and shared with me that he was excited to talk about ethical decision-making. During our campus interview, Wesley was reflective and used the phrase “the value of honesty and integrity” numerous times throughout the interview.

Wesley, a White man, grew up in a home where if he did something wrong and subsequently told the truth, he was still punished. He believed there were always consequences to his behavior and that the punishment was worse if he lied. Wesley talked in detail about his childhood and stated, “Being in things like Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, and being active in my church made me really think about decision-making at an early age.”

As Wesley told me short stories about his upbringing, he commented that what he is trying to do at Airburg is provide those kinds of reflective moments for students, the kind of moments he had as a child. His mission is to provide student learning and personal development through effective and innovative teaching and a wide variety of high-quality, reflective, out-of-

class experiences. He believed that Airburg was very supportive of his mission in that the institution supports student affairs initiatives quite well.

Wesley described himself as always learning and growing when it comes to decision-making. He was flattered to have been nominated by more than one person but he interjected:

I don't think I'm any kind of paragon of virtue. I've learned that I made my share of mistakes and done some stupid things as I was growing up and I continue to make mistakes. I guess I don't try to make the same stupid mistakes. I try to make good decisions. Sometimes you don't have all of the information, and sometimes you get wrapped up in bad things...I value doing the right thing.

"The President Said, 'I Want The Truth'"

Wesley recalled the words of the President ringing in his head over and over. The incident was a complicated web of not wanting to lie and respecting the autonomy of a colleague to tell the truth on his own. Wesley informed me that a colleague, a fellow senior level cabinet position, although not a vice president, was involved in inappropriate behavior. Wesley went on to describe a large executive management group consisting of vice presidents, particularly deans, directors, and executive assistants.

Wesley informed me that he was becoming aware of instances where his colleague was misusing institutional resources and was engaged in activities such as traveling to exciting locations under the guise of business. Additionally, Wesley learned that this colleague was involved in "personal sexual shenanigans" with other people, including subordinates. Further, he discovered that this person was not fulfilling some responsibilities directly related to the position, but easily hidden for the time being.

Wesley continued that this colleague would say that he was acting with the "full support of the President" when confronted by subordinates and colleagues alike. Wesley said that he was slowly being made aware of the issue by colleagues and staff, almost if on purpose. Another

colleague was giving Wesley the information because, as Wesley stated, “she hoped that someone would have the courage to tell the President that it was happening.” Wesley shared that his colleague was successful at convincing others that the President did know about the questionable expenditures and did not deem the behavior to be inappropriate.

Wesley found himself torn, torn between his stated values of telling the truth and torn between his values of autonomy. Wesley believed the right thing to do would be to wait and allow his colleague to inform the President of his behavior. But as Wesley noted, “What if I am wrong about my colleague and my calculations are wrong? Worse, what if my colleague never says anything and the President finds out that I lied and kept this from him?” These questions haunted Wesley.

When I asked Wesley what he chose to do and why, he shared that he did not go to the President. Rather, he first went to confirm or verify what he had been hearing. Indirectly at social gatherings or receptions, he went to staff members of this colleague and he also went to other vice presidents to see if they had heard anything. He knew that he was a trusted person on campus and he did not want to compromise his own reputation. Staff across campus who knew of what was going on, shared with Wesley that they hoped he would go to the President; that Wesley had to go to the President. He explained what happened next:

I went to the President and shared with him my concern that his name was being used. I put the focus on the fact that somehow there was a perception that he knew of the behavior and was supportive of it. I did not suggest to him what he should do. I didn’t tell him that I had irrefutable proof or people to verify the information. I told him that if any of this is true, he needed to know and if any of it was false, then he wouldn’t need to be concerned about it.

I asked Wesley why he went to the President, and he shared that he wanted to give the opportunity for his colleague to come forward. Wesley said the President asked him directly

what information was public and Wesley admitted that the story was beginning to surface with others, outside of the Cabinet, at Airburg. For him, he shared that his conversation with the President brought to mind two values that he held dear: honesty and autonomy. Wesley shared with me that years ago, in a previous position, the value of honesty became stronger than the value of autonomy in an athletic hazing scandal when he waited for his athletic director to resolve the problem on his own. “I believe that I was hired in my role to be honest with the President but at the same time, I don’t tattle on people.” Wesley reiterated this statement numerous times throughout our interview. Wesley maintained that if the president asked him a direct question, he would tell the truth because the relationship between the senior student affairs office and the president, if it is to be successful, must be based on truth.

Wesley then chose to explain to me the culture of ethics in higher education. He stated:

The first day on the job, people are going to be playing themselves off against others to try to get you to make a decision. Things are offered to you so that other people can get favors. Some other executive staff that you would otherwise assume would be open and ethical are doing improper things and want to suck you in along so later they can blame you for it.

Wesley discussed a value of experience. He indicated that while he believed ethics could be taught and values could be learned, he felt that a person needed a variety of significant ethical quandaries before assuming the position of senior student affairs officer. Wesley recollected numbers of very principled people who became victims of those who lacked honor around them. He said:

Even if you are an honorable person with integrity and believe that you’re ethical, there are lots of very skilled people at twisting your goodness into their badness or at least a sort of shaping your goodness into their badness and then eventually being able to use you in part of the responsibility for why they did what they did wrong.

He explained that much about being ethical and making ethical decisions is a process. Wesley shared that as he progresses in his career, he thinks a great deal about the people with whom he works, his church, and his family. These people, in his various communities, showed him not only intellectually, but emotionally how far he could bend before he had gone too far out of his bounds. It is this process of learning about himself that makes him a more ethical person in his eyes.

Wesley stated that he was potentially open to fail like any other person. Failing, for Wesley, is not a bad thing. He believed that he could become more ethical by failing in ethical attempts.

“You have to learn, and the only way to learn is to act.” For Wesley, the value of remembering his humanity was paramount. He explained:

I think you judge yourself by your best intentions and you judge others by their worst behaviors. This is a human fault I always try to remember. For me, this is a lesson learned and it guides my reactive behavior when I get too preachy.

I thanked Wesley for his time and shared that I appreciated his thoughts and wished him the best at Airburg University.

“I Don’t Tattle On People”

Wesley’s dilemma involved whether or not to share sensitive information about a colleague with the President. Wesley, who as an adult considers himself agnostic, made very few references to the values of faith and spirituality. He did however state that he was very active in the church as a child and that experience caused him to think about ethical decision-making at a very early age. Wesley did mention the issue of power numerous times during our interview. He stated that others see him as a “powerfully ethically person” although he did not see himself that way, going so far as to share that he has made many unethical decisions in his life. The values of

integrity and humanity were most relevant for Wesley because he stated that relationships with colleagues, especially the President, must be based on truth if they are to be successful. Wesley believed that fostering genuine relationships with individuals means treating them with humanity, and not judging them because of their faults. It is the value of integrity and honesty for which Wesley wished to be known.

