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**A National Study of the Ethical Dilemmas
Faced by Student Conduct Administrators**

By

Mary Christine Dowd

This Dissertation is Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for

the Educational Doctorate Degree

in Educational Leadership

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

May 2012

A National Study of the Ethical Dilemmas Faced by Student Conduct Administrators

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This dissertation has been examined and approved by the following members of the dissertation committee.

Dr. Scott Wurdinger, Advisor

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Abstract

Although previous studies examined the ethical dilemmas faced by student affairs administrators (Janosik, Creamer, & Humphrey, 2004; Janosik, 2007), no such study explored the ethical dimensions of administering student conduct. The purpose of this mixed method study was to identify the ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators and to test the applicability of Kitchener's model as a framework for resolving ethical dilemmas. Also examined were the theories, professional codes, and core values informing ethical decision making. Further, the study explored possible correlations between knowledge of ethical principles and codes, and actual use of the ethical principles and codes. Finally, the study inquired about the amount of graduate school training in ethics. A national survey with open-ended questions and Likert-scale items in Survey Monkey was disseminated online to 1,595 professionals belonging to the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA) in February 2011 yielding a 24.38% response rate. Results were coded using qualitative techniques (Tesch, 1990) and uploaded into PASW, Version 18, formerly called SPSS, for analysis. The results indicated that sexual assault cases, situations involving athletes, demands for preferential treatment, and alcohol/drug policy enforcement most often pose ethical dilemmas. Categorical grouping of ethical dilemmas fit well under Kitchener's principles, particularly justice. Student conduct administrators reported relying most heavily on their professional code of ethics, personal values, cultural perspectives, institutional mission, and legal ramifications to resolve dilemmas. There was a significant correlation ($p < .01$) between the extent of respondents' knowledge of ethical theories and frequency

of use. Only 5% of respondents reported receiving “very extensive” ethical instruction in graduate school.

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Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my supportive advisor, Dr. Scott Wurdinger, who kept me going when I felt fatigued and disenchanted with the process. I am also deeply grateful for dissertation committee members, Dr. Kari Much and Dr. Jerry Robicheau, who took a special interest in my research. I benefitted from their impressive knowledge of ethical theory and real world experience. I would also like to acknowledge Educational Leadership professors, Dr. Julie Carlson and Dr. Courtney Stewart, whose teaching enlightened and inspired me.

I am indebted to the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA) for allowing me the privilege of surveying the ASCA membership. Throughout my career, ASCA has played a major role in shaping my professional dispositions.

Additionally, I wish to thank my dear friends and cherished family, particularly my son, Joseph, and my daughter, Elizabeth, who weathered the journey with me. This paper is dedicated to my late parents who valued education and faith above all else.

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Chapter I

Introduction

As a microcosm of society, higher education is not immune from ethical misconduct. Inflated credentials, plagiarism, falsified research data, padded expense reports, sexual harassment, hazing, and student-athlete steroid use are among the ubiquitous acts that can potentially grab headlines in the Chronicle of Higher Education. Such behavior is antithetical to the mission and values of institutions of higher learning.

So why do these embarrassing and egregious lapses in moral judgment occur? Blimling and Whitt (1999) pointed to a fundamental lack of moral imperative as an explanation. “Unfortunately, higher education has in recent years neglected its historic commitment to building character, values, and a commitment to responsible citizenship” (Blimling & Whitt, 1999, p. 15). Further, Blimling and Whitt maintain that a commitment to “...values and ethics must occupy a larger role in the decisions, policies, and practices influenced by student affairs” (p. 16). By emphasizing ethics, Student affairs administrators can communicate the importance of integrity and personal accountability. More exposure to ethical theory may better prepare students to take the moral high road when faced with situations that test their values and character.

Student affairs professionals, particularly administrators responsible for student conduct, can be powerful role models and teachers of ethical behavior. “Student Affairs staff today are in a most strategic position on campus to help students explore and discuss ethical issues” (Baldizan, 1998, p. 29). Baldizan further noted, “Fostering moral and

ethical development in our students is an integral part of the student affairs profession” (p. 34).

A journey typically begins with a map. Similarly, if student affairs staff are going to assist students down the road of moral development, it would behoove them to start with an examination of the literature. Unfortunately, research in this area is limited (Janosik, Creamer, & Humphrey, 2004). Student affairs professionals may benefit from more instruction on how to navigate political hurdles and do the right thing in the face of competing interests.

Lampkin and Gibson (1999) also wrote extensively about the need for more research and discussion germane to ethical considerations in the practice of student affairs. Lampkin and Gibson believed the ideas of bioethicists Beauchamp and Childress could be applied to the practice of student affairs. In their opinion, the principles identified by Beauchamp and Childress can help bring about consensus when there is disagreement over a proper course of action.

Beauchamp and Childress (2001) delineated four guiding principles of autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice which prove useful in making meaning of an ethical challenge by clarifying and weighting competing interests. Beneficence and nonmaleficence as defined by Beauchamp and Childress mirror the Hippocratic oath to do no harm in the medical field. Secondary principles included veracity, fidelity, and privacy. Beauchamp and Childress believed that students could learn to think and act in a more virtuous manner by exposure to role models with good character who take a systematic approach to problem solving.

Drawing from Beauchamp and Childress's work, Kitchener (1985) developed a set of precepts for student affairs practitioners to use when faced with moral dilemmas. Kitchener identified five similar moral principles essential to ethical decision making: autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, fidelity, and justice.

After studying the ethical problems facing student affairs administrators, Janosik et al. (2004) concluded that Kitchener's five principles (justice, beneficence, fidelity, autonomy, and nonmaleficence) provided a "very useful framework" (p. 378) for organizing the ethical incidents described by student affairs administrators in their study.

Janosik et al. (2004) were surprised by the consternation expressed by many participants when faced with problems that could readily be resolved by following the professional codes of NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education and the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education which incorporate Kitchener's principles. These codes are widely promulgated through conferences, professional publications, and online web sites. Janosik et al. surmised, "It may be that the work of our best thinkers in the area of ethics does not speak plainly enough to the professionals in the field to help them solve the problems that confront them" (p. 371). Janosik et al. speculated that the codes were well written, but perhaps too abstract for practitioners faced with real world application.

Kelly (2005) also noted a discrepancy between awareness of professional codes and use of the professional codes in the practice of student affairs. Relying on a narrative, interpretive method, Kelly asked 10 senior student affairs administrators to discuss their handling of a serious ethical dilemma and found that senior student affairs

officers relied more heavily on personal, professional, and faith-based values than professional codes when posed with ethical problems. Other questions explored definitions of ethical dilemmas, and views on professional codes. Gender and racial background influenced the decision making process, as well.

Reybold, Halx, and Jimenez (2008) reached similar conclusions after completing a qualitative study of 18 student affairs administrators at a public university. The researchers found that participants in the study were familiar with professional codes, but they did not appear to have internalized or implemented the codes in the course of their daily work. Reybold et al. further suggested that student affairs professionals would benefit from training around Kitchener's ethical principles decision making matrix. "Ethics education in student affairs should support all professionals, administrative and classified, to engage more fully in the development and maintenance of ethical decision making across their campuses" (p. 122). Use of highly regarded theories such as Kitchener's principles would offer student conduct administrators a solid foundation for making tough decisions, particularly when a student conduct situation is politicized.

