Principals' value-informed decision making, intrapersonal moral discord, and pathways to resolution

The complexities of moral leadership praxis

William C. Frick

*Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies,
College of Education, The University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, USA*

Abstract

Purpose – This research seeks to explore the inevitable internal struggle experienced by school leaders when making ethically-informed judgments. The study acquired principals' intimate reflections about professional decision making in response to personal versus organizational and/or professional value discrepancy as identified in the ethic of the profession and its model for promoting students' best interests.

Design/methodology/approach – A modified phenomenological research method, appropriate for an educational research context, was used to capture administrators' perspectives about moral practice and decision-making experiences. The primary data collection strategy was participant interviews by means of purposeful sampling.

Findings – A clash between personal beliefs and values and organizational/professional expectations was very real for participants. The experience was generally frequent, but varied among principals. The struggle can be characterized as a phenomenon of intrapersonal moral discord experienced as part of the process of deciding ethically when faced with difficult moral choices.

Practical implications – The study contributes to the understanding of moral conflict in school leadership as an intrapersonal moral phenomenon, and how the conflict is resolved in practice, while providing insights into a more recently defined and theorized professional ethic for educational leadership. The study offers empirically derived knowledge for theory building and offers conceptual clarification of the moral leadership construct.

Originality/value – Moral judgment was complicated and contextually defined for participants. Administrators reported various ways of dealing with the nuances of personal and organizational value incongruity in order to engage in ethical decision making, including relying on, in some instances, a fundamental professional injunction.

Keywords Ethics, Leadership, Decision making, Principals

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The point that school administrative decision making requires more than the mechanical application of existing rules, regulations and various levels of school and school-related policy has been well established (Hoy and Miskel, 2005). The essential aspects of school leadership are more than simply possessing and carrying out certain technical skills to ensure effective and efficient management of organizational operations (Sergiovanni, 2009). The emphasis and preoccupation with bureaucratic

scientism and management perspectives has given way to the importance of value, moral, and ethical bases for educational leadership decision making. There is an increasing recognition that putatively value free administrative decisions and actions are actually "value-laden, even value-saturated enterprises(s)" (Hodgkinson, 1978, p. 122; see also Willower and Licata, 1997) that undergird our understanding of what Greenfield (1985, 1999), and others (Green, 1990) have articulated in more precise terms as the careful location of purpose and worth in things, or in other words "moral education" and "moral leadership." This recognition of value-driven, moral leadership action, according to Hodgkinson (1978), is an "administrative logic" of a new order[1].

Herbert Simon (1957) can be credited for helping us understand the importance of negotiating the value-laden, value-saturated nature of administrative practice in his conception of "economic man" where value compromises within modern organizational life are increasingly necessary, and therefore make being "good enough" rather than perfect rationality the distinctive mark of organizational leadership (Lakomski, 1987). Negotiating compromises, or what is commonly referred to as "satisficing", becomes the essential leadership skill. The mix of values, beliefs and assumptions from a myriad of interested parties, in American schooling writ large and those within an immediate geospatial context, creates "messy, complicated, and conflict-filled situations" that require difficult choices between competing, highly prized conceptions of what is desirable "that cannot be simultaneously or fully satisfied" (Cuban, 2001, p. 10). This leadership context is what Begley (2000) refers to as "value praxis."

Distinctions between values, valuation and morality

The distinction in the use of terms and language is important for this study. Axiology is complicated. Values are motivated preferences, conceptions of what is desirable, in personal or collective terms, "that influences the selection of available modes, means, and ends of action" (Kluckhohn, 1962, p. 395). Values language is ubiquitous and vague in the social sciences. In the most precise terms, "things have value (a property of something) and persons value (activity/action) things" (Green, 1990, p. 209). Value is the worth of something and valuation is the human estimation of something's worth (predicate vs. verb). Value placing and valuing are things that people do. The subtle and often misconceived distinction between value, valuation and morality happens when the word values is used as a noun. When making reference to people as "having values," as if to possess something, is a dramatic shift in modern language (Green, 1990). Values in this conception becomes the shift from things having value and therefore people valuing things to people having values based upon the notion of economic marginal utility – nothing has value inherent to itself, rather only as it has value to someone or some group. Values in this basic sense can be understood as amoral.

Morals or morality is a special class of values where differentiations between good and evil, right and wrong, praiseworthiness and blameworthiness are made. Morals and morality are distinctive values that carry a different quality than mere preferences, tastes, motivated desirability, or subjective estimations of worth. Within this value type, there is understood to be a drive or motivation (by design of our very nature as human beings) to live in community with others and be attuned to one another and the

world in which we inhabit. Morals or morality is what persons, individually and collectively, take to be important in relation to one another and nature – highly prized and cherished values. Therefore, "to say that a discourse or decision is moral is to say that it takes place in the domain where such differentiations [right – wrong, good – evil, praiseworthiness – blameworthiness] are seen as relevant, not that the judgments in this domain are correct [or incorrect, true or false in technically rational terms]" (Covaleskie, 2008, p. 2). Morals and morality then, can be understood as "the living out of ethical beliefs and commitments" (Starratt, 2004, p. 5) pertaining to relations between people, the faculties, desires and motives within each person, and beliefs about "the general purpose [or purposes] of human [and non-human] life as a whole" (Lewis, 1952, p. 72).

Purpose of the study and theoretical framework

This study seeks to provide empirical insights into a more recently defined and theorized professional ethic for educational leadership – the Ethic of the Profession and its Model for Promoting Students' Best Interests (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2001, 2005; Stefkovich, 2006). This professional ethic recognizes moral aspects unique to the profession that are primarily client-based and highlights the inevitable internal struggle experienced by school leaders due to a wide variety of considerations and factors that seek to inform and influence their moral practice as school leaders. This existential struggle can be characterized as a phenomenon of intrapersonal moral discord experienced as part of the process of deciding ethically when faced with difficult moral choices centered on personal versus organizational and/or professional value discrepancy, described as a "clashing of codes" within the framework. The professional ethic recognizes moral aspects unique to the profession of educational leadership and grounds the moral dimension of the profession on the nomothetic injunction to "serve the best interests of the student" (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2001, p. 23) whereby "promoting the success of all students" (ISLLC, 1996, p. 8) by focusing on the needs of children (Walker, 1998). The theory proposes that "clashes of codes" can be assuaged by adhering to the maxim as a principle of ethical decision making. There is limited empirical understanding of how the Ethic of the Profession and its Model for Promoting Students' Best Interests (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2001, 2005; Stefkovich, 2006) is understood and practiced by school administrators outside specific university seminar and training programs.

The Ethic of the Profession (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2001, 2005) makes reference to, and elaborates upon, a characteristic of professional moral decision making that involves a "clash" between one's own personal "code" of morality and the values, expectations and guidelines of an organization and/or profession. The framework is not explicit about the process and structure of internal moral discord experienced by school principals when faced with challenging ethical decisions. According to the Ethic of the Profession (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2001, 2005) some school leaders find difficulty in separating personal beliefs and values from professional or organizational values and expectations prior to sustained reflection, while for many there exists a "clash among codes." A variety of possible clashes are identifiable, but a key conflict is the one experienced within the administrator as value incongruity between the personal and organizational/professional.