Summary

In this chapter I presented findings from the data collected through in-depth interviews with ten senior student affairs officers. I retold the individual stories of the participants, and highlighted values and principles that were important for each person. Together, the ten stories illustrated the complex ethical world of these senior student affairs officers. The values and principles shared among participants, included faith and spirituality, power and powerlessness, reputation and livelihood, and integrity and humanity.

The first five stories of the chapter paint a picture of ethical decision-making and underscore how the issue of race is inextricably tied to the identity of the person making the ethical choice. Although race may not have been the central focus of the story, race and ethnicity, along with religion and gender, did matter when discussing the critical values involved in ethical decision-making. The additional five stories of the chapter also discussed ethical dilemmas. In the 10 narratives the four broad themes of faith and spirituality, power and powerlessness, reputation and livelihood and integrity and humanity emerged from the data.

The narratives suggest that the critical values for ethical decision-making are dependent upon the individual personal background of the senior student affairs officer. For the senior student affairs officers who identified as Black or African American, the lens of race was evident. For the White senior student affairs officers, the lens of race was less present. Also

evident but to a lesser degree, the senior student affairs officers who were women made mention of their gender in their narratives.

The decision-making processes were very much informed by the backgrounds of the senior student affairs officers. Stories of feeling scrutinized because of one's race, made to speak for others, ability to obtain other employment, terminating a colleague, or responding to student and personnel issues, influenced the manner in which these senior student affairs professionals made decisions and conduct their professional lives.

Last, for some of the senior student affairs officers, the lines between the professional dilemma and personal life could not be delineated. Whether the senior student affairs officer was more reflective and more comfortable discussing ethical issues or whether the senior student affairs officer was more distant and removed, the issues of faith and spirituality, power and powerlessness, reputation and livelihood, and a belief in the integrity and humanity of colleagues and students influenced their decision making in both the public and private spheres.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter summarizes the study's central purpose, draws conclusions in relation to the literature previously reviewed, presents the study's limitations and strengths, and discusses implications of the results for research and practice.

Summary of the Purpose

The intent of this study was to understand what senior student affairs administrators identify as the critical values in ethical decision-making and why. Through an interpretive approach, specifically, narrative inquiry, ten senior student affairs administrators were invited to share, in a confidential manner, their professional stories about ethical decision-making.

Through the data collection, many of the senior student affairs officers described experiences from earlier in either their personal lives or in their careers that served as powerful lessons in their own ethical decision-making processes. In terms of their personal experiences, whether the senior student affairs officer grew up poor or wealthy, White or Black, agnostic or religious, each person's ethical decision-making was informed by the narratives of their lives. I was profoundly touched by the role that narrative played in the lives of these professionals. The participants were not objective, value-neutral professionals but contextual human beings who used their lives and experiences as a template upon which they made decisions – ethical and otherwise.

My asking senior student affairs officers to reflect upon ethical dilemmas created a process by which these student affairs professionals revisited critical moments throughout their careers. There seemed to be a hunger for a context in which to talk about and hash out the dilemmas faced within their jobs. As noted by the respondents, this opportunity was rarely

experienced in their day to day practice. Narrative scholars (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Nash, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1988) and several organizational theorists (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Zohar & Marshall, 2000) discussed the need for reflection and even spiritual practice in organizational life. Despite this advice, few of these executive leaders had such time for reflection. As such, the senior student affairs officers in this study appreciated the opportunity to reflect on their careers because it allowed them to engage in dialogue about and contemplate the ethical decision-making they experienced. As one would suspect, some of these ethical decisions were personally challenging, professionally threatening and ethically momentous. The need to talk about these decisions, that profoundly influenced their lives, was clearly evident as the participants were willing to talk with me on more than one occasion, if necessary, and were prepared to review their transcripts for accuracy of data interpretations. As I examined the ethical decision-making narratives of these senior student affairs officers, I found answers to the following three research questions in this study:

1. What do senior student affairs officers think are the critical values when making an ethical decision and why?
2. What do senior student affairs officers identify as the lessons learned in ethical decision-making, and how do those lessons guide the decision-making process?
3. How is ethical decision-making informed by the stories and narratives of senior student affairs administrators?

In this chapter, I summarize and expand upon the interpretations outlined at the close of Chapter IV. I make links to student affairs practice and the relevant literature reviewed in Chapter II, discuss limitations of the study, offer implications for research and practice, and conclude with a reflection and appreciation gained from this research endeavor.

Conclusions

The Narrative Context of Ethical Decision-Making

Dewey (1908) discussed two dimensions of ethical decisions. He identified the public side that is shown to others and the private side that silently tests the individual. This private side, through the dialogue of data collection, was exposed and summarized in this dissertation. This interpretive study explored the values, not often discussed openly or shared with others, which ten senior student affairs administrators considered in ethical dilemmas. Nash (1996) wrote that ethics are a set of moral principles that govern one's conduct be it privately or publicly. Ethical decisions are decisions made based on persons' "truths or beliefs or norms by which they live and are willing to stand on and defend" (Nash, p. 110). Through this study's examination of the private side of ethical decisions, I was able to learn what these senior student affairs officers considered in their decision-making process and in doing so, I discovered what their truths and beliefs were. The values and principles were:

3. Senior student affairs professionals considered a wide variety of ethical principles and values in their administrative work, those being faith and spirituality, power and powerlessness, reputation and livelihood, and integrity and humanity.

The values of faith and spirituality were evident in the narratives of most of the senior student affairs administrators. The remaining institutional leaders did not specifically mention God or religion, but did raise issues of belief in something or someone spiritual outside themselves. All ten senior student affairs officers raised issues of power or lack thereof in their positions. Further, the issues of reputation and livelihood, although not always their own, but often that of a colleague or subordinate were prevalent in the stories of the participants. All of the senior student affairs officers mentioned the value of integrity and matters of humanity during

the interviews. By tapping into the stories of the participants, I was able to identify the value of integrity. Not surprisingly, all of the senior student affairs officers who worked at Catholic institutions discussed the values of faith and spirituality in their ethical decision-making. Perhaps, this may be because these participants' identification of the values of faith and spirituality relate to where they work, or these participants may have chosen to work in Catholic institutions because of their values of faith and spirituality.

2. Senior student affairs officers relied heavily on cultivating relationships with others, especially with their presidents, so that others understood the ethical basis for a decision. This conclusion illustrated that these senior student affairs officers were concerned with not only the perception of them as administrators, but also how closely linked relationships with supervisors and supervisees are to the actual process of making an ethical decision.