Student conduct administrators are often placed in the unenviable position of disciplining a son or daughter of a major donor, trustee, faculty member, attorney, or elected official. Tensions can run high when a star athlete on a winning team is facing possible dismissal from the institution for behavioral misconduct. For example, student-athletes, along with parents and coaches, may assume leniency will be granted if the institution emphasizes winning sports teams. "The problems that occur with athletes can be exacerbated by a belief by some athletes that they are too important to the team and

the institution to be punished” (Olson & Mittler, 1996, p. 92). Politics, institutional reputation, fear of litigation, and financial ramifications of pending disciplinary actions can further undermine ethicality. “As political systems inextricably bound to funding and accreditation sources, academic institutions are vulnerable to ethical missteps or even outright violations” (Reybold et al., 2008, p. 110). Student conduct officers have a moral imperative to treat students fairly even if the campus milieu allows for liberal interpretation of policy and inconsistent enforcement.

In order for student conduct administrators to effectively guide students and function as the moral compass of the campus, they need ready access to resources and training. Professional organizations such as the Association for Student Conduct Administration are essential to promoting professional ethicality through greater emphasis on codes, standards, and instruction in ethical decision making. The annual conference of the Association for Student Conduct Administrators (ASCA) and the annual ASCA Donald D. Gehring Academy Training Institute would be excellent venues for extensive instruction in ethical theories and case studies.

More than ever before, student conduct administrators must be adequately equipped to assist today’s students as they confront moral dilemmas that previous generations never faced, such as appropriate use of technology. “Finally, in an increasingly competitive enrollment environment, institutions willing to examine how they measure up and act on such concerns might be those who will ultimately prove most successful in responding to a public that expects at least as much” (Strange, 2004, p. 35).

A good starting point is a theoretical framework that has proven useful and relevant in other disciplines.

The research literature reveals that Kitchener's (1985) ethical principles have served as appropriate guidance for several studies pertaining to ethical dilemmas experienced in the field of business, medicine, counseling, and college student affairs. It is posited here that Kitchener's work would also be a relevant guide for student conduct administrators in analyzing ethical problems, identifying alternatives, and weighing consequences when adjudicating student conduct cases. Therefore, Kitchener's five ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, fidelity, and justice have been selected as a guiding theoretical framework for this study.

Statement of the Problem

The extent to which professional codes and ethical frameworks are used by practitioners when faced with ethical dilemmas is largely unknown. To date, there is a paucity of research in the application of substantive ethical models to the practice of student affairs. Most of the literature on ethical behavior in student affairs relates to academic misconduct, particularly cheating and plagiarism. "It is only recently that studies have focused on the ethics of administration in higher education or student affairs" (Kelly, 2005, p. 8).

Similar conclusions were reached by Stimpson and Stimpson (2008) after reviewing the past 27 years of literature in the field of student conduct. They found that most studies were concentrated on the history of student conduct and legal implications.

Further, they discovered much of the research is outdated (p. 23) and “the majority of works are based on a single institution, with a small sample size” (p. 24).

In a summary of their findings, Stimpson and Stimpson (2008) implored the Association for Student Conduct Administration to exert a leadership role in the advancement of focused scholarship. As pointed out by Stimpson and Stimpson, “Through an increase in scholarship, the practice of student conduct administration will improve” (p. 26).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the nature and frequency of ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators. Also explored will be the theories, professional codes, and core values informing ethical decision making. The study will investigate whether student conduct administrators are incorporating ethical models and professional codes in their ethical decision making or relying on legal concerns or subjective factors, such as personal values or political ramifications. Additionally, the study will examine whether correlations exist between knowledge of ethical principles and codes, and use of the ethical principles and codes when engaged in ethical decision making. Finally, participants will be asked about the extent of their graduate school training in preparing them to address ethical dilemmas.

Research Questions

The following questions will guide this study:

1. What are the factors influencing the ethical decision making processes of student conduct administrators?

2. Do the ethical decision making processes of student conduct administrators differ by gender, ethnicity, size, or type of institution?
3. Is there a relationship between respondents' reported reliance on ethical theories in decision making and use of ASCA principles?
4. Is there a relationship between respondents' reported reliance on ethical theories in decision making and use of Kitchener's principles?
5. Is there a relationship between respondents' reported knowledge of ASCA principles and actual use of ASCA principles and/or Kitchener's principles in decision making?
6. Do respondents who use ASCA principles in decision making also know and use Kitchener's principles in decision making?
7. Do respondents with knowledge of Kitchener's principles use Kitchener's principles in decision making?
8. Is there a correlation between the extent of ethical instruction in graduate school and knowledge/application of ASCA and/or Kitchener's principles?
9. What are the most challenging ethical dilemmas experienced in the professional lives of student conduct administrators?
10. What are the most common ethical dilemmas experienced in the professional lives of student conduct administrators?
11. Do the ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators in their professional lives fit within Kitchener's model of ethical principles?

Significance of the Study

Although the literature on ethical decision making is considerable and spans multiple decades, there is lack of research that examines the current challenges facing student conduct administrators. This study will provide a significant contribution to the body of knowledge on ethical decision making in student conduct administration. The findings of this online survey may lead to greater understanding of the critical values that inform ethical decision making. The results could potentially stimulate discussion in the student affairs profession, enhance professional preparation programs, and contribute to the next review of the ethical codes of professional organizations. The findings may also lead to greater emphasis on the application of ethical theory to practice, particularly if the dilemmas most frequently reported in the survey closely align with Kitchener's five precepts.

Definition of Terms

Ethics

According to Taft and White (2007), there is no universally held definition of ethics. They described ethics as "the practice of one's personal morality directed toward what is right and good for society" (p. 617). Ethical paradigms describe how individuals make meaning of moral choices. Taft and White further explained that an individual's ethical principles are derived from family upbringing, culture, class, community, spiritual beliefs, transformative experiences, education, societal norms, and the law.

Dewey (1977) viewed ethical theory as analogous to a scientific inquiry. Dewey recommended using an ethical theory to analyze a moral dilemma and systematically assess possible outcomes.

Dilemma

Robbins and Trabichet (2009) defined a dilemma as a “situation where one has to choose between two options but does not know which side to take because both seem legitimate” (p. 52). Complexity and uncertainty are other distinguishing characteristics of an ethical dilemma, “Ethical dilemmas are dilemmas because the right course of action is not always clearly visible” (Liddell, Cooper, Healy, & Stewart., 2010, p. 14).

Kitchener (1984) described an ethical dilemma as a situation where “there are good, but contradictory ethical reasons to take conflicting and incompatible courses of action” (p. 43).

Theoretical Lens

A theoretical lens is a type of focused inquiry. Using a particular lens brings into focus certain aspects of a phenomenon while downplaying others. Each lens suggests a different set of practices and solutions” (Ancona, Goodman, Lawrence, & Tushman, 2001, p. 645). Noddings (2008) is a proponent of using multiple lenses when faced with a dilemma that is sensitive or complex.