This disparity, as the Ethic of the Profession would have it (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2001, 2005), often exists between organizational codes and professional expectations meant to inform decision making and conduct in work, and the personal moral values of administrators that serve to guide their judgment and behavior. An attempt to integrate organizational and/or professional and personal "codes" can lead to a repetitive and sustained moral dissonance, or "clashing of codes." Accordingly, there arises within the moral actor, and in this case the educational leader, an internal moral disagreement emerging from two competing sets of values, one personal and one professional, that, in some sense, manifests itself as an internal struggle because of a lack of value correspondence. In responding to this inevitable discord, and ultimately either resolving or conditionally satisfying the internal moral struggle, the Ethic of the Profession (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2001, 2005) suggests grounding ethical decision making in the needs of children. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001, 2005) indicate that moral considerations should be grounded in the prima facie principle: Serve the best interests of the student. This principle is affirmed as a moral "ideal (that) must lie at the heart of any professional paradigm for educational leaders" (p. 23), and additionally, can be relied upon to calm the internal struggle between personal morality, what is determined as right, true, good and praiseworthy according to the individual moral actor, and what an organization and/or the profession expects and values or delineates as appropriate and correct.

The objective of this specific investigation was to explore in depth and detail the "clashing of codes" experienced by school leaders as they sought to make ethical decisions by examining secondary principals' professional moral reasoning including detailed sense making about their own experiences and judgments where a plurality of values and situations embody competing and irreducible moral standpoints (Swedene, 2005), the meanings participants ascribed to these circumstances, and intimate reflections about their own professional moral practice in response to personal versus organizational and/or professional value discrepancy. The value discrepancies reported in this research were moral ones with principals articulating their struggle over their own personal sense of what was right, good and praiseworthy in response to any number of complicated and difficult circumstances where school policy or technical organizational values differed markedly from their own.

The research and findings presented here are tied to a larger investigation that primarily examined secondary principals' ethical decision making perspectives; not decision making, per se, but rather principals' post hoc reasoning about the decisions they made, or how they would have decided in a hypothetical situation. Identifying the phenomenon of intrapersonal moral discord experienced as part of the process of deciding ethically when faced with difficult moral choices is the kind of investigative focus that Starratt (2003) has made reference to when he enjoins school leaders to "take stock of what is happening to [their] insides" – "that interior self" as they endeavor to be increasingly authentic (p. 243).

Background literature
What is known currently in the field of values, valuation, ethics and moral leadership in schools has much to do with how practicing educational leaders approach decision making along various ethical frameworks (justice, critique, care, community, and

professional or client-based). We also know that behaviors of school officials are likely to be influenced by value and motivational bases within personal and or public valuation processes, particularly "value groundings" that are rationally derived (consensus seeking and utilitarian consequence) (Begley, 2000; Begley and Johansson, 1998; Begley and Leithwood, 1989; Begley, 1988).

Theoretical perspectives pertaining to the management of conflict within organizations has been discussed at length by Thomas (1976, 1992a, b), and there is a growing empirical literature within the field of educational leadership that attests to practitioners struggling with negotiating competing and irreducible value stances and moral standpoints from their various publics. The moral wrangling experienced by practitioners when faced with ethically challenging or even dilemmatic situations is apparent in the empirical literature (Ashbaugh and Kasten, 1984, 1986; Grogan and Smith, 1999; Kirby *et al.*, 1992; Langlois, 2004; Marshall, 1992; Roche, 1999; Sherman and Grogan, 2003; Storey and Beeman, 2005). Most research on value-laden problem solving or dilemma situations reveals that practitioners are not reactionary or morally single-minded, but rather possess a capacity for managing situations, are reflective and thoughtful about the range and plurality of values they are dealing with, and make reference to organizational policy and rules without necessarily following them to the letter (Morris *et al.*, 1984).

Negotiating value incongruity both within the school organization, and equally as important, within oneself, and the decisions that follow is part of the work of leadership. In fact, it can be claimed that either a congruency or "clash" of personal and organizational/professional values, and the administrative decisions that follow, is the heart of ethical leadership in schools – what has been described as the difference between normative rationality and technical rationality and how the two rationalities are managed both within and outside the leader (Sergiovanni, 2009).

A limited number of empirical studies have addressed the "inside the leader" issue, but provide little by way of description or what this existential leadership moment, in the form of intrapersonal struggle, is like for practitioners. Roche (1999) indicates that administrators "agonized" over achieving satisfactory moral solutions to difficult, value laden problems. While Langlois (2004), indicates that administrators relying on solely political, administrative or legal logic to solve complex problems seem to constitute a "form of torture" only resolved through reflection and decision making based on "personal ethics."

There is a dearth of systematic studies focusing on what the intrapersonal struggle is like for school leaders; particularly when confronted with stark value differences between personal morality and organizational directives or professional expectations. This want of empirical research is particularly problematic when theoretical claims indicate that intrapersonal moral grappling is common among school leaders who desire to make ethical decisions in their work.

Significance of the study
This study examines the moral leadership life of principals by exploring, in greater depth than previous research, the reality of intrapersonal moral conflict experienced by those who lead schools. The moral leadership construct is "sensitive to the particularity inherent in human affairs ... [and] reminds us there is very little

simplicity, stability, or clarity in the world of administrative decision making" (Barlosky, 1995, p. 446). Moral leadership involves a "pressure to act despite competing and often conflicting standards of goodness" (Greenfield, 1985, p. 142), and is a constellation of factors including literacy (Tuana, 2007), integrity (consistently and congruently living out moral commitments and the stated and operative values one espouses), and professionally-informed decision making in approaching moral problems and dilemmas. Part of moral leadership is the very real intrapersonal grappling that occurs when normative rationality and technical rationality do not align. This study contributes to the understanding of a particular and salient moral conflict in school leadership, the intrapersonal struggle, and how the struggle is resolved in practice. This study seeks to "capture and interpret [a fuller] complexity of educational leadership as a meaning-driven, socially situated, interpretive practice" (Riehl, 2007, p. 12), characterized by conditional nuance and situatedness, by explaining and defining the intrapersonal moral discord secondary school leaders experience. Analyses of participants' words indicate experiences and conceptions that can serve to inform and extend the theoretical framework guiding the study (a professional ethic developed by Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2001, 2005).

Research questions
This study sought to verify whether or not educational leaders could relate experiences of discord between organizational policies and professional expectations meant to inform judgment, decision making and conduct and one's own personal moral values, whether held privately or expressed publicly.

The two research questions were:

(1) Do principals have a sense of being "duty bound" to rules, policies, institutional procedures and professional expectations while conversely recognizing that these structures and role expectations are, at times and in certain situations, not good or morally right?

(2) Is there a "clash" between what the organization or profession deems as appropriate or ethical and what an administrator believes is right and good on a personal level?

Methodology
A phenomenological-like research method for the educational context
The primary methodological focus of this study was with description – rendering an accurate account and interpretation of the experiences of educational leaders and the inherent logic of such experiences as conceptualized and made understandable by participants (Dukes, 1984). Data were acquired by qualitative-naturalistic inquiry. This section describes the procedures used in a larger study that generated the data as reported here. Data collection techniques that were explorative and generative in nature were best suited for the research questions. A general, modified phenomenological-like perspective suited for an educational research context was used in order to capture administrators' perspectives, experiences, beliefs and interpretations about the unique moral qualities of their work. Patton (1990) indicates that "a phenomenological perspective can mean . . . a focus on what people experience and how they interpret the world . . . " (p. 70).

The focus of this study was on the essence of shared, common experiences and the meaning ascribed to those experiences from the participants' perspectives; particularly, understandings that represent a commonality of basic elements in human experience and meaning making. This kind of phenomenological perspective applied to educational research is formally based on the philosophical works of Husserl (1962) and Kockelmans (1967). Although there is no standard methodological mandate for phenomenological procedures and techniques, general and specific guidelines exist that guided the research preparation, data collection and analysis (see Giorgi, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). A transcendental, psychological phenomenological perspective informed this study.