For instance, all of the participants mentioned the relationship that they shared with their president as important. Most of those interviewed said that not only is the relationship important, but the relationship is crucial to their ability to obtain resources for staff, garner support for initiatives, and be a credible advocate for students and the institution. Noddings (1984) discussed the reciprocal relationship of caring: "What we seek in caring is not payment or reciprocity in kind but the special reciprocity that connotes completion" (p. 151). To these senior student affairs officers, the nature of their relationship with their president either hindered or helped their ability to care for others at the institution.

The conclusions that emerged from the stories were not theoretical philosophies, but rather the lessons learned from ten educators who in various ways interpreted their role, senior student affairs officer, as that of an educator. In each of the ten stories, it was evident that they

understood the expectations that were placed on them to act ethically. As one participant, Paul, shared, “I suppose I will probably learn a little about myself from your study. Ethics, eh, since I am the VP, I had better be an ethical person.” What follows is a discussion of the conclusions in relation to the literature previously reviewed.

Conclusion 1: Values and Principles Considered

Senior student affairs officers considered a wide variety of ethical values and principles in administrative work which were: faith and spirituality, power and powerlessness, reputation and livelihood, and integrity and humanity.

Faith and Spirituality

One of the values considered in the ethical decision-making of senior student affairs officers was faith and spirituality. Many of the participants referred to their spiritual beliefs. They did this in the context of prayers that they say, references to their childhood, and how they nourish their souls. For these senior student affairs officers, faith and spirituality served as a foundation for how they approach their administrative positions. In fact, most of the participants mentioned going to church, reading scriptures, meditating and praying as manifestations of their faith and spirituality in ethical-decision making.

The use of spirituality and faith is supported in the literature. Specifically, Nash (1996) discussed stories and moments that shape an individual’s base assumptions about others and the world. He referred to these moments as “background beliefs” or the “First Moral Language (p. 13).” Joan, for example, expressed deep reliance on the spiritual lessons from the Bible when faced with an ethical dilemma as she looked for outcomes that would be reminiscent of King Solomon. Cynthia has an unwavering belief that, through prayer, spiritual signs will be revealed in her ethical decision-making process. For her, her church life was very important. This was

mentioned by Nash (1996) when he spoke of the second moral language. Although none of the literature reviewed specifically mentioned God in the context of decision-making, Kant (1959), reduced religion to a general set of conduct rules, and his philosophy is represented by the senior student affairs officers who looked to the Bible or religious signs for guidance and direction. Kant (1959) raised the premise that humans are inherently disposed to promote the common good and use religion as a means to do so.

Power and Powerlessness

Based on the narratives of the participants', power and powerlessness can be viewed as the control, or lack thereof, of human and fiscal resources, across a range of issues affecting the institution. In the context of this study, power was not infinite. Because the participants saw themselves in powerful positions does not mean that this power was without limits. In the bureaucratic hierarchy of colleges and universities, participants in this study found there is usually someone who has more positional power. As such, the dynamics of power and powerlessness depended upon the position of the participants and the context of the situation.

Values of power and powerlessness are supported in the literature. Gilligan's (1982) theory on the psychology of women is an area of the literature that addressed power particularly well. Gilligan highlighted the disparity between power and care by identifying traditionally male approaches as being justice oriented and traditionally female approaches as responsibility oriented. Specifically, when speaking of abortion, Gilligan commented that between "compassion and autonomy" and "virtue and power" the feminine voice may struggle to be heard. The power she was referring to was the power to choose. For example, the stories which follow illustrate incongruence between traditional notions of power and the concept of care.

Power is generally associated with top down directives and commands whereas care is associated connecting with another through collaboration and consensus building (Gilligan).

The stories shared by the participants highlighted differences between the concepts of power and justice and the concept of care. Both Tina and Alexis, along with other participants, realized that power, or the lack thereof, meant they would have to make decisions based on someone else's notion of justice. In both instances, they were instructed to follow top-down orders instead of being invited to collaborate and build consensus on the best possible decision. Tina was told by the president of her institution to resolve a problem in a manner that she believed to be unethical. Alexis was harassed by her president to make a decision that she believed was racist and unappreciative of the institution's heritage and culture. Both Tina and Alexis believed that their role of senior student affairs officer was no longer a position of power when confronted with disreputable directives from their supervisor.

Reputation and Livelihood

Reputation and livelihood was discussed in more detail and considered more deeply during the participant interviews than I would have anticipated. Participants' Richard and Kyle were both surprised to have their livelihoods threatened. Although punishment was mentioned in Kohlberg's (1969) lower stages of moral development, I was disheartened to the extent that threats were used regarding the livelihood of the participants. I was also surprised to hear of illustrations of the low levels of moral development being exhibited by their Presidents, as perceived by the participants.

Both Richard and Kyle referred to threats to their reputation and livelihood in their narratives. Richard was told to terminate an employee because the president of his institution believed the employee to be a lesbian. Although Richard chose not to follow the president's

instruction, he did receive backlash when he heard negative remarks, made by the President, about him and his profession. The President made disparaging remarks about student affairs and disregarded Richard's contributions during meetings. According to Richard, the President further imputed that Richard was no longer qualified for the job because of an inability to handle complex personnel issues, making a reference to Richard not terminating the Dean of Students. Richard feared he was going to be fired for not adhering to the president's directive, yet he could not ethically terminate a staff member because the President suspected the Dean of Students was a lesbian. Richard believed his livelihood, his position, was at stake if he did not follow the President's order and his reputation as a student affairs professional was at stake because of what the President might say about him if he was fired.

In Kyle's story, Kyle believed he was made to be the scapegoat of the President during a time of campus unrest and disagreement regarding the future of the campus structure for Black students. He was unsure if his job would still exist once he confronted his President. Again, in this case of a bureaucratic organization, more power resides above Kyle. Kyle reported he was portrayed as intentionally misleading the situation to the Black community on campus by his President because Kyle had not informed the campus of the President's plan to demolish the Black Student Center on campus. Still, Kyle's decision to confront the President was made based on what he believed to be in the best interest for students and the overall campus community. Kyle believed that he had to confront the President and use the power of the President's reputation for being a supporter of racial diversity on campus, to achieve his goal of paying tribute to the Black students who fought to create the Black Student Center. Kyle did so knowing that the confrontation might negatively affect his family's livelihood.

Literature reviewed by Kohlberg (1969) and Gilligan (1982) is most applicable here because Kohlberg stated that individuals go through changes in moral development when faced with an ethical dilemma. For both Kyle and Richard, logic failed when it came to violating the bureaucratic mandates about how power is used in organizations. At the same time, Richard and Kyle contemplated what it would mean to families and loved ones if they lost their job. Both participants wondered how others would be taken care of if they themselves lost employment. The participants were not only aware of organizational constructs such as mission, responsibility, and hierarchy, but also familiar with how their decision would impact important people in their lives. Thus, they made their decisions using both justice (Kohlberg) and care (Gilligan) concepts.