Student Conduct Administrator

A student conduct administrator is a professional whose job involves administering an aspect of student discipline at an institution of higher education. The student conduct administrator assists students in learning more appropriate and socially

acceptable ways of behaving and relating. Often, this involves assigning educational sanctions exercises with a self-reflection component. Student conduct administrators typically work in an Office of Student Conduct, Department of Residential Life, Student Activities Office, or Greek Affairs. Many belong to the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA).

Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA)

According to the ASCA website, it is “the only organization dedicated solely to the advancement of student judicial affairs.” Started in 1986 by Donald Gehring, the organization has grown to over 1,600 members representing over 700 colleges and universities in the United States, Canada, and abroad. Members share a commitment to enforcing standards of student conduct that “strengthen the ethical climate” and “promote the academic integrity of our institutions.” For purposes of this study, members of the Association of Student Conduct Administrators (ASCA) will be surveyed.

Ethical Principles and Standards of the ASCA Organization

Per the Ethical Principles and Standards of ASCA, members have a professional responsibility to: accept and support the mission and goals of the employing institution; respect legal authority; practice equality; promote pluralism; treat students impartially; fully comply with an institution’s code of conduct; ensure that rules, standards, and due process are consistent with legal mandates and institutional mission; promote and enforce responsible student behavior; refrain from conflicts of interest; maintain confidentiality; provide accurate and contextual information; provide appropriate information for background checks; understand professional limits; supervise staff in accordance with

institutional policies; and pursue professional development opportunities (ASCA website, 2010).

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Although the literature on ethical theories is considerable and spans multiple decades, there is a gap in the research that examines the extent to which ethical theories are used by student conduct administrators to inform their ethical decision making. Little is known about the degree to which theories, professional codes, political pressure, or personal values influence how student conduct administrators resolve ethical dilemmas. This study will address that gap in the literature and contribute to the body of knowledge.

The theoretical framework undergirding this mixed method study will be Kitchener's (1985) five ethical principles: justice, beneficence, fidelity, autonomy, and nonmaleficence. Kitchener's principles provide guidelines for analyzing an ethical problem, identifying alternatives, and weighing consequences. Kitchener's work is also a relevant guide for student conduct administrators in effectively resolving ethical dilemmas where the best course of action is unclear and potentially controversial.

To resolve ethical dilemmas, student conduct administrators must analyze situations from multiple perspectives, particularly in an increasingly diverse campus environment where cultural values may clash. Doing the right thing for the right reason can be highly subjective. Ethical lenses, theories, and models provide a framework for making meaning of complex circumstances and competing interests.

This chapter operationalizes the construct of ethical decision making. The history of student conduct administration provides a critical contextual background for understanding how lenses of ethical decision making shift with political and social

influences. External forces can be powerful determinants when making ethical decisions. Also examined will be the role of values, character, and institutional mission in sagacious ethical decision making which is frequently mentioned in the literature.

This chapter is organized into three main sections: (a) role of professional organizations, (b) ethical theories, and (c) related research studies. The chapter concludes with a discussion of potential implications for ethical instruction in graduate school preparation programs.

Role of Professional Organizations

Student conduct administrators look to professional organizations for guidance in best practice, particularly when it comes to a working knowledge of student development theory and higher education law. “The movement towards a more developmental view of college student discipline and the need for legal knowledge has placed student conduct administrators in the position of being purveyors of two types of specialized knowledge: student development and legal issues” (Stimpson & Stimpson, 2008, p. 15). Membership in professional organizations helps practitioners stay abreast of important trends.

Historical Perspective

A historical perspective illustrates how changing societal views and resulting legislation have influenced the way student conduct administrators approach decision making. These societal forces also impacted the philosophy of professional organizations, particularly the Association for Student Conduct Administration.

In loco parentis. Student discipline in higher education is rooted in colonial times when college was the purview of affluent white males. Faculty duties included

managing behavior and punishing conduct unbecoming of a gentleman (Kaplan & Lee, 1995). From its inception, student discipline has been fraught with challenges. College authorities have historically worried about the unruliness of the current generation and feared the decline of civilization. Thomas Jefferson lamented,

The article of discipline is the most difficult in American education. Premature ideas of independence, too little repressed by parents, beget a spirit of insubordination which is the great obstacle to science with us and a principle cause of its decay since the revolution. I look to it with dismay in our institution, as a breaker ahead, which I am far from being confident we shall be able to weather (as cited in Stoner & Cerminara, 1990, p. 89).

Through the first part of the twentieth century, the courts viewed college personnel as surrogate parents. As such, school authorities could discipline students as they saw fit.

Due process rights. The paternalistic practice known as ‘in loco parentis’ met its demise with the landmark federal court decision, *Dixon vs. Alabama State Board of Education* (Kaplan & Lee, 1995). In 1961, St. John Dixon and five other African American students appealed their expulsion from Alabama State College after being summarily expelled for participating in civil rights demonstrations. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that students at a state-supported school were entitled to minimal due process rights defined as notice of the allegations and an opportunity to be heard (Kaplan & Lee, 1995).

The influx of veterans attending college on the GI bill and student anti-war protests during the 1960s further eroded a parental approach to managing student behavior (Bickel & Lake, 1999). The courts viewed students as having a contractual relationship with a public institution that afforded fundamental constitutional rights.

Concurrent with the due process rights movement, cognitive-development theorists, such as Lawrence Kohlberg, challenged the notion that society dictates morality. Kohlberg theorized individuals make meaning from their experiences and decide for themselves what is morally right or wrong (Kohlberg as cited in Baldizan, 1998). Colleges and universities struggled to develop policies and procedures that addressed student rights as well as student responsibilities. “Not all institutions were able to reconcile due process with developmentally and educationally sound practices” (Baldizan, 1998, p. 31). As a result, student disciplinary proceedings became increasingly adversarial and legalistic.

Creeping legalism. Dannells (1996) noted that court rulings and student activism in the 1960s marked a dramatic shift in the way public school authorities approached student discipline. Most notably, campus leaders adopted legalistic campus judicial systems to uphold students’ rights. Character education as part of the sanctioning process was secondary to following legalistic procedures to protect the institution.

Tort claims involving student death or injury spiked in the 1980s and 1990s (Bickel & Lake, 1999). Increasing numbers of litigants filed suit alleging failure on the part of colleges and universities to rectify foreseeable harm. Litigants claimed that

colleges and universities possess a special relationship with students requiring a heightened duty of care.

However, in the wake of *in loco parentis*, the court rejected the notion that colleges and universities had a special duty to protect students or visitors on campus, especially from acts of self-harm. Bickel and Lake (1999) expressed concern that this legal viewpoint “cast the university in the legal and cultural role of helpless ‘bystander’ to student life and danger” (p. 49). Bickel and Lake argued for a proactive approach to harm reduction and risk management in the interest of student safety.

Integrating due process and development theory. Bickel and Lake (1999) asserted that promoting moral growth was not mutually exclusive from legally defensible student disciplinary systems. Baldizan (1998) agreed that fear of litigation should not fetter the goal of educational discipline, “Moral development for our students, as part of this equation, demands ongoing assessment as a means to determine to what degree our students are truly growing cognitively and developmentally” (p. 33). Baldizan opined, “We can answer the requirements of our contractual relationship and meet the legal criteria without relinquishing our role in fostering moral growth” (p. 35). Baldizan suggested involvement in the student disciplinary process could increase a student’s moral faculties.