It is important to note that a phenomenological study within the educational research context involves "studies of schooling [that] elicit the meanings that participants in the educational process assign to themselves and what they are doing" (LeCompte and Preissle, 1992, p. 850). Therefore, in this methodological tradition the researcher is obliged to understand and faithfully report the depictions, perspectives, and interpretations of participants.

Procedures
The general guidelines that assisted in informing this investigation and that address the requirements of an organized, disciplined, systematic and rigorous study included:

- *Initial preparation*. Investigate a topic and question rooted in human experience constituting autobiographical meanings and values as well as having social implications of significance;

- *Data collection*. Construct criteria to locate and select participants, develop questions and topics to guide face-to-face interviews, provide participants with information about the nature and purpose of the research and establish an agreement that includes informed consent, and conduct lengthy interviews with participants that focus on a specific experience.

- *Data organization and analysis*. Transcribe audio recordings of interviews into individual participant records; read and study each transcript in its entirety, divide transcripts into units or blocks that express self-contained meaning; code statements relevant to the research topic and questions with simple language that express dominant meanings; list or cluster meaning units into common categories or themes that represent the words of participants; develop textual descriptions of experience from thematically organized meaning units using the participants' own words; and integrate and synthesize textual descriptions into a structural description, or a composite portrait, of the essence of the experience being investigated (Moustakas, 1994).

Participant selection
Purposeful sampling was used to identify and select participants who were public school administrators. Secondary principals were selected because of their work in managing the size, scale, and level of problems associated with a complex and often bureaucratic service organization. Participants were selected by determining accessibility and willingness to participate in an extended, in-depth, two-interview sequence format, representativeness of those persons who occupy the position of

building level administrator, and the extent to which they would be thoughtful and reflective participants. Other selection criteria included representation of gender, race/ethnicity, age, length of time in the position of building principal, student enrollment, and community type.

A range of participants were included in the study. Participants' ages ranged from 35 to 55 years old and served in their administrative role from 2 to 19 years. The size of student enrollment in participants' respective schools ranged from 80 to 2,200 with two principals serving in rural schools, three serving in suburban schools, three serving in suburban/metro schools, and three serving in urban schools. A total of eleven secondary school principals from school districts in central and southeastern Pennsylvania participated in this study: three females and eight males. One male and one female were black and the other nine were white.

Data collection techniques and interviews
The primary data collection strategy was participant interviews. As stated by Seidman (2006):

> The method of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing applied to a sample of participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions gives enormous power to the stories of a relatively few participants (p. 55).

Statements from participants, that were essentially descriptions of the experience and meaning making being investigated, served as the "brute data" of the lived world of people – publicly accessible information consisting of beliefs, attitudes, feelings, values, and ways of thinking. These "brute data" came from "collecting . . . words and marks of people given in response to. . .interviews" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 264). Participant descriptions of their experiences and the meaning ascribed to those experiences, in the form of interview data and reflective memos pertaining to observations made within the interview context, allowed for a systematic and rigorous interrogation of personal responses pertaining to how practicing administrators think about their work as being morally unique.

Face-to-face interviews were set with the participants and interviews were conducted in a uniform pattern[2]. Two semi-structured, in-depth interviews took place with each of the 11 participants within the space of one day using both a dilemma vignette[3] with follow-up questions, in addition to a more extensive protocol designed to elicit descriptions of personal and professional experiences and the meanings ascribed to moral and ethical practice. The dilemma vignette and follow-up questions were used to engage participants in a moral problem and set the stage for a sustained reflection about moral and ethical practice[4].

A series of 17 prefigured questions posed during the second interview conform to the two research questions enumerated earlier. Examples of the actual protocol questions include:

(1) In what ways do you consider your work as a school leader to be moral and ethical in nature? What is good moral practice?

(2) What kinds of difficult moral and/or ethical decisions are you faced with in your work? How often?

(3) Would you say that you feel "duty bound" to rules, policies, institutional practices, and professional expectations by those you work with and others within the profession?

(4) Have you ever experienced a conflict over following a school law, policy, institutional procedure or professional expectation that you believed was morally questionable?

(5) Have there been times when what you believed was right, good and praiseworthy personally was different from what you thought was expected or the right thing to do professionally?

(6) Tell me about that. How did you resolve the discrepancy between self and the organization?

(7) What assisted or guided you in making a decision?

(8) Do you believe you acted for the best?

Central interview tasks involved:

· having participants read a dilemma vignette, questioning and probing for participant responses;

· a second and more extensive interview on personal experiences; and

· audio recording of all responses, observational notes taken in and around the interview times, and interviewer reflective-analytic journaling based on the interview experience.

Significant clarification, rephrasing and participant response checks were part of the conversational nature of each interview[5].

Participant sampling ended at the conclusion of the 11th interview based on the substantial amount of information that had been acquired through lengthy discussions. The practical exigency of time and resource constraints, balanced against the potential for expanding the boundaries of participants' shared understandings (Merriam, 1998) of their work in schools, indicated that data collection was complete. The data collection and analysis process rendered a full account of participants' views and perceptions, based in large part on the fact that all participants had generally experienced similar structural and social conditions within middle class schooling bureaucracies. The ultimate criterion in this study for determining validity of responses was the accumulation and analysis of a wealth of rich data and thick descriptions (Geertz, 2000) obtained from participants.

Analysis
Preliminary analysis of interview data occurred during the fieldwork stage of this research. These analyses included the coding of interview notes, writing of memos during transcription, and the rough formulation of central categories and domains of experience. Formal analysis after data collection began with a careful reading of each of the interview transcripts. Each participant record, including interview transcript, corresponding observations and analytical memos, were read and studied in their entirety. An understanding of participants' experiences and the meanings they attributed to them was ultimately achieved by integrating the stories and descriptions

of participants which included perceptions, thoughts, feelings, examples, ideas, and both personal recollections of past situations and reactions to the dilemma vignette. Data analysis, coding and the reporting of findings followed a modified phenomenological-like research perspective applied to an educational context including textual, structural and composite descriptions.

Findings: a phenomenological exploration of intrapersonal moral conflict between self and organization/profession in decision making

This section reports the experience of internal moral conflict between participants' personal values and the organizational or professional values and expectations they were to adhere to as part of their professional decision making. Findings presented here do not construct a full-scale and completely developed phenomenology of professional intrapersonal moral discord, but an attempt is made to provide a textual, structural and composite portrait of an aspect of school leadership that has not been thoroughly explored in the empirical literature.

Findings will follow an analysis sequence that emulates phenomenological research. The report will include two brief textual descriptions, verbatim examples of participants' own words (what happened?), followed by an organized and synthesized additional set of descriptions, known as structural accounts (how was the phenomenon experienced?), and will conclude with the combining of both textual and structural descriptions into an isolated expression depicting the essence of a "clash among codes" as identified in the Ethic of the Profession (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2001, 2005). Beyond this traditional phenomenological approach, additional findings related to how secondary principals sought to resolve their "clash of codes" will be reported.

Finding a way through the gray: wrangling with oneself over self and the organization and/or profession

When the moral space between personal and organizational/professional gets cramped, typically in difficult decision making contexts that do not lend themselves to rational, pattern-based or habituated choice (Gioia, 1992; Hansson, 1994; Verplanken *et al.*, 2005), there occurred for participants, some rather frequently while others only occasionally, a private, tacit, internal moral wrangling with oneself. This space between personal morality and professional expectation and organizational obligation was referred to by many participants as a "gray area." Navigating or finding one's way through the gray areas was difficult. The journey through cramped moral spaces was described in different ways, but was primarily depicted in unpleasant terms not unlike a "clash." There were a variety of experiences and responses that participants shared as they explained what the moral "clash" was like for them – a "clash" between personal beliefs and values and organizational and/or professional expectations.