Both Richard and Kyle first reflected on the actions and directives of the President before making a rash decision. Although Kyle and Richard realized that they could be punished or admonished, both men sought alternative ways they could accomplish the President's goals and yet, still maintain their integrity. Finally, both thought about the impact of their decision as a universal principle, as an impact on their own reputation, and as a factor affecting their livelihood should they be terminated.

Integrity and Humanity

The themes of integrity and humanity were most artfully illustrated by the narratives of Amanda, Sharon and Wesley. Amanda struggled with how to convince an employee to resign after years of service to her institution. Amanda valued the humanity of having the employee make the decision on his or her own as opposed to the decision being made and the person being terminated. Sharon's dilemma forced her to terminate a trusted and valued colleague after numerous attempts to encourage self responsibility had failed. Sharon used integrity as a context in which she made this decision by admitting to herself that she had already waited far too long

before deciding to terminate this employee. Wesley was faced with the situation of knowing a colleague was misappropriating funds while questioned by his president about the situation.

Kitchener (1985), Nash (1996) and Fried's (1997) models on ethical decision-making in student affairs were all applicable to the theme in the findings of integrity and humanity. Kitchener identified five principles for ethical decision-making in the campus environment and Nash and Fried wrote that background and culture should be added in an effort to explore ethical decision-making in student affairs. The principles outlined in Kitchener's work included (a) respecting autonomy, (b) doing no harm, (c) benefiting others, (d) being just and, (e) being faithful. As it relates to research on gender, Delworth and Seaman (1984) and Noddings (1984) highlighted the principles of humanity and compassion as contributors to the promotion of honest relationships. Amanda considered a more humane approach, characterized by honesty and time, because she believed it would show her respect and value for the relationship she had built with her colleague. Her decision-making process was influenced by her desire for an honest and caring association that she formed with her employee.

Nash (1996) and Fried (1997) maintained that individuals often make decisions and do not share the foundation or reasons for why a certain choice was made. Both asserted that metaphysical or hidden beliefs should be unearthed and discussed in an open and honest manner. Although there are codes of ethical behavior and principles of ethical practice in the student affairs profession, individuals most often used stories from their families, churches, schools, friendships, education, and careers to make ethical decisions. Sharon, for example, referred to stories from her childhood or lessons from her parents about friendships that she believes may have caused her to wait before taking the necessary step of termination. Wesley made references to his time as a child in Boy Scouts and how telling the truth was always important. These are

examples of contemplation and reflection, influential moments, with hidden values that contributed to senior student affairs officers' ethical decision-making.

Stories of respecting others, doing no harm, and being faithful (Kitchener, 1985), were described in rich, descriptive narratives that were alive in the participants' everyday professional lives. Paul's respect for the clergy who hired him, Amanda's desire to bring no harm to her valued colleague, Wesley's notion of telling the truth and Richard's belief in the humanity of his dean of students are examples of the ways in which ethical principles were manifested in the stories of these senior student affairs officers. Despite participants' awareness of professional ethical standards, the participants did not utilize various codes designed for student affairs professionals in these difficult situations. Rather than rely on these ethical codes for guidance in a specific situation, participants discussed the utility of these codes in a general theoretical sense or as a teaching tool. Canon (1985), Lebacqz (1985), Winston and Dagley (1985), Nash (1996) and Blimling (1998) all stressed that codes can be used in a general sense and not as documents that can speak directly to one's experience.

Senior student affairs officers in this study considered the principles and values of faith and spirituality, power and powerlessness, reputation and livelihood, and integrity and humanity in their ethical decision-making. These themes indicate that ethical decision-making embodies some of what is found in the literature, but many themes were only indirectly covered in the literature. Thus, ethical decision-making is a complex mix of issues that draw upon many different approaches to ethical inquiry. For example, concepts such as situational variables, context considerations and cultural nuances have not been explored in the literature. Each of the participants had situational, context and cultural variables that made ethical decision-making a complex phenomenon.

Conclusion 2: Cultivating Relationships

In support of the second conclusion, cultivating relationships, the senior student affairs officers spent a great deal of time reflecting on how to cultivate relationships with others, most often their presidents. This is where Kant (1959) and Gilligan (1982) were most relevant. Kant believed that people should behave according to the “Golden Rule” of doing unto others as we would have done unto ourselves. A few of the senior student affairs officers found themselves frustrated by others who did not adhere to this principle. Despite the incongruence between words and actions or disagreement with those who did not adhere to the Golden Rule, these administrators remained steadfast in their desire to treat others as they would want to be treated.

The senior student affairs officers shared that they found themselves in positions of managing campus crises and over time have assumed the role of caretaker of various relationships. In fact, some of the participants felt obligated to take care of others including their presidents, the president’s cabinet, parents, students and colleagues alike by being the spokesperson at times of campus unrest, as in Kyle’s story, or serving in a variety of administrative roles for the senior leadership, as in Amanda’s narrative. This ethic of care is supported by Gilligan’s (1993) research. She stated that “responsibility and relationships” (p. 126) are connected. The desire to cultivate and nurture relationships among the participants was quite strong. This is evident in Tina’s story because she believed if her relationship with her president was stronger, colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates would understand or “have faith,” as she put it, in her decisions when faced with an ethical dilemma.

Paul, Wesley, and Sharon were examples of participants for whom relationships with others are central to their experiences as senior student affairs officers. For Paul, he believed his success was in part dependent upon the continued faith of Catholic priests and so he nurtured

those relationships. Wesley believed that, above all, a positive working relationship with his president was crucial to the successful implementation of student affairs initiatives so he chose to always be honest with his president. Sharon, for example, struggled for months about how to resolve a conflict with a colleague with whom she had a friendly and supportive relationship. The world of the senior student affairs officer is, as Gilligan (1993) stated, “a world of relationships and psychological truths where an awareness of the connection...gives rise to the recognition of responsibility...” (p. 30).

Wesley identified the need for building relationships when he shared that others often try to manipulate the senior student affairs officer. Again, he stated, “people are going to be playing themselves off against others to try to get you to make a decision.” Rob, what you are trying to say in this sentence, or the point you are making, still is not clear – This need to situate ethical decision-making in the context of the theme of cultivating relationships was reached by the senior student affairs officers, but only realized after significant time in leadership positions in student affairs. Many of the participants believed that they were in some way responsible for the overall professional relationships of the leadership teams of which they were a member. Indeed, these administrators have assumed a role of caretaker for others.