While Baldizan’s (1998) point is well taken, it can be difficult to have a developmental conversation with a student accompanied by an attorney or parents looking for technical flaws in the process that can be used as grounds for appeal. To prevent such misunderstanding, it is useful to emphasize the educational goals of student

discipline (Sokolow, 2004). In Sokolow's view, legalism and developmentalism are polar opposites. "The more legalistic our process, the less developmental and educational they will be" (p. 4). Sokolow (2004) recommended de-legalizing the process through adoption of a value-based student code tied to an institution's mission and core values

Association for Student Conduct Administration response. Integrating legal requirements with student development theory has been a frequent topic at conferences organized by the Association for Student Conduct Administration. Legal experts such as Sokolow (2004) and leaders in higher education advised moving away from legalistic terminology and a labyrinth of disciplinary procedures. In 2008, the Association for Student Judicial Affairs changed the name of the organization to the Association for Student Conduct Administration to reflect a renewed commitment to student development theory.

At the same time, ASCA continues to serve as a resource for the latest information on legislation and precedent setting court decisions that affect how situations are handled on campus (ASCA website, 2010). ASCA advises practitioners to approach decision making from different lenses starting with the mission and values of their campus.

Ethical Lens of Professional Codes and Laws

Institutional Policies

A deontological starting point is grounded in written codes of conduct promulgated informally and formally. Institutional policies codify organizational values

and expectations for members of a learning community. Consequences for misbehavior are assumed to be effective deterrents.

Federal and State Law

Students and employees on a college campus must adhere to state ethics, laws, and policies governing the use of technology, state property, cell phones, weapons, harassment, discrimination, and sexual violence. Along with state law, there are also federal laws, such as the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), First Amendment, and the Jeanne Clery Student-Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act. Consistent enforcement of policies positively impacts the organizational climate.

Professional Ethical Codes

NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) Principles of Good Practice in Higher Education. Student conduct administrators often belong to NASPA. Members of this organization “are committed to providing services and education that enhance student growth and development” (NASPA website, 2010). In 1990, NASPA adopted Principles of Good Practice in Higher Education describing expected standards of ethical behavior. Examples included supporting the mission and goals of their employing institutions, protecting institutional resources, avoiding conflicts of interests, refraining from illegal acts, honoring the moral codes of their communities, treating others fairly, and valuing diversity.

Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA). This organization is devoted exclusively to best practice in the field of student conduct. Emphasis is placed on high moral standards. Examples include supporting the mission and goals of the

employing institution, obeying the law, treating students impartially, avoiding conflicts of interest, and maintaining confidentiality (ASCA website, 2010).

College Student Educators International (ACPA). ACPA is “dedicated to enhancing the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of each individual within post-secondary educational institutions and, thus, to the service of society,” according to the ACPA website (2010). The Ethical Principles and Standards of ACPA encompass Kitchener’s principles and core professional values. ACPA members must: (a) benefit others through fostering holistic growth; (b) promote justice and fairness; (c) be faithful in factually communicating information; and (d) do no harm by refraining from discrimination.

The Ethical Principles and Standards of ACPA emphasize the global composition of students on a typical college campus. Ethical leaders genuinely care about the values and perceptions of non-dominant cultures. ACPA notes, “Ethical dilemmas often arise among or between people from different cultures. Ethical decision making suggests that the values of relevant cultures be examined when dilemmas arise and overt conversations about conflicting values take place, if necessary” (p. 14).

The Ethical Principles and Standards of the ACPA acknowledge that it is impossible to anticipate the many ethical conundrums professionals in student affairs will face. “Student affairs professionals should strive to develop the virtues, or habits of behavior, that are characteristic of people in helping professions (p. 2). ACPA also stresses context, “Institutional mission, goals, policies, organizational structure, and

culture, combined with individual judgment and professional standards, define and delimit the nature and extent of practice” (p. 7).

The ACPA Ethical Principles and Standards (2010) identify four essential virtues for the profession: prudence, integrity, respectfulness, and benevolence. Virtues are distinguished from principles in that virtues “are somewhat flexible and reflect the means by which a person acts of values” (p. 13).

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS).

According to the CAS website (2010), this organization “has been the pre-eminent force for promoting standards in student affairs, student services, and student development programs since its inception in 1979.” The Statement of Shared Ethical Principles of CAS identifies seven guiding principles largely derived from Kitchener’s work.

According to the CAS website (2010), professionals in higher education are ethically bound to follow the principles of autonomy, beneficence, justice, fidelity, veracity, and affiliation.

Ethical Theories

Karen Kitchener’s Model of Ethical Decision Making

Kitchener (1984) developed a model of ethical justification that encompassed an intuitive level and a critical-evaluative level. Most ethical dilemmas are resolved intuitively through reliance on personal values, professional codes, laws, and life experience. However, when unique, complicated or unforeseen moral issues arise, critical evaluation of the situation is required, particularly when beliefs collide.

Kitchener's (1984) model is built around five principles: (a) respect autonomy; give individuals the freedom to choose ; (b) do no harm; avoid hurtful actions; (c) benefit others; perform good deeds; (d) be just; treat others equitably; and (e) be faithful; be honest and loyal. Kitchener expanded upon the ideas of bioethicists Beauchamp and Childress (2001) who continue to research application of ethical theory to the practice of medicine.

Kitchener's principles are comprehensive and widely used across many disciplines. Evans (1987) endorsed the use of Kitchener's principles in higher education administration, "These principles should inform the policies of student affairs professionals and the work of these professionals with individual students and groups" (p. 192).

Many professional ethical codes cite Kitchener's principles. Beneficence is the reason individuals enter the student affairs profession. Much reward comes from making a positive difference in the lives of students. Fidelity and justice are also core values in student affairs work. Student affairs practitioners promote trust, transparency, and inclusion. Policies take into account that people have the autonomy to live freely and make their own decisions, so long as their behavior does not infringe upon the rights and well-being of others.

When principles conflict, Kitchener (1985) believed that above all, do no harm. As such, student affairs practitioners have a moral imperative to minimize foreseeable harm and assist students in a competent manner.

Kitchener (1985) maintained that ethical decision making was a critical thinking skill that could be taught. Using Kitchener's model, the practitioner first analyzes a dilemma in light of the five principles. Next, the practitioner determines which of the principles apply to the situation and take precedence if two or more principles conflict. Professional codes can help further clarify the issues and identify the outcome that will achieve the greatest good.

King and Kitchener (1994) collaborated on a model of reflective thinking. Their model explains how individuals at different stages of moral cognition solve problems when solutions are not self-evident. Pre-reflective thinking (Stages 1-3) relies on tradition and experts to know the truth and provide the right answers. Quasi-reflective thinking recognizes that situations can be multi-faceted and knowledge is not absolute. Reflective thinking (Stages 6-7) involves weighing evidence and actively constructing knowledge that must continually be reviewed and adjusted across contexts.

Lawrence Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Reasoning

An ethical lens of justice focuses on theories and models of student development that explain moral reasoning and behavior. Principles of fairness, impartiality, and justice serve as the rationale for decision making. An ethical lens of justice provides a framework to student conduct administrators when communicating with students. The goal is to challenge the student to reflect on maladaptive behavior and learn more socially responsible ways of relating.