In setting the stage for describing the experience of a private, tacit, internal moral wrangling over value incongruity between oneself and the organization and/or profession, participants identified a wide variety of instances and circumstances where they held a different notion of what was right, true, good or praiseworthy than that of their employer, the profession (including teachers' perspectives) or public education in general. Several principals talked about their personal values and morality and how their ethical viewpoints were different from what was important or right, or appeared

to be important or right in their estimation, for public education as a social institution. Some participants talked about dealing with a "one size fits all" philosophy whether in the form of inflexible instructional practices enacted in the classroom, rigid school district policies pertaining to pupil personnel issues, or uniform expectations for student achievement.

Even though principals expressed overwhelming support for standards and accountability practices in order to increase student achievement, uniform expectations for all students when it came to testing performance was, in the view of many participants, morally wrong. They believed that all students are "unique, and have different needs, and . . . on the basis of uniqueness, in all fairness to the students, that needs to be considered." One principal indicated that:

> Everyone should be 100 percent proficient. I think that's an admirable goal to set, but I think that's where the issue comes in with morality: judging every kid at that same standard. What's 100 percent for you may be a different 100 percent for me. It sort of becomes that sliding scale with all those other factors that come into play in everybody's lives – to expect everyone to be at the same spot, I think that's morally wrong.

According to participants, an intrapersonal value clash was not precipitated by any abstract, philosophical differences they had with public education in general, but rather with specific, isolated circumstances that called upon them to make, what was for them, difficult ethical decisions. One principal shared a story about a tangible moral conflict he experienced:

> I was asked [by a former superintendent] to tell some folks something that I knew was not [true], to lie to them. Some of these people I worked with . . . I had taught with these people. I began as a rookie, taught there for a long period of time, and I became their boss. Some of them were ten years older than me, [and] I had a long history with those people. I'm supposed to go lie to them. I had a great deal of trouble with that. I did it, but I guess I sort of justified it to myself somehow – I stretched the truth or whatever, but bottom line it wasn't ethical.

It was in direct and immediate circumstances, that required participants to decide and act, like the situation described above, that brought about the experience of internal moral wrangling. For the majority of administrators these direct and immediate circumstances had to deal with feeling duty bound to organizational policy, procedure or professional directive and at the same time honoring their own sense of what was morally right.

Textual descriptions
Two separate textual accounts for two different principals in this study provide typical depictions of what happened to participants in direct and immediate circumstances that caused an experience intrapersonal moral wrangling. The two textual descriptions are representative of the many that were shared by participants. Textual descriptions are necessarily long in a pure phenomenology in order to provide a more complete picture of the relevant factors involved in an experience under investigation. For the purposes of this research a shorter version of each textual account is offered.

The first textual description is about how a white, middle aged, male principal, heading up a suburban high school of about 900 students, dealt with some sticky student residency issues. Here is a brief account of what happened (and continues to happen) for this administrator:

I run into those circumstances where I may have a family who's in turmoil, and I find out that they may not be residents (because they've moved to either one parent or another parent, there's been a split) and I get put in the position where I have to make a decision; and I have a policy that says if they're not a resident they have to pay tuition – bottom line, unless their homeless. I had to make a decision where, by the letter of the law, I didn't follow the letter of the law. The bugaboo was with policy 202. It [says] they have to finish 11th grade here. So I just had to say OK they finished 11th grade here. Did I lie? Yeah, I did . . . But [I] get placed in that situation a lot with the residency thing. That's one thing I know I really struggle with . . . . Morally and ethically, okay, I didn't quite follow the letter of the law.

[The residency issue] happens on a regular basis where you have to deal with it . . . . I need to do what's right. In that, right is conditional, because I take those circumstances as they arise and I deal with it . . . . So making those decisions, of course, then you have to weigh out those factors of what are the rules, and regulations and the policies, but at the same time what's moral and what's ethical. If I'm going follow the letter of the law, and I know darn well this kid is going to wind up bouncing through three schools and then back here again; if I follow the letter of the law there's going to be a real hardship here for this kid. Now is it my fault, now that becomes the question, is it my fault or is that their parents' fault? Am I responsible? Well, I don't worry about who you blame for it.

Now, you could take the hard line, and this is what I struggle with sometimes about the people above me, and I understand their plight because they have to be accountable too. You could take the hard line . . . and you talk about the ethical part of that, that's a part that I constantly come back to that does get me in trouble sometimes with those above me. I can't tell you what that line in the sand is . . . . So there's a place, and if I get taken to task on it, I'd be in a ringer – point black . . . . Do I feel like I made bad decisions, no, because my guiding principle was what was best for that kid.

The second textual description is taken from an account given by a younger, black, male principal working in an urban middle school with an enrollment of about 500 students. He described a discipline issue involving the district's zero-tolerance policy and his sensitivity to unique circumstances involving a female student. Here is a brief account of what happened (and continues to happen) for this administrator:

We had a young lady a couple years ago. [She] came from a rough section of town. This particular day . . . [she] caught the city bus to school, and what she did was, in the process of catching the bus (I guess she was in a hurry) she left her purse on the bus. The bus director personally return[ed] the student's purse. So then, [when he arrived at school] he tells me, "inside [the purse] there's a box cutter". I called her down; and she admitted having it on school property the previous day. She knew she shouldn't have had it. She knew basically that if she were caught with it that would mean expulsion. And there were literally people who wanted to arrest her and expel her!

Now the reason she had this box cutter was because she had decided basically that she didn't want to take another beating from the girl gangs that ran [in her neighborhood]. She took her last beating and she told herself, "I ain't getting beat up no more." So she started carrying a weapon. Technically she admitted bringing it one day . . . . Now you're splitting some fine hairs there, but the other side of it is, she never had a history of being a threat when you looked at her record. She's always been our student, and basically the way it is, you can take her to an expulsion hearing and kick her out, and [then] she's in a rough neighborhood threatened by gangs, or you [can] hold her accountable briefly or immediately and get her back in the system, so what are you going to do here? I decided to keep her . . . She should have gone to expulsion. I think the conflict occurs when you begin to question: is this the right thing to do? I gave her a day out of school [suspension] and brought her back. It hit the fan [with] legal ramifications . . . but now she's on the verge of graduating.

And that's the thing I tried to explain about zero tolerance. So what am I to do, you know? Do we penalize her and say that she's . . . kicked out of the school community or ostracize her, or do we try to look at the circumstances and understand . . . . I think that when you look at some of those things, the intent, the motives, the action and usage plays a big part in terms of whether you need to move to an expulsion. We talk about kids walking the street or coming to school with freaking box cutters and guns; but the reality is, basically, the school is a reflection of the community. Now we have the zero tolerance or the parameters that we're not going to accept this from you . . . and for some people, we have to deal with them accordingly. But many of the things we see happening out there [neighborhoods] are going on in here [school], and I'm thinking we're hard on [the kids] for bringing this stuff in the schools. What about the community? They're still carrying it!

The two textual descriptions presented here are designed to answer the question, "what happened?", when exploring the phenomenon of intrapersonal moral discord between personal values and professional or organizational expectations. Most participants gave similar accounts of specific instances or circumstances where they were "put in a position" and consequently had to wrangle over, what was in their view, an acceptable moral course of action because their personal values conflicted, acutely, with what was expected of them organizationally or professionally as a principal. Both accounts reveal a considerable degree of perspective taking and empathy by the principals. Problem solving, decision making, ethical reasoning and value-informed judgment, that yielded an acceptable moral response, involved being sensitive to the circumstances of the immediate situation and the moral tension that emerged in context. Participants were inclined to take a reflective posture in order to carefully consider, not only ethical rules, moral consequences, and personal virtues, but construct a way to a more carefully reasoned and sensed ethical position.