The Use of Story

Although not a conclusion but rather a by-product of the process used to collect the data, I confirmed that stories and past incidents played a significant role in the ethical decision-making processes of senior student affairs officers. Richard, for example, was asked to terminate one of his current staff members by his president. As a means to resolve this conflict, Richard reflected upon his previous experience of being asked to fire his dean of students because of her sexual orientation. Similarly, Cynthia reflected on the experience of not being offered a job because of

her race when she was faced with whom to hire for her budget and planning position at Latin College.

Fried (1997) recognized the importance of stories as metaphors and believed the insights would reveal the complex issues placed before student affairs professionals. Her work complemented Nash's (1996) arguments regarding background beliefs and moral languages. Nash's insights were quite applicable because many of the stories the senior student affairs officers shared were personal accounts. Of particular interest was the use of stories by the senior student affairs officers who identified as Black or African American. Each participant shared a variety of stories woven together in a way that illustrated the way in which the participants' decisions were influenced by their stories. For the African Americans in the study, stories about race played a large part in how they viewed ethical decisions.

African American studies scholar Early (1993) stated that African-Americans are pulled in two directions...one to be "American" and the other to be "Negro" (p. xvii). Du Bois (1903) identified the "peculiar sensation" (p. 2) as "the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (p.2). Although not the focus of the study, the issue of race and how it manifests itself in the professional lives of the participants echoed the writing of Du Bois (1903) and Early (1993). There is often a double consciousness in how African Americans view themselves.

In this study, the African American senior student affairs officers viewed their ethical decision-making from two vantage points. They viewed it first from their own story, narrative or life experience, and then they also viewed it from the lens of their presumably White supervisors and colleagues. Often the decision they reached meant taking into account how they would be

perceived racially, as well as professionally. For example, Cynthia identified the precarious position in which she found herself when faced with whom to hire for the position in her office.

Likewise, for women participants, gender was a focal point of many of their stories, as was class for participants from lower income backgrounds or families. Joan, for example, shared a story of growing up poor in a large family and having long conversations about “who was going to get what piece of chicken at the table.” Joan referenced this story and compared it to an issue of equity. Like dividing the chicken during dinner, her dilemma of the Black student taking the campus newspapers was about equity and she needed to be involved in the decision-making process. Good change – For Sharon, her female gender became a focal point of her dilemma. She struggled with a decision to terminate a staff member’s employment especially at the time when she was the only female vice president or dean. She contemplated how her behavior would be interpreted by her male colleagues.

Foster (1986) and Polkinghorne (1988) emphasized the use of story in exploring ethical considerations of individuals. Nash (1996) and Brooks (2001) stated that narratives are the foundation of one’s ethical beliefs. I found that ethical decision-making was indeed informed by the stories and narratives of the participants in this study.

Limitations of the Study

If one believes that ethical behavior is in the eye of the beholder, then the scope of this study is limited as a result of whom I spoke with regarding ethical decision-making. I chose to speak to those making the decision, not those receiving or observing the decision. Therefore, this

study's narratives are personal accounts from a specific point of view. I did not seek an objective or outsider's perspective on the ethical decision being rendered.

In order to enrich the data collection with multiple perspectives on the ethical decision made, an initial thought was to also interview trusted colleagues or confidants of the primary participants, in addition to the senior student affairs officers themselves. Because of the difficulty in identifying those confidants as well as time constraints, I relied instead on the words of the senior student affairs officers alone. As such, that is the only perspective shared. The inclusion of different perspectives might have shed additional light on the experiences of these respondents.

Furthermore, this study is limited to senior student affairs officers in the mid-Atlantic and New England regions of the country. A broader selection of participants from throughout the country may add strength to the study by including more geographically diverse institutions and participants. Additionally, my participants were African American or White. The study could have been enriched by participants of additional races or ethnicities. Lastly, the participants could have been more diverse in sexual orientation, age, religion, ability and nationality.

Another challenge to this study included the process by which the participants were identified. I relied on nominations from student affairs organizations. These nominations of senior student affairs officers may have yielded participants who are publicly known by others to have a particular stance on ethics and ethical decision-making. Further, the participants were aware that they were nominated for participation in the study because someone believed them to be an ethical administrator. Similarly, these participants may have been more comfortable discussing ethical decision-making and may not be illustrative of all senior student affairs officers in the field.

A final limitation may include the social desirability of the ethical dilemma. The ethical dilemma the participants chose to share may have been one in which they believed, I as a Black male, would find particularly interesting or a dilemma in which they acted honorably. Despite these limitations, I am confident in the process and the results because of the length of time the participants spent with me in the interview and afterwards reviewing the transcripts. In my time with the participants, I trusted they were being honest and truly recalling values and principles that were pivotal to what they consider when making ethical decisions. The strengths of the study address why I am confident in the study's conclusions.

Strengths of the Study

The study contains several strengths, both in terms of data collection and analysis. The senior student affairs officers recruited as respondents were willing to discuss ethical dilemmas in depth with me. They expressed a genuine interest to be involved in the study and to take advantage of the opportunity to tell their story. All participants shared potentially sensitive information and gave much of themselves in their responses with me. The openness of our communication allowed for the collection of rich data and analysis. Open sharing of the private side of ethical decision-making revealed insights into ethical decision-making that I had not considered before. I believe this research is a significant contribution to the student affairs literature about the ethical decision-making of senior student affairs officers.

The use of narrative inquiry as methodology is also a strength of this study. The responses of the senior student affairs officers to open ended questions about ethical decision-making were, on the whole, thick descriptions of not only the ethical decision-making process, but also the participants' own identities. The fact that most respondents could not divorce their identities from their actions points to the realization that for the participants in the study one's

own personal story informs their process for making ethical decisions. Indeed, faith and spirituality, power and powerlessness, reputation and livelihood, and integrity and humanity are all critical values considered by these participants when making ethical decisions.

A third strength of the study included the senior student affairs officers themselves. In this study, there were five White and five African American participants. Additionally, the gender of the participants was relatively balanced with six women and four men. This study did not include Asian American, Native American or Latino(a) representation, and no participant identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered. Yet, in a field which has struggled to diversify at the executive level ranks (Jackson, 2003), this representation is an important example of the array of contexts and perspectives available for ethical decision-making.

A fourth strength of this study was the level of quality I was able to assure through rigorous strategies employed. The senior student affairs officers were extremely willing to review their own transcripts, summaries, and findings. Through this reiterative and analytical process, these participants offered comments and revisions when appropriate. Similarly, the inquiry auditor and peer debriefers assisted in the construction of the interview format, the data analysis, and logic and accuracy of the arguments and findings. As such, I am confident about the strength of the conclusions and findings offered.