Kohlberg (1984) developed a hierarchy of moral reasoning centering on the concept of justice. Kohlberg approached research from a value-free, positivist worldview

but departed from convention by including moral values and subjective reasoning.

Heavily influenced by Jean Piaget's stage theory of cognitive development, Kohlberg's postulated a cognitive-structural theory involving six stages within three levels. His primary subjects were young Caucasian males.

At Level I, Preconvention Moral Reasoning, Stage 1, individuals are egocentric and act according to the likelihood of adverse consequences. In Stage 2, individuals are hedonistic and only consider the needs of others if it might result in personal gain.

At Level II, Conventional Morality, Stage 3, approval seeking behavior is emphasized and the individual strives to live up to the expectations of others. Stage 4 focuses on law and order with thought given to what would happen to society if everybody acted that way. Duty and honor are cherished.

Level III, Post Conventional Morality, Stage 5, focuses on the social contract and individual rights. The spirit and intent of the law takes precedence over strict literal interpretation. Dilemmas are resolved according to what course of action will result in the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Stage 6 pertains to universal ethical principles. Acting in accordance with conscience takes precedence to following the letter of the law. Universal principles of human dignity, respect, equality, and justice are primary determinants of behavior.

Kohlberg is well known for his moral case study about a poor man named Heinz who faces an ethical dilemma about whether to steal a cancer fighting drug that might save his dying wife. Subjects are queried about the action Heinz should take and scored on the rationale provided.

A possible limitation of the study is the uncertain correlation between an individual's professed intentions and actual behavior. Even people with high moral standards can make poor choices. This begs the question of whether college students who score highly on tests of moral reasoning can be counted on to demonstrate pro-social behavior.

James Rest's Four-Component Model

James Rest (1986) developed a model with four components at the University of Minnesota describing the process of moral development. Rest identified four psychological components that need to be developed in order for a person to recognize ethical implications and choose the most ethical course of action (Bebeau, 2002).

Component I concerned awareness of the existence of a moral dilemma through a morally attuned interpretation of the situation. Component II involved deciding what is morally right based on application of moral principles. Component III dealt with making a moral choice in the face of conflicting values, and Component IV involved following through with a plan of action. Rest (1986) did not consider the components to be linear – the interaction between the components impacts moral behavior.

Rest (1986) is best known for developing the Defining Issues Test (DIT) that incorporates his model and post-conventional theories of Kohlberg. The DIT consists of complex moral dilemmas that assess participants' level of moral reasoning. The DIT is reliable as evidenced by test-retest scores and Chronbach's alpha in the upper 0.70s and low 0.80s (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau, 2000).

King and Mayhew (2002) reviewed 172 studies that examined the influence of higher education on college student moral development using the Defining Issues Test. King and Mayhew concluded that college has a profound impact on students' ability to use postconventional moral reasoning. The highest gains were seen at institutions that provided students with opportunities to grapple with ethical dilemmas.

These findings suggest the college experience may be even more important to a student's moral growth than the subjects studied in school. If that is the case, then educationally derived sanctions in the student conduct process could have a big impact on students being disciplined.

In 1998, Winston and Saunders commented that Rest's model is still relevant, noting that the model takes into account the often contextual aspect of deciding the best course of action. Winston and Saunders attested to the validity of the DIT.

By contrast, critics of the DIT claim it has a liberal bias. Thoma, Narvarez, Rest, and Derryberry (1999) adamantly refuted those allegations, "Our findings are unambiguous: the DIT provides unique information above and beyond that accounted for verbal ability, general ability, political attitudes, or political identity" (p. 338).

Schmidt (2011) noted there is little proof that individuals who score high on moral reasoning on the DIT act ethically when faced a difficult ethical dilemma in real life. However, Mullane (1999) discovered that students involved in the conduct process scored lower on the DIT than other students. Mullane also found that conduct students with low moral development scores on the DIT were less likely than conduct students with higher moral development scores to perceive the disciplinary process as educational.

William Perry's Cognitive-Structural Theory

Like Kohlberg, Perry (1970) was influenced by the stage development theories of Piaget. Perry identified nine stages of moral development that progress from dualism, multiplistic thinking, relativism, and commitment in relativism. In the early stages, thinking is dualistic with heavy reliance on experts for the truth; in the middle stages, there is recognition that experts don't always agree; in the late middle stages, there is increased awareness of the complexity of decisions; and in the final stage, there is confidence in the validity of personal views with openness to new knowledge. Perry formulated his theory on interviews with affluent male students at Harvard University which has been viewed as a serious limitation to generalizability.

Carol Gilligan's Ethic of Care

Gilligan (1982) studied under Lawrence Kohlberg, but disagreed with the emphasis Kohlberg placed on justice in his test of moral judgment. Gilligan viewed care and responsibility as central to ethical decision. Based on her studies of moral reasoning, Gilligan concluded that women typically frame moral problems around values of connectedness and peace whereas men prefer values of justice, rights, and equality. Gilligan referred to these gender-linked worldviews as different, but equally legitimate, voices.

In later studies, Gilligan (1995) observed that women's moral reasoning evolves from a sense of self-centeredness to seeing other perspectives, and ultimately learning to balance their own needs with the feelings of others. She also clarified that she did not consider the ethics of relating to be an innate or exclusive characteristic of women.

“Listening to women’s voices clarified the ethic of care, not because care is essentially associated with women or part of women’s nature, but because women, for a combination of psychological and political reasons, voice relational realities that were otherwise unspoken or dismissed as inconsequential” (p. 123). Gilligan attributed the differences to the way men and women are socialized.

Gilligan (1995) observed that an individual’s stated intentions are often inconsistent with real life behavior. Student conduct administrators are very familiar with students who claim they have learned their lesson only to repeat the behavior within a short span of time.

Support for Gilligan’s theory was found in a study by Jones and Watt (2001) of 182 undergraduate students at a Midwestern university who were administered the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment (SDTLA, Form F95) that measures psychosocial developing along Chickering’s vectors. Women had significantly higher ethic of cares scores than men. In particular, women respondents placed greater emphasis on relationships and connectedness.

Similarly, Persons (2009) analyzed the responses of business students to 18 scenarios derived from a corporate code of ethics. Women and students with exposure to workplace ethical training scored highest in ethicality.

Nel Nodding’s Relational Ethics

Nodding’s (2008) endorsed many of Gilligan’s philosophies and believed the ethicality of a decision was linked to how it impacted others. She considered dialogue to be essential in communicating respect and solving ethical dilemmas. Nodding’s argued

that an ethic of justice should be balanced with an ethic of care. Nodding's recommended the use of different ethical lenses in examining an ethical dilemma (Bergman, 2004). Treating everyone equally may not be fair when students are not on an equal playing field, she noted. Nodding's emphasized community building and affirming interpersonal relationships. Nodding's noted similarities between an ethics of relation and virtue ethics; however, she had reservations about character ethics pointing out that fascist and totalitarian states embrace character education to maintain the status quo.

Critical Social Theory

Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) characterized critical social theory as a lens that examines power and privilege. Critical social theory is "concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy; matters of race, class, and gender; ideologies; discourses; education; religion and other social institutions; and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system" (Kincheloe & McLaren as cited in Zou & Trueba, 2002, p. 90).