Structural descriptions
An integrated structural description for all 11 participants seeks to answer the question, How is the phenomenon experienced by participants? In rendering a brief and loosely constructed structural description, participants' words indicate how intrapersonal moral discord was experienced by them. What is important for this stage of description is a clear account of what is involved and the dynamics of the experience as opposed to providing an elaborate account of what transpired as it relates to an experienced phenomenon. The goal of structural description is to elucidate how participants as a group experience what they experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Navigating or finding one's way through the gray areas was difficult for participants. Gray areas were moral terrains that not only became cramped as a result of specific circumstances, but were instances where personal beliefs and values and organizational and/or professional expectations were countervailing ("clashed"). There were a variety of experiences and responses that participants shared as they explained what the moral "clash" was like for them. As participants reflected on their experiences of intrapersonal moral discord, they used a wide range of expressions to depict the phenomenon. What follows is a brief account of how the phenomenon of intrapersonal moral wrangling, or a "clash among codes," one personal and the other organizational/professional, was experienced by participants.

A clear expression of intrapersonal conflict in the context of a specific incident was shared by a white, middle aged, female high school principal working in a

suburban/metropolitan region. She relates her episode of intrapersonal moral dissonance between duty and circumstance, and although the two previous textual accounts lent themselves to overriding attention to personal values, this account ends with the principal taking the side of organizational/professional duty. She said:

> I expelled a young man. I knew a lot about him – his molestation, unsettled family background, and many personal and life challenges. The kid had a laminated marijuana leaf in his pocket. I was torn, personally. The leaf tested positive. I didn't want to see him expelled, that's what the rule said . . . but I certainly didn't like it. I wanted to fix the situation in my own counseling way versus applying a consequence. I look at both sides a lot – it's difficult . . . I felt the [moral] discrepancy . . . When a situation arises, personal beliefs arise. I wound up suspending the student . . .

The experience of intrapersonal moral discord was expressed similarly by a younger, black, female school leader who also worked in a suburban/metropolitan region. She indicated how, in many instances, she couldn't allow herself to experience too much moral dissonance because of the need to do the practical thing – which was for her, the purposeful and efficient daily operation of the high school. She explained:

> It's really hard sometimes, because we bring how we were raised and all that into whatever job we do – it comes with you. You bring you with you, and so sometimes you can't dig that deep, you just have to do what is the right thing as far as the practical thing.

Although two participants in this study were explicit about intentionally setting aside their personal values, or at least trying to, in order to make a "practical" decision, both indicated they still experienced an internal tension. The other nine principals clearly indicated that intrapersonal moral discord was, at times, part of their experience when formulating a judgment about a specific matter. Some administrators said their wrangling occurred frequently (on a daily basis) while others indicated a "clash" occurring every several months to occasionally (several times a year).

The experience of an intrapersonal "clash" between personal values and organizational and/or professional expectations was described as: "getting placed in a situation that I really have to struggle with," "weighing what you're doing in terms of your own sense of what's right and wrong," "weighing out the factors of what are the rules, regulations, and policies but at the same time what's moral and ethical," "weighing out what it all is . . . so you can do the best you can," "having to deal," "struggling and dealing," "dealing with gray," "gray judgment," "having to read (extremely hard) between the lines," "bite[ing] the bullet," "feeling troubled," "a difficult struggle – a tough pill to swallow," "placed in uncertainty," "a weight," "moral pressure," "troubled [while] trying to balance out," "questioning if this is the right thing," "personally bothered," "being unfortunately stuck" and "frustrating."

For the majority of administrators, deciding and acting as a result of direct and immediate circumstances pertaining to organizational policies, procedures or professional directives, for which they felt duty bound, while at the same time honoring their own sense of what was morally right, resulted in a common experience that was described in a variety of ways, but typified the moral wrangling and "clash" identified in the Ethic of the Profession (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2001, 2005).

Composite description of the "essence"
The concluding descriptive stage of this phenomenological study, as rendered here, is designed to bring to light the meaning of the experience of intrapersonal moral discord. Textual and structural descriptions were synthesized into an isolated expression of what is asserted to be a commonly experienced phenomenon. Evidence from first-person reports of life experience were reduced to meaning units, substantiated by textual descriptions, and organized into a coherent description of the most essential constituents of the phenomenon under investigation (Moustakas, 1994); or in other words, a composite portrait of professional moral discord as experienced by participants. A depiction of the essence of intrapersonal moral discord when faced with difficult moral choices is offered by the author as the final portion of phenomenological exploration in this study:

> An intrapersonal "clash of codes" experienced by a secondary school administrator primarily occurs within a direct and immediate circumstance that requires a salient, value-laden decision. This specific circumstance brings about an immediate awareness of, and feeling of obligation to, organizational policy, procedure and/or professional directive while at the same time prompting the administrator to consider his/her own personal values and sense of right making that conflict with work expectations. A moral disruption is sensed and a feeling of being put in a situation that must be dealt with brings about the beginning of a private, tacit, internal dispute. The administrator begins to weigh out the factors of rules, regulations, policies, and his/her own sense of what's right and wrong, true and false, good or bad, praiseworthy or blameworthy. This weighing back and forth begins to feel like a struggle and accompanying feelings follow such as being bothered, frustrated, uncertain and weighed down. In a struggle to judge, the administrator considers his/her moral choice as emerging from an intrapersonal state where an array of morally gray and uncertain options are appraised.

This phenomenological portrait of the essence of a "clashing of codes" reveals the importance of "thinking gray" as described by Sample (2002). School leaders in this study demonstrated their ability to dispute binary thinking – even when the issue involved a dilemmatic condition involving their personal normative rationality versus the technical rationality of the organization of which they felt duty bound.

Moving beyond intrapersonal moral discord: resolving the dilemmatic condition of self vs organization/profession
Although participants experienced a common phenomenon of intrapersonal moral wrangling between their own set of values and their felt obligation to organizational expectations, especially the adherence to policies, procedures and administrative direction; there were a variety of ways in which principals resolved the internal "clash of codes" or dilemmatic condition they experienced as educational leaders. In coming to a place of decision, and likewise resolving (to some degree) the internal dissonance between duty bound obligation and personal values, principals followed a number of pathways including: adhering to one's gut instinct or personal sense of right, leaping (choosing) in uncertainty about one's interpretation of gray options, following organizational expectations and then consciously separating oneself as a person from positional duty or work role, rationalizing by gathering information, brainstorming with others and following past experience, or following a personal policy, principal or maxim that guides one's conduct.

Gut instinct and/or aesthetic sense of right
A number of principals indicated that they resolved the internal moral tension they experienced by following their personal aesthetic sense of right or gut instinct. Some participants called this being true to themselves. One principal said:

> I guess I have to be able to live with the decision I make. Is the decision true to myself? I have to be able to answer that question.

Another principal explained that:

> I feel duty bound if that's what you have to do. I think you can be flexible in your application sometimes and your interpretation. There's always room for flexibility, for patience . . . [and] being true to yourself.

Being true to oneself, according to a middle aged, male high school principal was "trying to follow the policy and the rules . . . however; I'll follow my gut instinct if I'm sure it's right." A black, female administrator felt strongly about following this specific pathway when she said:

> I feel that I'm bound literally to my own morals and values, and sometimes I'm not going to go against that . . . . So I would go to court and sit there and tell them why I did it and let the cards fall where they fall.