Returning to Researcher Subjectivity

Friends and colleagues have shared that they see me in this research. I would agree that I was very much involved in shaping the aspects of the study. While I had the benefit of an inquiry auditor, I bring much of my own identity and narrative into my thinking about ethical decision-making for senior student affairs officers. I do not see this as a weakness but a reality of doing

qualitative research which, by necessity, is situated in the contextual reality of the researcher. The infusion of my perspective may have come from my own desires to one day become an ethical senior student affairs officer or from my need to be in conversation with others as they unearth the background of a decision. Whatever the reason, I believe that the participants enjoyed their involvement in the project because they felt trusted and cared for. I was deeply interested in their stories, and I sincerely cared for them as people. I enjoyed meeting my participants and learning more about them. I now consider several of them to be mentors and role models.

At the same time I must recognize that the comfort and ease I felt with some of the participants may have caused them to misunderstand or misinterpret me, and at the same time, me to them. For example, in my interview with Joan, she said, “you know what I mean,” inferring that I understood her experience because we are both African American. In another interview, with Tina, I identified with her experience of spending long hours in church as a child. The issues of race and religion were especially meaningful to me because I live the experience of an African American student affairs educator and, in making many of my own ethical decisions, I have drawn from my experiences at both Jesuit, Catholic and secular schools, colleges and universities. Thankfully, my peer debriefers, and inquiry auditor were always there for me to test various assumptions or beliefs.

Implications for Practice

Canon (1985) and Nash (1996) shared that few student affairs professionals fully read their profession’s code of ethical behavior in its entirety. Blimling (1998) offered that most ethical codes represent a variety of concessions and do not have the strength and force necessary to be instructive. Winston and Dagley (1985) outlined a variety of limitations with ethical codes

including that codes were not based in reality and rather were idealized. In this study, few of the participants claimed to be familiar with various ethical codes.

Implications of the findings of this study are that senior student affairs officers become engaged with their professional statements on ethics and determine ways to make the codes more practical, more forceful, and tools for consultation and instruction. According to my participants, ethical decision-making and an analysis of the ethical codes in student affairs are not always a component of professional preparation programs or commonly discussed in the workplace. Alexis, one of the participants, expressed gratitude that she had explored the issue of ethics and ethical decision-making in both her doctoral and master's programs. When asked during the interviews, few respondents mentioned ever taking a course on ethics while in graduate school.

Although prompted to do so, I found that senior student affairs officers enjoyed reflecting on stories or incidents from their past to guide their ethical decision-making processes and enjoyed reflecting on their own backgrounds as insights into their ethical decision-making. Each of the senior student affairs officers discussed the value of revisiting critical incidents from their past as a way to determine how they would make ethical decisions in the future.

The participants identified their stories as constructive tools in their own ethical decision-making. Only one participant, Cynthia, verbally identified that she had not fully resolved a difficult moment of discrimination from her past until our interview in her office. She revealed that being turned down for a job was an incident that she had not fully resolved. She shared that the opportunity to reflect on the ethical dimensions of her current dilemma was especially valuable to her.

Second, senior student affairs officers are in need of supportive colleagues, mentors and role models. Confiding in a colleague, a partner, or friend and obtaining appropriate counsel are

critical to processing ethical dilemmas. According to the participants in the study, discussing ethical dilemmas with others will, over time, aid senior student affairs professionals in identifying a variety of ways to manage ethical dilemmas of the senior university leadership. Additionally, and most important, senior student affairs officers need to examine the stories of their lives to recognize the values and principles that inform their ethical decision-making. This examination may serve the senior student affairs officer well when faced with an ethical dilemma.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study brings attention to the importance of further research on ethical decision-making of senior student affairs officers. For example racial background, religious traditions, and gender issues were raised as significant factors in terms of how these senior student affairs officers approached ethical decisions and how the participants were treated by colleagues and supervisors when making these decisions. Research that explores how race, religion, and gender influence the ethical decision-making processes of senior student affairs officers is needed. Studies on ethical decision-making that include gender, religious, racial and ethnic diversity of senior student affairs officers are needed. What is also needed are studies that have race and gender as their focus. I propose both because there is a difference between identity of the participants and content of the research study.

Additionally, I had always imagined inquiry into the processes of ethical decision-making to be an examination of a central figure torn between two equal choices, both either good or bad. The ethical dilemmas of these ten participants painted a picture that was much more complex. In fact, their ethical dilemmas were wrought with examples of racial and gender bias, discrimination, unscrupulous supervisors or colleagues, nuances of how to honor another person,

or how to address student behavior. Thus, the study of ethics is rarely about just a good or a bad choice; it is often about the context in which that decision is made. Participants had to consider how the decision they were asked to make had its origins in racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism and other issues related to personal identity. This study therefore highlights the need for more research to be conducted on the subject of ethics itself, in all its complexity.

This study was born out of a desire to explore the professional lives of other higher education administrators such as academic vice presidents, student development vice presidents, development vice presidents, and even presidents. Research could be conducted that considers how these other administrators approach ethical decision-making. Research of this nature might illustrate fundamental differences and similarities in the orientations and preparation of these administrators. Other sampling strategies that include other geographic locations, all women's colleges, historically Black or Hispanic serving institutions, or religiously affiliated institutions, may elucidate other findings of importance to understand ethical decision-making in higher education. Institutional context and what position within an institution's administration someone holds may alter the conclusions drawn in this study. For instance, would administrators at a religiously affiliated college or university more effectively relate stories about ethical decision-making than those at secular institutions or vice-versa? Similarly, might a dean or an administrator with more experience in the profession consider an ethical dilemma with greater complexity than a hall director or a new administrator just entering the field? Institutional and positional context are important considerations in the study of ethics.

Longitudinal research, including following senior student affairs officers over a period of years, might also allow researchers to see how, if at all, the values or narratives change over time. In particular, the use of longitudinal data on ethical decision-making in student affairs may

assist those who teach in graduate programs to conceptualize new and innovative ways in which to challenge and support students entering the field, especially those who may one day become a senior student affairs officer.

Reflection and Appreciation

One of the challenges for me proved to be how much of the participants' stories to retell. Some of the participants were very reflective and able to discuss, in great detail, the values they considered when faced with an ethical dilemma. Other participants were less contemplative and less able to expand upon their responses. In fact, some participants needed prompts, while others were less forthcoming. I suspect that for some of the senior student affairs officers, the ethical dilemmas raised feelings that the participants were unwilling to discuss. This unwillingness may have impaired their ability to openly discuss their values. Nonetheless, the stories, retold here, are presented in a way that illustrated the values considered and lessons learned from each participant.