Critical theory examines who gains and who loses when decisions are made. Privileged groups perpetuate the status quo to retain control of resources. A social justice orientation asserts that ethical decision making must consider the needs, opinions, and beliefs of everyone, not just the dominant group.

Critical theorists contend that the value-free premises of early leadership theories ignored values and character (Middlehurst, 2008). Leaders such as Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, or Saddam Hussein were powerful, but diabolical, leaders. In some respects, they

demonstrated effective leadership strategies, but they will be remembered for moral depravity.

Fried (1997) declared that of notions of justice, fairness, and goodness can only be understood in a cultural context. “Immigrants, refugees, international students, native people, Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and people with disabilities populate our campuses and expect their beliefs and behaviors to be respected” (p. 21). Fried cautioned student affairs administrators against resolving dilemmas exclusively from a Eurocentric belief system.

Related Research Studies

Applications of Kitchener

An important responsibility like campus discipline demands theoretically grounded decision making. To quote Kitchener (1985), “We must consider ethical principles and theories in order to make reasonable and ethically defensible judgments in student affairs” (p. 17). Student conduct administrator must have a rational foundation for decision making.

By relying on Kitchener’s model, the likelihood of an ethical resolution is enhanced. Rarely, will there be only one workable solution to an ethical dilemma, or it would not be a dilemma. Ethical theories and models do not provide “quick fixes and simple solutions” (Middlehurst, 2008, p. 336). Rather, they offer insight and direction when a practitioner is facing decisions with high stakes consequences.

Additional studies (Fried, 2000; Gass & Wurdinger, 1993; Guthrie, 1997; Humphrey, Janosik, & Creamer, 2004) suggested Kitchener’s model of ethical decision

making can assist in the resolution of ethical dilemmas. A model of ethical decision making provides a theoretically sound framework for evaluating alternatives.

Humphrey et al. (2004) advocated for Kitchener's decision making model, "By using this decision making model, practitioners can increase the likelihood that their decisions will be based on the appropriate ethical principles, character traits, or professional values. Professionals will be in a strong position to explain and, if necessary, defend their decisions" (p. 683).

Janosik et al. (2004) conducted a comprehensive study of ethical decision making in student affairs. In a survey disseminated to randomly selected members of NASPA, Janosik asked professionals to describe ethical challenges faced on the job. The 303 NASPA respondents provided 580 examples (1.9 per respondent) of ethical dilemmas. Qualitative methods were used to identify categorical themes then grouped according to Kitchener's ethical principles.

Concerns about fairness and consistency were mentioned most frequently in the Janosik et al. (2004) study, which closely fits Kitchener's concept of justice. Examples included preferential treatment, conflict of interest, and inconsistent policy application. In addition, Janosik found that women administrators were more apt to mention discomfort in inappropriate social settings where policy violations were occurring. Professionals in high level positions reported more incidents of inconsistent policy enforcement than entry level staff which Janosik attributed to senior administrators being more attuned to improprieties. Janosik further discovered that inconsistent policy

enforcement was more of an issue at small institutions and private colleges less bound by rules and system policies.

Guthrie (1997) found relevance in Kitchener's ethical schema from an intellectual development perspective. According to Guthrie, intellectual development is a precursor of moral development, and in order to understand complex ethical situations, students require critical thinking skills. Student conduct administrators can apply this insight when attempting to help students unlearn maladaptive behavior.

Fried (2000) cited Kitchener's (1985) five ethical principles as practical guidelines for decision making in student affairs. Fried suggested that Kitchener's model could be strengthened by incorporating values of individuality, autonomy, achievement, responsibility, and progress.

Gass and Wurdinger (1993) described the benefits of using Kitchener's principles to ensure consistent decision making; however, they also expressed concern about the inflexibility of the model when applied to complex, real life situations. They noted that in certain circumstances, virtue ethics may be more appropriate when an understanding of context, character, intentions, and consequences is essential. Gass and Wurdinger recommended synthesis of principle and virtue ethics "to limit the potential weaknesses of both approaches" (p. 46). Their studies point to the benefits of drawing from more than one theory or model. Wurdinger (1987) cautioned that prima facie acts of virtue are not always virtuous. It is necessary to determine the intent and motive behind a person's actions before deeming that person to be virtuous.

Relevance of Models

Argyris and Schön (1996) posited that members of an organization have mental maps that guide them in handling ethical situations. The maps may not be conscious or tied to the theory, professional code, or philosophy they espouse. Problems occur when the maps are incongruent. Greater reliance on theories and models sharpens clarity and intentionality, which improves decision making skills.

Student conduct administrators encounter ethical dilemmas with regularity. A moral map is essential in resolving difficult situations in a fair, just, and compassionate manner. Through example and role modeling, the student conduct administrator demonstrates civil and respectful engagement.

In addition to meeting with a student conduct administrator to discuss their behavior, students are typically assigned educational sanctions such as a reflection paper. Educational sanctions are intended to deepen moral reasoning. Philosopher John Dewey (1977) believed that learning occurs when students reflect on their experiences. Baldizan (1998) asserted that individual conduct meetings and conduct board hearings are powerful teaching tools because students are questioned about their core values, motivations, and responsibility to other members of the learning community and causes students to reflect on their behaviors.

Theoretical Lenses of Decision Making

The ethical dilemmas of student conduct administrators include emotionally charged situations and differing opinions as to what constitutes a just disposition of contested allegations. Competing interests and value conflicts add to the quagmire of

uncertainty. Noddings (2008) recommended multiple lenses to resolve an ethical dilemma. Because ethical dilemmas come with no easy answers, it is wise to look at a situation from many angles.

A theoretical lens can assist a student conduct administrator with a thorny predicament. Using a particular lens brings into focus certain aspects of a phenomenon while downplaying others. “Each lens suggests a different set of practices and solutions” (Ancona et al., 2001, p. 645).

The theoretical lens of a student conduct administrator shapes decision making. Using only a legal lens, a student conduct administrator would choose the course of action most likely to avoid litigation. By contrast, a student conduct administrator using a lens of justice would likely decide a case based on principles of fairness and justice even if the accused student had threatened to appeal and sue. A lens of caring would focus on how the situation could be turned into a learning experience for the student.

Student conduct administrators are dedicated to students' moral, intellectual, relational, vocational, and spiritual growth. Characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation need to be considered when making culturally appropriate decisions. A philosophy of educational discipline emphasizes natural consequences over punishment.

Wark and Krebs (1996) investigated the relationship between gender and moral maturity. Participants were given a shortened version of Kohlberg's test and instructed to describe their handling of self-reported real-life moral dilemmas. Responses were classified according to a care based orientation concerned with helping others and

avoiding harm, and a justice based orientation concerned with rules, impartiality, principles, and standards. The researchers found no effect for gender role on how participants scored on Kohlberg's test of moral judgment; however, men reported more personal dilemmas involving violations of rules and principles whereas women reported more violations of trust and social obligations.

A study of gender differences in the ethical behavior of accountants was undertaken by Doty, Tomkiewicz, and Bass (2005). The study looked at how men and women approached ethically equivocal accounting scenarios. The researchers found that women were better able than men to perceive the ethical implications of their decision making. Further, they reported "males expressed a greater inclination than did the females to engage in behavior they believed to be unethical" (p. 827). They concluded, "the male drive to succeed could lead to a more relaxed view of ethical decisions and actions" (p. 827).