This perspective was summed up by a school leader when he indicated:

> You have to weigh what you're doing in terms of your own conscience of right and wrong . . . [and] there are times that you have to bite the bullet and do what's right . . . . Even though it may not have been popular or it may not have been acceptable, you did what was right.

Leaping into gray
Some principals followed a different path to resolving their experience of moral discord. This approach involved navigating through an array of morally gray options before making a choice that, for the principal, was not morally optimal but could be lived with under a given circumstance. One participant indicated that:

> The right is out there, but it's hard to institute the right on a continual basis. I think you can be true to yourself pretty much, but it all gets back to gray.

Another principal said:

> That gray area: interpretation. I think that makes you a good administrator.

A young, male principal spoke about how his decisions have become, in his estimation, more morally gray when dealing with student discipline issues:

> I think probably I have . . . become even more gray in areas. [I] work very hard – attendance, tardiness to school, how you conduct yourself in the hallway, how you speak to adults across the board – very hard administratively not just to be black and white . . . . I think I've probably extended the boundaries of . . . fairness across the board.

Self-imposed schizophrenia
Several other principals indicated that they resolved the internal moral tension they experienced by following organizational expectations and then consciously separating

themselves out as a person from their positional duty or work role. Two white, male, veteran principals, one leading an urban high school and the other a rural high school had very similar perspectives. One said:

> I've really struggled . . . because I have a very strong personal belief, however I know it's a law to enable their [homosexual] cause, you know. And sometimes I struggle with that. I think it's my own bias, bigotry, but I know where I fall. I think the only way to resolve [the struggle] is following the law. I'm not sure it's internally resolved, it's resolved in my practice because it has to be, but [I'm] not sure internally it's resolved . . . Also, I don't see my job as personal, I used to, but not anymore. It's not personal to me, it's my job. That's what I do, not who I am. And who I am speaks a lot more than what I do.

The other principal commented on the psychological strategy of distancing oneself from decisions made based on organizational expectations – a conscious separating oneself as a person from positional duty or work role. He explained the coping this way:

> I think you have to be able to separate yourself somewhat from what you do. This is what I do. I define myself, who I am, by this job as well, but on the other hand – it's a "what I do" thing. I have to be able to go home and separate that out through whatever method I choose, whether it's religiously, whether it's spiritually, whether it's meditation, going for a walk, playing tennis, whatever. I think people have to be able to separate those things out and in [their] own mind [and] learn to cope.

These perspectives were mirrored by comments made by a young principal who described a kind of self-imposed schizophrenia:

> Sometimes you just got to set aside what the personal is . . . cut and dry. Sometimes that's hard to do. Stone cold sometimes – be callous. You just got to block, I mean you just got to – that's a hard one to do, it really is.

Brainstorming
Another approach principals used to mitigate the experience of intrapersonal moral discord was rationalizing choices by gathering information, brainstorming with others and following past experience. This approach was not viewed as consensus seeking, but rather a process used to "gain perspective" in order to decide. One principal explained that:

> I'm pretty committed to reflecting on what are the community values. I might not agree with this, but this is the right thing to do, in this situation, based on what I know.

Other principals said they seek advice from others in a variety of ways. One participant characterized himself as a "brainstormer" and said:

> I very often reflect with other staff. There isn't anybody here that I don't go and say, "I got a situation here, here's what's going on."

Another participant expressed his approach this way:

> You're always going to question; you're always going to feel hesitant. Sometimes decisions are based upon past experiences, from advice and direction and the experiences of other people . . . . I utilize the folks [I'm] surrounded by.

Another principal said that:

> You just need more data to make the difficult [ethical] decision.

This sentiment was expressed another way:

> Show me the facts . . . show me the data, show me the line. There're so many positive things
> that contain information for us as leaders to take a look at and help us make decisions; [and]
> we're going to feel comfortable making some decisions because of what [information] we have
> at hand.

Following the rule
Several principals indicated that they resolved the internal moral tension they
experienced by ardently following a personal policy, maxim, or ethical principle. One of
these principles, if an administrator had a clear idea about its meaning, was stated
often and quite regularly as "do what's best and right for the kids" or "try to do what
you think is best for the kid" or any number of variations on the expression "the best
interests of the student." Even though almost every principal (nine out of eleven)
readily used the phrase to indicate a priority consideration when choosing courses of
action and deciding on important school matters, only a couple participants indicated
that the expression was helpful in resolving any internal moral tension they
experienced between their own values and those of the school district or profession.
Other rules of thumb, or self-imposed reflections, were referenced as well but not as
often. "How would I want my kid to be treated in this situation?", or "how would I
feel?", or "treat people the way I would expect to be treated." were mentioned as
important rules or considerations when resolving an intrapersonal struggle over
personal values and organizational expectations.

It is important to note that principals quite frequently blended approaches or paths
in their effort to resolve the experience of internal moral discord. Even though the
pathways to resolving an intrapersonal "clash" are depicted as hard and fast
approaches, possibly quite antithetical to one another, administrators did not
characterize themselves in pure, distinct terms, although one approach was more
illustrative of each participant than the others. One administrator summed up his
experience of resolving the moral tension he feels this way:

> There are times when you lay awake at night or you wake up three in the morning – "How do
> you want to handle that?", or "How do you want to deal with that?" But for the most part I
> think you have to try to make the decisions as [best] you can and move on and keep them in
> perspective . . . One of the best coping skills you have is to be able to look at life [and] issues in
> our lives that we have and say – this is beyond what I can do as a human being, as a mortal;
> as a result, it's in someone else's hands.

Discussion about findings
The phenomenon of intrapersonal moral discord between personal values and
organizational/professional policy and practice was described in a variety of ways and
tended to be experienced in specific circumstances that required more immediate
decisions and actions, rather than generalized or broad philosophical distinctions
between personal worldviews and the mission and operation of mass public schooling.

Negative and unsettling language was used to describe the experience of struggling between what was right, good and praiseworthy on a personal level and what was figured to be appropriate and acceptable in terms of organizational or professional expectations.

This research indicates that a "clash" between personal values in the form of espoused moral points of view and organizational or professional expectations was very real for participants and seeks to expand upon and clarify our understanding of the internal "agonizing" and "torture" experienced by reflective, thoughtful and morally sensitive school leaders. The "clashing of codes" experience, as related by participants in this study, was generally frequent, but varied from principal to principal (reports of daily to every several months to occasionally or several times a year). Participant accounts were directed at specific instances or situations that called upon the principal to weigh out and wrangle with external administrative guidelines, policy, and procedural expectations on the one hand and their own personal values, moral orientations and beliefs on the other.

There were a variety of experiences and responses that participants shared as they explained what the moral "clash" was like for them. As participants reflected on their experiences of intrapersonal moral discord, they used a wide range of expressions to depict the phenomenon of an intrapersonal value clash that collectively contribute to a composite description of the "essence" of the experience. But the story does not end with "agonizing," internalized "torture," and angst experienced by reflective, thoughtful and morally sensitive school leaders. Decisions and actions had to be made and carried out and practitioners followed a variety of unique paths in order to resolve, or resolve in part, the intrapersonal moral wrangling they experienced in their work.

Implications

A rendering of school leaders' inevitable grappling with their own sense of right, good and praiseworthy motives and actions and the organizational and/or professional values, guidelines and stipulations they were to acknowledge and carry out brings increased insight into the complexity of ethical decision making in school leadership practice. That complexity includes a variety of approaches by which principals resolved the internal "clash of codes" or the intrapersonal dilemmatic condition they experienced as educational leaders. In coming to a place of decision, and likewise resolving (to some degree) the internal dissonance between duty bound obligation and personal morality, principals followed a number of pathways including: adhering to one's gut instinct or personal sense of right; leaping (choosing) in uncertainty about one's interpretation of gray options; following organizational expectations and then consciously separating oneself as a person from positional duty or work role; rationalizing by gathering information, brainstorming with others and following past experience; or ardently following a personal policy, principle or maxim that guides one's conduct.