The ten participants shared moments of their professional and personal lives with me. These stories touched me in profound ways and I look forward to one day assuming the role of senior student affairs officer. By hearing their stories, I am now equipped with the lessons they taught me. The critical principles and values they considered enriched my own narrative through this experience, especially at a time when I transition to a new professional role in a Jesuit institution where personal and professional transformation is a part of institutional mission. I am excited about the future of student affairs, as I believe these ten educators are examples of the thoughtful, reflective, and soul-driven leadership in the field of student affairs today. Elkins (2003) wrote:

In taking on the various roles that we accept (or have pushed on us) we filter what we see and hear in a way that flattens our perception and

impoverishes our story. Performing a role, defining ourselves by the parameters of a role, living as if we are a role, can devalue as well as enrich our stories...Being a person, having a life to live, with hopes, fears, and dreams is more than any role or set of roles can prescribe. Roles may describe what we do but it is stories that embody our lives. We need stories because life fully lived does not lend itself to description and definition, or to abstract theories. (¶ 2)

I include this quote from *Imagining Our Lives as Stories* because it exemplifies what I learned about myself, the role of the senior student affairs officer, and ethical decision-making. I was able to see the important ways in which these professionals consider ethical values and principles of their positions through stories. I am very much appreciative of this glimpse into their lives.

APPENDIX A
LETTER TO NASPA REGION I ADVISORY BOARD &
NASULGC COUNCIL ON STUDENT AFFAIRS

October 2003

Dear INSERT NAME:

The purpose of this letter is to request your participation in a research study and provide you with basic information about the study. This dissertation study of values and principles in ethical decision making for senior student affairs administrators represents one of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Maryland, Higher Education Administration program. This study is designed to gain a greater understanding of the values that guide ethical decision-making of senior student affairs administrators.

Your participation in the study involves you nominating 3-5 senior student affairs administrators from your region who you believe think deeply and complexly about student affairs work. Please be sure to indicate why you might be nominating each person for inclusion in the study. Once I receive your nomination, I may contact that person to participate in the study. I will follow up via email you if I do not hear from you by X DATE.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Maryland, College Park, and is being conducted under the scholarly guidance of Professor Marylu McEwen, my dissertation advisor. The responses I gain during the interviews will remain confidential and no names will be identified in any document related to this study. The study involves no known risks or discomforts.

I greatly appreciate your willingness to nominate senior student affairs officers in your region. For your information, findings of the study may have implications for student affairs education administration and practice relative to understanding ethical decision-making. Although the abstract for the study will be sent to you, final results of the study may be obtained upon request. Thank you very much for your participation.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Kelly
Doctoral Candidate at University of Maryland
Associate Dean of Students
The University of Vermont
41 South Prospect Street
Burlington VT 05405
Robert.Kelly@uvm.edu
802.656.4643
802.656.4644

Marylu McEwen
Dissertation Advisor
Professor
University of Maryland
EDCP, Benjamin Building
College Park, MD, 20742
mmcewen@umd.edu
(301) 405-2871

APPENDIX B

NOMINATION FORM

Please submit the names of senior student affairs administrators who you believe are deeply engaged in student affairs work. The people nominated should, in their everyday actions at work, contemplate the administration and ethics of student affairs. Thinking deeply and complexly about the administration and ethics of student affairs is operationally defined as serving as the “moral conscience” of the division and the college (Brown, 1985).

As criteria for participants for this study, the please consider those senior student affairs administrators who (a) have responsibility and oversight for the division of student affairs, (b) have terminal graduate degrees, and (c) have at least one year of prior experience in that level of position.

Submit one form for *each* person whom you nominate.

Nominee's Name: _____

Nominee's Title: _____

Nominee's Address:

Nominee's Phone Number: _____

Nominee's Email Address: _____

Justification/Illustration of reason for Nomination:

Your name: _____

Title: _____

Institution: _____

Your Phone #: _____

Your Email: _____

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO ROBERT KELLY,
BY FRIDAY, November 17, 2003. Nicholson House, 41 South Prospect Street, Burlington, VT
05405, Robert.Kelly@uvm.edu –Email

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

November 2003

Dear INSERT NAME:

The purpose of this letter is to request your participation in a research study and provide you with basic information about the study. You have been nominated by a “Region I NASPA Advisory or NASULGC NE Student Affairs board member” as an appropriate candidate for my study. This dissertation study of values and principles in ethical decision making for senior student affairs administrators represents one of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Maryland, Higher Education Administration program. This study is designed to gain a greater understanding of the values that guide ethical decision making for senior student affairs administrators.

Your participation in the study would involve a 60-90 minute interview session with me, the researcher. During the interview session you will be asked to discuss an ethical dilemma that you have dealt with in your current position. Additionally you will be asked to respond to a variety of questions for me to learn more about the issue and your decision-making process.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Maryland, College Park, and is being conducted under the scholarly guidance of Professor Marylu McEwen, my dissertation advisor. Your responses during the study will remain anonymous and no names will be identified in any document related to this study. The study involves no known risks or discomforts.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and your formal consent will be indicated by signing the informed consent form. Your consent can be withdrawn at any time in the study.

Findings of the study may have implications for student affairs administration and practice relative to understanding ethical decision making. Although the abstract for the study will be sent to you, final results of the study may be obtained upon request. Thank you very much for your participation. Please respond, by phone or email, by XXXXX. I will contact you via email, if I do not hear from you by X DATE

Sincerely,

Robert D. Kelly
Doctoral Candidate at University of Maryland
Associate Dean of Students
The University of Vermont
41 South Prospect Street
Burlington VT 05405
Robert.Kelly@uvm.edu
802.656.4643

APPENDIX D
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I state that I wish to participate in a program of research being conducted by Robert Kelly, under the guidance of Professor Marylu McEwen, of the University of Maryland.

I understand the purpose of the study is to explore the values and principles that guide and influence ethical decision making for senior student affairs administrators. I understand the research involves the audio taping of interviews. Interviews will be conducted by Mr. Kelly and will last approximately 1-1 1/2 hours. I understand that a subsequent phone interview may be conducted. I understand that I will be given copies of my interview transcripts for my review and comment. I understand that I will be asked to provide an informal tour of my campus or time with my Divisional staff to Mr. Kelly.

Numerically coding the audiotapes and not identifying participants by their names to anyone verbally or in any written material produced from this study will maintain confidentiality. In addition, the tapes will be stored in a locked drawer for six months after which they will be destroyed. I understand that I have the option of using my real name or choosing a pseudonym for the purposes of the study, and I understand that my real name or chosen pseudonym will be used according to my preference.