By contrast, Maeda, Thoma, and Bebeau (2009) did not find a correlation between gender and moral reasoning. They concluded, "there is growing consensus that men and women are more similar than different on measures of moral development" (p. 234).

In addition to gender, there is evidence to suggest that racial identify may influence how people judge the moral and ethical dimensions of behavior. Members of a dominant culture may view certain actions as wrong or inappropriate without realizing they are seeing things from a skewed cultural lens. This lack of insight can have hurtful and unintended consequences; for example, Monroe (2006) found that African American

students are disproportionately represented in school disciplinary actions. Monroe attributed it to cross-cultural misinterpretation of communication styles. Monroe observed teacher discomfort with African American students' louder and more frank manner of expression. Teachers misperceived these students as difficult and confrontational. Monroe advised: "teachers are encouraged to modify their own behaviors and avoid sanctioning culturally based actions that are not intended to be disruptive" (p. 164). Monroe's findings demonstrate how race can influence perceptions of virtue and character.

Ethical Lens of Virtue

As part of their commitment to student development, student conduct administrators prepare students for future leadership roles. An important aspect of leadership is virtue. Through involvement in the student disciplinary process, students come to better understand why leaders must act in ways that reflect virtue if they hope to engender the trust and respect of others.

Virtue ethics. The origins of western virtue ethics trace back to Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greece around 348/7 B.C.E. (McKeon, 1947). The Greeks regarded virtue as a predisposition toward a righteous course of action. A person with a virtuous character consistently elects to do good. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* emphasized personal responsibility, "Now if it is in our power to do noble or base acts, and likewise in our power not to do them, and this was what being good or bad meant, then it is in our power to be virtuous or vicious" (Aristotle as translated and cited in McKeon, 1947, p.

357). While rules and laws articulate societal expectations, it is ultimately up to the individual to decide whether to comply.

Begley (2005) saw practical value in the application of virtue ethics. In contrast to deontology, virtue ethics focuses on the morality of an action rather than on observable outcomes. Begley argued that moral dilemmas are not easily resolved through formulaic references to professional codes. According to Begley, virtues critical towards professional practices include moral courage, prudence (practical wisdom), justice, compassion, benevolence, integrity, honesty, and competency.

Values and ethics. Public institutions of higher learning vacillate on the appropriateness of values education. On the one hand, it makes sense that leaders of tomorrow would benefit from cultivation of values, virtue, and ethics. On the other hand, many faculty at public universities shy away from talking to students about values in an attempt to avoid “indoctrinating them in a specific set of values” (Mathieson & Tyler, 2008, p. 6).

Mathieson and Tyler (2008) argued that values education does have a place in public education because the purpose is to help students identify their own values and to learn how to handle complex ethical problems. Indoctrination would be antithetical to the process of values clarification. Values education is only a form of propaganda if participants are pressured into subscribing to a conservative, liberal, or other agenda.

Mathieson and Tyler (2008) quipped, “By ignoring ethics, faculty tell students what they think ethics is worth. Should they be surprised when students act unethically?”

In the opinion of Mathieson and Tyler, faculty who neglect ethical training share responsibility if their students engage in unethical behavior on the job.

Baldizan (1998) speculated that the decline of in loco parentis caused administrators to forego value based education. In the area of student conduct, the threat of litigation has prompted more concern over due process than learning outcomes. Baldizan lamented this trend, “The issues students face today cry out not for less but more moral and ethical reflection. Rather than stepping away in a neutral zone, hiding behind legal rationales, administrators of student policies desperately need to be addressing life and learning experiences that lead to ethical and moral outcomes” (pp. 30-31). Moral development occurs when a student encounters new ethical dilemmas requiring reflective thinking.

Evans (1987) made a similar argument, “individuals must recognize that today’s society is value laden and that even students who attend public universities are continually faced with values dilemmas that require thought and action” (p. 193). While it is difficult to argue that values play a central role in decision making, critics of values education counter that it can be used to promote a social agenda.

Novak (1996) noted that values education may be associated with traditional conservatism, “First, our high culture – composed of intellectuals, professors, and artists – is quite ambivalent about praise for virtue and for character. For many, such realities smack of traditional values – those residues of the dark past that enlightenment is supposed to enlighten us from” (p. 110). Values are associated with private schools and faith based institutions where views may be more homogenous.

Dalton and Healy (1984) surveyed 623 student affairs professionals on their perception of the importance of values in student conduct administration. They found support for promoting values as part of the sanctioning process. Values most frequently identified included teaching and demonstrating personal responsibility, fairness, respect, and helping others.

Farrell (2009) noted that honesty and open communication are core underpinnings of an ethical environment. Farrell observed that an institution's approach to diversity is a key measure of authenticity between espoused values and actual practice. When leaders foster an atmosphere of trust and respect, members of the learning community feel safe to talk about their personal values.

Young and Elfrink (1991) conducted a national study to ascertain the perceived importance of values education in student affairs graduate education. All respondents believed values education should be included in graduate school course work. Values identified as core to the practice of student affairs included altruism, equality, freedom, human dignity, justice, truth, and community.

Young and Elfrink (1991) recommended further discussion within the student affairs profession to clarify the essential values that should be taught, modeled, and practiced in student affairs. Young and Elfrink suggested integrating a taxonomy of values with Kitchener's model to fully inform the decision making process, "... an expanded list could improve the use of Kitchener's model of decision making by revealing the values implications of different type of professional actions" (p. 114).

Kelly (2005) noted incongruence between knowledge of professional standards and actual application of the standards in the daily practice of student affairs. Using a narrative, interpretive method, Kelly asked 10 senior student affairs administrators to discuss their handling of a serious ethical dilemma. Kelly's study suggested that senior administrators may be more likely to base ethical decision making on personal or faith-based values rather than professional codes or standards.

Kitchener (1996) also saw merit in a virtue ethics approach, but cautioned, "...virtue ethics can be dangerously ethnocentric without principles against which to evaluate and balance them" (p. 93). Kitchener pointed out the tendency for individuals to cast dispersions on those who seemingly lack certain culturally relative virtues, such as timeliness or neatness. Kitchener opined, "It is my own suspicion that as many acts of intolerance have been committed in the name of virtue as in the name of principle..." (p. 95). Further, Kitchener observed that virtuous people do not always know what to do when values collide.

Ethics and character. Strange (2004) defined character as "a function of personal identity, including one's attitudes, values, beliefs and abilities; how one relates to others; and toward what ends one is committed and one acts" (p. 31). Ostensibly, there is renewed interest today in ethics and character education. A campus climate survey conducted for the Association for American Colleges and Universities (AACU), Fall 2007, reported by Antonaros, Barnhardt, Holsapple, Moronski, and Vergoth (2008), produced compelling results. The survey encompassed 23,000 undergraduates and 9,000

faculty, staff, and administrators at 23 institutions. Participants were asked whether they thought personal and social responsibility should be a major focus of a college education.