One basic principle used to resolve the intrapersonal moral tension, namely, serve the "best interests of the student" in order to meet individual needs, as proposed by The Ethic of the Profession and its Model for Promoting Students' Best Interests (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2001, 2005; Stefkovich, 2006), was not evidenced in the data. A

professional principle serving as a special moral imperative or ideal, utilized to clear away internal moral discord experienced by administrators, was not a point of reference for the majority of participants in this study. Based on the findings of this investigation, administrators use their own unique ways to calm the internal moral struggle between personal values and organizational and/or professional expectations. Moral judgment was more complicated and contextually defined for the secondary principals participating in this study. Relying on one principle, injunction or rule of thumb to guide decision making was not in accordance to administrators' stated ways of dealing with personal and organizational value incongruity.

Principals quite frequently blended approaches or paths in their effort to resolve the experience of internal moral discord. Even though the pathways to resolving an intrapersonal "clash" are depicted as hard and fast approaches, possibly quite antithetical to one another, administrators did not characterize themselves in pure, distinct terms; although one approach was more illustrative of each participant's way of operating than the others. Internal moral discord was not primarily allayed by decisions strictly based on personal values, beliefs or moral disposition, or conversely, a dogged adherence to organizational policies and administrative guidelines. Rather, for the participants in this study, a blending of strategies was required to maintain a sense of moral equilibrium between oneself and the organization/profession.

Conclusion

The stated ways that secondary principals dealt with their own internal moral wrangling represents a wide variety of approaches that do not conform to a strict client-based professional ethic as articulated by the Ethic of the Profession and its Model for Promoting Students' Best Interests (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2001, 2005; Stefkovich, 2006). The findings presented here serve to build upon, extend and refine a professional ethic framework for educational leadership.

Although there is a common recognition and use of the expression, "do what's best for the student" (and its many forms, including "what's the best interests of the student?"), and there is a clear aspirational quality to the maxim, the vagaries of professional moral judgment, especially for principals, suggest that the injunction is a reference point of special duty for a particular profession when dealing with value claims from various constituents. The injunction serves as a check, among many checks, when balancing and negotiating the wide mix of values and considerations while making decisions that have moral and ethical qualities – especially those mix of values external to the administrators own personal beliefs and moral vision (Frick, 2006). The internal struggle administrators experience between personal self and organization/profession is not assuaged by simply relying on a single rule-like expression, "what's in the best interests of the student?"

What happened with these school leaders as they sought out different paths to restore an inner life of professional moral equilibrium? The findings in this study lend themselves to descriptive decision theory – not how one ought to make decisions, but rather how one does in fact make decisions (Evers, 1998). Cognitive script theory can provide an explanation of administrative/management and leadership behavior within complex organizations such as schools (Abelson, 1981). Schools are bustling and busy places. Those who choose to lead in formal ways take on a pace of work that is highly

accelerated. In many respects the work of being a secondary school principal is one of information overload compounded with a hectic pace. There is so much to do and so much information to attend to. A leader must handle these job requirements with some measure of efficiency without becoming paralyzed by the variability of circumstances and events. Script schemas are information processing strategies that decision makers rely upon in order to handle the complexity and pace of their work (Gioia, 1992).

A script is a specialized cognitive framework that is used to impose structure on information – particularly the knowledge of actions appropriate for specific situations and contexts. Therefore a script simultaneously provides a thinking and emotive framework (Fiske, 1982) for understanding events while offering a guide to appropriate behavior to manage the event being considered. The pathways administrators employed to resolve, or partly resolve, the intrapersonal moral discord they experienced, can be viewed as highly refined scripts that are relied upon in order to, not only problem solve in order to make important moral and ethical decisions, but to provide relief for themselves and rid their internal moral wrangling.

Scripts can be conceived as a kind of social cognition within organizations, or organizational culture – a collection of scripts writ large formed from institutional knowledge and salient organizational experience. Scripts can also be viewed as individual or personal ways of dealing with information, situations, circumstances and events. Advances in cognitive science indicate that even beyond scripts "humans possess powerful nonsymbolic distributed representations of practical skills and knowledge which underlies much expert judgment" (Evers, 1998, p. 105). Decision making becomes a response to "perceptually presented soft constraints" and information that triggers prototypical scenarios based upon experience rather than engaging in formal deduction from formulated propositions (Evers, 1998, p. 100). The reflective and thoughtful secondary school principals interviewed for this research employed a variety of scripts or script-like mental models when confronted with intrapersonal moral tension. The scripts were not uniform or universal in nature and did not conform to a specific professional ethical injunction. Rather decision making was premised on "context-driven problems" were school leaders, over time, had learned from their previous decision making efforts and applied that understanding to new situations.

Notes

1. School administration is not purely art or science, nor is it art and science, it is art, science and philosophy involving habits of mind, hand and heart. There are three prominent ways of knowing and dealing with the world – three modes of action. These modes are theoria, techne and praxis. There is no true dichotomy between theory and practice – each is a different modality of a single continuum. Praxis, on the other hand, is ethical action in the political context of purposeful human conduct. Praxis focuses on behavior guided by purpose, intention, motive, normative morality, emotions and values in addition to the facts or "science" of the case (Hodgkinson, 1991).

2. Due to the nature of this investigation, a measure of flexibility was needed to elicit, what appeared to be for some participants, challenging self-reflection and sustained ruminations about personal and professional experiences and their meanings. As a result some variations in questioning did occur.

www.man

3. The first interview conducted with each participant required principals to read and respond to a dilemma vignette about a high school principal dealing with dictates from his superintendent pertaining to curriculum and instruction issues in order to meet accountability measures by way of student achievement testing.

4. In order to achieve in-depth personal reflection as data, both prefigured and open-ended questioning techniques were used to guide the two interviews.

5. These moves were helpful in understanding precisely what was being said and what was meant by participants when they were talking (Guba and Lincoln, 1981).

References

Abelson, R.P. (1981), "Psychological status of the script concept", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 36 No. 7, pp. 715-29.

Ashbaugh, C.R. and Kasten, K.L. (1984), "A typology of operant values in school administration", *Planning and Changing*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 195-208.

Ashbaugh, C.R. and Kasten, K.L. (1986), "Administrative values and administrative action: a study of school superintendents", *Planning and Changing*, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 239-51.

Barlosky, M. (1995), "Review: knowledge, certainty, and openness in educational administration", *Curriculum Inquiry*, Vol. 25 No. 4, pp. 441-55.

Begley, P.T. (1988), "The influence of values on principals' problem-solving processes: an empirical study", paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Association, New Orleans, LA, April.

Begley, P.T. (2000), "Values and leadership: theory development, new research, and an agenda for the future", *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 46 No. 3, pp. 233-49.

Begley, P.T. and Johansson, O. (1998), "The values of school administration: preferences, ethics, and conflicts", *Journal of School Leadership*, Vol. 9 No. 4, pp. 399-422.

Begley, P. and Leithwood, K.A. (1989), "The nature and influence of values on principals' problem solving", in Leithwood, K. and Musella, D. (Eds), *Understanding School System Administration: Studies of the Contemporary Chief Education Officer*, The Falmer Press, Bristol, PA, p. 151.

Covaleskie, J.F. (2008), "Insufficiency of rights talk: political speech and public education", *Journal of Philosophy and History of Education*, in press.