I understand that this study is not designed to help me personally but rather the researcher hopes to learn more about the values and principles that influence and guide decision making in student affairs. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

For more information, I can contact the principle investigator through the following information:

Robert Kelly, Associate Dean of Students
Nicholson House, The University of Vermont
41 South Prospect Street
Burlington, VT 05405
802.656.3380 WORK
802.879.0867 HOME
Robert.Kelly@uvm.edu EMAIL

Marylu McEwen, Professor
University of Maryland
Benjamin Bldg., UMCP
College Park, MD
301.405.2871 WORK
mmcewen@umd.edu EMAIL

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

APPENDIX E

INITIAL INTERVIEW OVERVIEW

The purpose of this interview is to attempt to understand the values and principles that guide ethical decision-making for senior student affairs administrators. You have been chosen for an interview because of the apparent complexity present in your job responsibilities and because student affairs leaders perceive you as someone who thinks deeply about student affairs work. During this interview I would like to find out as much as I can about what and how you think about the ethical dilemmas you face in student affairs administration.

I will be asking you to reflect upon and share a situation that you have previously faced in which you had to make a difficult ethical decision. I am interested in your story. Additionally, I will ask several questions that are designed to help me understand how you view ethics in your work in student affairs. Of course, there are many ways to address any problem. I am more interested in how you thought about the issue than in what you eventually decided. Again, my interest is more in understanding what values and principles you think about and how you arrived at your decision rather than the actual solution you employed.

After your story, the questions I ask may at times appear repetitive. However, in order to insure that I understand the issue as you see it and understand your ethical decision making process, I may need you to repeat your thinking or to tell me why you said what you did.

First, I will ask you to discuss a scenario of your choosing and how you resolved the issue. Next, I will ask you to discuss the thought process between your initial confrontation of the issue and the decision made.

What we discuss here today will be strictly confidential. The transcriptions of the interviews will be given a number to protect your identity. The session will be taped and a transcript will be created. Once the study is completed, the tapes will be destroyed 6 months after the study is completed.

Please don't hesitate to ask questions at any time throughout the interview. If at any time you feel uncomfortable for any reason, please let me know.

Do you have questions you might want to pursue before we begin?

Thanks for taking time to meet with me.

PLEASE TELL ME THE STORY ABOUT AN DILEMMA YOU HAVE FACED. WHAT VALUES AND PRINCIPLES MOST INFLUENCED YOUR DECISION? I think a recap of the scenario will give us a starting point for our discussion today. Ask the participant any questions that might be pressing. Allow the participant to identify and describe the situation.

APPENDIX F

MAIN INTERVIEW/QUESTIONS/PROBES

- 1..What were your initial thoughts about the decision you had to make? How did your thinking develop?
2. What were the conflicts for you in that situation?
3. Had you ever come across a conflict like this before? Is this what you would have called an ethical dilemma? Why did this make you think deeply and complexly about your work?
4. What constitutes an ethical dilemma for you?
5. What do you think about or consider when coming to a decision about what to do? Anything else?
6. What did you decide to do? Why?
7. On what basis did you justify the decision that you made? What are the important components for you?
10. What did you think would happen as a result of that decision?
What did happen? Why?
10. What do you think *now* about the decision you made? Why?
11. What would you say are your guiding principles for ethical dilemmas in your work? Why?
12. How do you think your background is linked to the decision you made?
13. What are your beliefs about good and bad, right and wrong?
14. Where did you learn these concepts?
15. Who were the people that you feel aided in shaping your moral identity?
16. Where were the places that aided in shaping your moral identity?
17. How do the NASPA or ACPA Ethical Codes fit into your professional identity?
18. What do you think of the codes? Why?
19. How do the principles X Code match with your personal code, whatever that may be?
20. Is there anything that you would like to add or you feel I should have asked you?

APPENDIX G
FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

1. Review of the transcripts
 - (a) You have had a chance to review the transcripts. What was it like to read them?
 - (b) Would you add or change anything relating to the transcript?
 - (c) Did reading the transcripts provide any insight, clarity, or strike you in any ways?
2. Ask follow up questions if necessary

APPENDIX H
LOGISTICS JOURNAL

| | | |
|----|---|------------------|
| a. | Proposal Draft Prepared | July 2003 |
| b. | Proposal Committee (Renamed) Marylu McEwen, Chair Sharon Fries-Britt Laura Perna Robert J. Nash Cordell Black, Dean's Representative | January 2001 |
| c. | Acceptable three-chapter proposal completed | October 2003 |
| d. | Proposal Hearing | October 2003 |
| e. | Human Subject submission and acceptance | October 2003 |
| f. | Contact Participants & Conduct Pilot Interviews | October 2003 |
| g. | Contact & Collect Nomination Forms | November 2003 |
| h. | Contact Participants for Study | December 2003 |
| i. | Begin First Interviews | December 2003 |
| j. | Begin Second Interviews | February 2003 |
| k. | Begin Formal Data Analysis | January 2003 |
| l. | Continued Data Analysis | February 2003 |
| m. | Chapter 4 (findings) draft | October 1, 2004 |
| n. | Chapter 5 (conclusions) draft | November 1, 2004 |
| o. | Chapter 4 (findings) final | January 15, 2004 |
| p. | Chapter 5 (conclusions) final | March 1, 2004 |
| q. | Defense Committee Named | January 2001 |
| r. | Complete Dissertation Available | May 5, 2005 |
| s. | Defense Hearing | May 17, 2005 |
| t. | Corrected copy of dissertation to graduate school | August, 2005 |

APPENDIX I
LETTER FROM INQUIRY AUDITOR

April 27, 2005

Dear Robert,

This letter provides written confirmation that I have completed my inquiry audit of your dissertation research focused on ethical decision-making of senior student affairs offices. The responsibility of the inquiry auditor is to review the process and the procedures followed by the researcher as well as to substantiate the “product” in terms of data analysis, interpretations, and findings. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of your research. I read your dissertation with great interest, and believe your study provided a new area of inquiry given its focus and respondents.

To complete the audit, I read your full dissertation, including the proposal, findings, recommendations, transcripts, and appendices. While a large amount of information to digest and consider, I have carefully verified that you utilized the procedure you indicated you would. I can attest that the procedures you followed preserved the integrity of naturalistic inquiry, specifically narrative inquiry, and that your interpretations of the data, findings, and conclusions are logical and sound.

In reviewing your dissertation, I made written comments throughout, indicating where I thought you should clarify or expand upon your explanation or analysis. I found that you did a solid, accurate job taking the contents of your interview transcripts and composing those transcripts into a story about the ethical issue/dilemma faced by each respondent. Further, your final chapter logically connects with the theories you presented in your literature review and those described by the respondents in your research.

In summary, you followed procedures consistent with narrative inquiry with precision, rigor, and attention to detail to the words and the stories of the participants. Your findings and recommendations follow logically from the data, and are written to engage the reader in better understanding the complexities of the ethical dilemmas presented.

Please let me know if you need clarification on any of the above points and observations. Thanks again for the opportunity to be a part of your work. Congratulations on this wonderful accomplishment Rob!

Sincerely,

Richard J. Gatteau, PhD
Assistant Provost for Advising, Orientation, and Family Programs
Stony Brook University

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