Cuban, L. (2001), *How Can I Fix It? Finding Solutions and Managing Dilemmas: An Educator's Road Map*, Teachers College Press, New York, NY.

Dukes, S. (1984), "Phenomenological methodology in the human services", *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 197-203.

Evers, C.W. (1998), "Decision making, models of mind, and the new cognitive science", *Journal of School Leadership*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 94-108.

Fiske, S.T. (1982), "Schema-triggered affect: applications to social perception", in Clark, M.S. and Fiske, S.T. (Eds), *Affect and Cognition*, Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ, pp. 55-78.

Frick, W.C. (2006), "Redressing the balance of community schooling and religion in the USA", *Journal of Beliefs and Values: Studies in Religion and Education*, Vol. 27 No. 2, pp. 191-202.

Geertz, C. (2000), *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, New York, NY.

Gioia, D.A. (1992), "Pinto fires and personal ethics: a script analysis of missed opportunities", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 11 Nos 5/6, pp. 379-89.

Giorgi, A. (1985), "Sketch of a psychological phenomenological method", in Giorgi, A. (Ed.), *Phenomenology and Psychological Research*, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, PA, pp. 8-22.

Green, T.F. (1990), "The value of 'values'", *Career Development Quarterly*, Vol. 38 No. 3, pp. 208-12.

Greenfield, W.D. (1985), "Moral, social, and technical dimensions of the principalship", *Peabody Journal of Education*, Vol. 63 No. 1, pp. 130-49.

Greenfield, W.D. (1999), "Moral leadership in schools: fact or fancy?", paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April.

Grogan, M. and Smith, F. (1999), "A feminist perspective of women superintendents' approaches to moral dilemmas", in Begley, P.T. (Ed.), *Values and Educational Leadership*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, pp. 273-88.

Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1981), *Effective Evaluation: Improving the Usefulness of Evaluation Results through Responsive and Naturalistic Approaches*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Hansson, S.O. (1994), *Decision Theory: A Brief Introduction*, Department of Philosophy and the History of Technology, Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Stockholm, available at: www.infra.kth.se/ ~ soh/decision theory.pdf (accessed August 27, 2006).

Hodgkinson, C. (1978), *Towards a Philosophy of Administration*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

Hodgkinson, C. (1991), *Educational Leadership: The Moral Art*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY.

Hoy, W.K. and Miskel, C.G. (2005), *Educational Administration: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 7th ed., McGraw-Hill, New York, NY.

Husserl, E. (1962), *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Collier Books, New York, NY.

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (1996), *Standards for School Leaders*, State Education Assessment Center, Washington, DC.

Kirby, P.C., Paradise, L.V. and Protti, R. (1992), "Ethical reasoning of educational administrators: structuring inquiry around problems of practice", *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 30 No. 4, pp. 25-33.

Kluckhohn, C. (1962), in Parsons, T. and Shils, E.A. (Eds), *Toward a General Theory of Action*, Harper, New York, NY, p. 395.

Kockelmans, J.J. (Ed.) (1967), *Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and its Interpretations*, Doubleday and Company, Garden City, NY.

Lakomski, G. (1987), "Values and decision making in educational administration", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 70-82.

Langlois, L. (2004), "Responding ethically: complex decision-making by school district superintendents", *International Studies in Educational Administration*, Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 78-93.

LeCompte, M.D. and Preissle, J. (1992), "Toward an ethnology of student life in schools and classrooms: synthesizing the qualitative research tradition", in LeCompte, M.D., Millroy, W. and Preissle, J. (Eds), *The Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education*, Academic Press, San Diego, CA, pp. 815-59.

Lewis, C.S. (1952), *Mere Christianity*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, NY.

Marshall, C. (1992), "School administrators' values: a focus on atypical", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 28 No. 2, pp. 368-86.

Merriam, S.B. (1998), *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Morris, V.C., Crowson, R.L., Porter-Gehrie, C. and Hurwitz, E. (1984), *Principals in Action*, Merrill, Columbus, OH.

Moustakas, C. (1994), *Phenomenological Research Methods*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Patton, M. (1990), *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2nd ed., Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA.

Polkinghorne, D.E. (1989), "Phenomenological research methods", in Valle, R.S. and Halling, S. (Eds), *Existential-phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology: Exploring the Breadth of Human Experience*, Plenum Press, New York, NY, pp. 41-60.

Riehl, C. (2007), "Some observations and useful approaches to research in education", *UCEA Review*, Vol. 46 No. 3, pp. 9-12.

Roche, K. (1999), "Moral and ethical dilemmas in Catholic school settings", in Begley, P.T. (Ed.), *Values and Educational Leadership*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, pp. 255-72.

Sample, S.B. (2002), *The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Seidman, I. (2006), *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, 3rd ed., Teachers College Press, New York, NY.

Sergiovanni, T.J. (2009), *The Principalship: A Reflective Practice Perspective*, Allen & Bacon, Boston, MA.

Shapiro, J. and Stefkovich, J. (2001), *Ethical Leadership and Decision Making in Education*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ.

Shapiro, J. and Stefkovich, J. (2005), *Ethical Leadership and Decision Making in Education*, 2nd ed., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ.

Sherman, W.H. and Grogan, M. (2003), "Superintendents' responses to the achievement gap: an ethical critique", *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, Vol. 6 No. 3, pp. 223-37.

Simon, H. (1957), *Models of Man*, John Wiley & Co., New York, NY.

Starratt, R.J. (2003), *Centering Educational Administration: Cultivating Meaning, Community, Responsibility*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ.

Starratt, R.J. (2004), *Ethical Leadership*, John Wiley & Sons, San Francisco, CA.

Stefkovich, J. (2006), *Best Interests of the Student: Applying Ethical Constructs to Legal Cases in Education*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ.

Storey, V.A. and Beeman, T. (2005), "A value informed decision model for educational administrators", paper presented at the 10th Annual Values and Leadership Conference, D.J. Willower Center for the Study of Leadership and Ethics of UCEA, University Park, PA, October.

Swedene, K. (2005), "Feeling better about moral dilemmas", *Journal of Moral Education*, Vol. 34 No. 1, pp. 43-55.

Thomas, K.W. (1976), "Conflict and conflict management", in Dunnett, M.D. (Ed.), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, Rand McNally, Chicago, IL, pp. 889-935.

Thomas, K.W. (1992a), "Conflict and conflict management: reflections and update", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 265-74.

Thomas, K.W. (1992b), "Conflict and negotiation processes in organizations", in Dunnett, M.D. (Ed.), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 2nd ed., Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA, pp. 651-717.

Tuana, N. (2007), "Conceptualizing moral literacy", *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 45 No. 4, pp. 364-78.

Verplanken, B., Myrbakk, V. and Rudi, E. (2005), "The measurement of habit", in Betsch, T. and Haberstroh, S. (Eds), *The Routines of Decision Making*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ, pp. 231-47.

Walker, K.D. (1998), "Jurisprudential and ethical perspectives on 'the best interests of children'", *Interchange*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 283-304.

Willower, D.J. and Licata, J.W. (1997), *Values and Valuation in the Practice of Educational Administration*, Corwin Press, Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA.

About the author
William C. Frick is currently an assistant professor in the Educational Administration, Curriculum and Supervision Program in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at The University of Oklahoma. William C. Frick received his PhD from The Pennsylvania State University under the co-advisement of Jacqueline A. Stefkovich and Dana L. Mitra. His research and writing interests include moral philosophy as applied to educational leadership, ethics, moral school leadership practices and decision making, values and valuation processes, school and community partnerships, and district-level reform. A recent cross-disciplinary publication, indexed in MetaPress, is Frick (2006). William C. Frick can be contacted at: frick@ou.edu

www.manaraa.com