An overwhelming majority of participants in the AACU study answered affirmatively, and believed more emphasis should be given to the topic. “Despite the perceived value of attending to those issues, all surveyed groups reported that the campuses were not focusing enough attention on issues of personal and social responsibility” (p. 2). Wasley (2008) reported that only 30% of the respondents in the AACU study strongly agreed that their campuses stressed moral development and ethical reasoning. The results connote a desire for stronger ethical leadership on college campuses.

“Character education may be the key to piracy prevention,” suggested Kruger (2004, p. 1) in discussing the problem of illegal file sharing on college campuses. Kruger argued that students don’t think about how copyright violations hurt the musicians, writers and programmers who created the pirated work. The solution, according to Kruger is to engage students in discussions of character, ethics, morality, and personal responsibility.

At its core, educational leadership is an ethical undertaking. “The most effective administrators have a clear idea of what they value, why they value it, and why it is important that the institution value it” (Blimling, 1998, p. 68). Student conduct administrators are more than disciplinarians, they are educators. “Student discipline is, and always has been, an excellent opportunity for development efforts. The traditional dean of students knew this, but operated without benefit of formal developmental

theories, especially those emphasizing moral and ethical growth and so lending themselves to the disciplinary process” (Dannells, 1996, p. 193). Conversations about moral issues promote student development, but they require skill.

Moral reasoning is highly sophisticated and emotionally charged. “To enhance sensitivity, one must be willing to discuss openly and explore fully the ethical implications of alternative courses of action and their differential effects on the parties involved” (Winston & Saunders, 1998, p. 78). The researchers noted that courage of convictions is essential when a practitioner’s principles are subject to political pressure.

Bishop, Lacour, Nutt, Yamada, and Lee (2004) noted that students today tend to view themselves as consumers entitled to whatever they want from the institution. Bishop et al. (2004) further observed that it is not uncommon for students to try and manipulate the system with little thought to the ethics of seeking preferential treatment. Lee (2010) cryptically commented that many students are indifferent to learning anything except what is going to be on a test. Realizing this possibility, student conduct administrators need to stand firm and enforce policies in an ethical, instructive, and legal manner as moral exemplars.

Ethics and institutional mission. Institutional mission is a major factor in how student conduct administrators approach an ethical dilemma. Professional codes dictate that student affairs professionals have a duty to act in accordance with the mission and goals of their host institution. Similarly, student conduct administrators play a critical role in upholding organizational identity by transmitting institutional values within the culture.

Farrell (2009) pointed out, “The foundation for a successful college is framed by both institutional values exhibited in its mission, culture, structure, and organization and the way the college implements these values” (p. 72). The organization develops an ethical identity through shared values, beliefs, and assumptions.

According to Thomas (2002), ethical breaches are most apt to occur when the behavior is tacitly condoned or ignored by the organizational culture. Institutional ethics are closely tied to mission, purpose and values. “An ethical culture is a collegiate environment that defines a way of life and makes possible a community of character... We create policies that embrace and teach values such as order, fairness, due process, timeliness, and productivity” (p. 66). The identity of any college or university includes varying degrees of assumptions about shared beliefs and expected behaviors. When lacking, problems are inevitable.

Liddell et al. (2010) cited four barriers to ethical behavior in an organization: (1) conformity - the desire to fit in results in complicity of wrong doing; (2) lack of ethical awareness – inability to adapt ethical principles to situations; (3) dualistic thinking and authority-bound mindset; and (4) lack of self-efficacy – reluctance to act when a moral issues arises. Professors and student affairs administrators must have working knowledge of ethical theories and paradigms in order to effectively mentor and instruct students (Healy & Liddell, 1998).

Taft and White (2007) developed comprehensive advice for maintaining one’s ethical core when joining an organization. They recommended researching an institution’s ethical codes before accepting a position. Other strategies included

transparent decision making and being willing to quit a job if expected to engage in unethical conduct.

Institutional culture. Environment matters when it comes to student behavior. Students continually scan the milieu to get a sense of prevailing peer attitudes, and quickly learn the implicit and explicit rules and norms of the campus. As explained by Traft and White (2007) “research on group dynamics, group think, gangs, and corporate misconduct demonstrates that peer pressure to conform to established norms is very strong” (p. 624). Theories have been proposed that explain how an individual’s behavior can be easily swayed by peer pressure.

Bandura’s social learning theory. Bandura (1969) posited a theory of social learning that describes how individuals are influenced by group norms. Bandura’s theory is relevant in understanding the power of institutional culture. Bandura believed individuals imitate behavior that results in positive reinforcement and social acceptance. Consistent with Bandura’s social learning theory, honor codes encourage academic honesty through providing a peer culture that values honesty and integrity.

Unethical student behavior in college can have long term effects. Research shows that students who cheat in college are more likely to be deceitful in their chosen professions. Stone, Jawahar, and Kisamore (2009) concluded, “Cheating in school is a likely precursor to engaging in unethical behavior at work and thus, may threaten worker career success and pose risks for organizational violations” (Stone, Jawahar, & Kisamore, p. 221). This finding underscores the importance of upholding ethical standards at both the individual and institutional level.

Significance of the Study

This research is necessary to identify the type of ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators as well as the processes used to inform their ethical decision making. Few studies have been conducted in this area. Little is known about the extent to which student conduct administrators apply ethical theories and decision making models even though Kitchener's principles are referenced in professional ethical codes. This study will help fill that gap by contributing to the body of knowledge specific to ethical theories and applications in student conduct administration.

Further, the study has the potential to influence graduate school curriculum. References to Kitchener's principles are ubiquitous in counseling, psychology, and bioethics field (Urofsky, Engels, & Engebretson, 2008). Graduate programs at the master's- and doctoral-level in these disciplines emphasize Kitchener's ideas.

Winston & Saunders (1998) stressed the need for adequate training aligned with Kitchener's ethical principles, "Preparation program faculty in student affairs programs and other applied areas, such as counseling, health professions, and social work, have a special obligation to assure the public that the people they graduate have the skills and personal attributes to be effective and to avoid harming others with whom they work" (p. 86). Professional organizations also play a vital role in reinforcing ethical lessons learned in graduate school (Janosik, Carpenter, & Creamer, 2006).

However, there is some disagreement as to what should be taught, and to what extent. McKerrow (1997) contended educational administration programs should teach "ethics at its core, not at its periphery" (p. 211). McKerrow claimed "the literature on

ethics in educational administration has not recognized its own hegemony. The emphasis placed on solving moral dilemmas, analyzing cases, and developing moral reasoning while useful, misses the point” (p. 218). McKerrow suggested students would benefit from more participatory decision making and reciprocal empowerment because an appointed leader’s attitudes are “translated into institutional values and practices” (p. 214). McKerrow argued that graduate programs should consistently provide students with real world opportunities to see ethics in action.

Hornak (2009) agreed that ethical instruction was important but discovered that consistency is lacking across programs, “Presenting the developmental issues of ethical and moral development is important because training for student affairs professionals is not consistent across a given discipline” (p. 54). Also missing are assessment measures of effective ethical instruction.

Linstrum (2009) studied the effectiveness of ethical decision making models in the training of students in master’s level counseling classes. The researcher examined whether instruction in ethical decision making models improves students’ ability to resolve ethical challenges. Linstrum concluded that introduction of ethical models had some positive effect of students’ ethical decision making skills, but the results were not statistically significant.

Another shortcoming in the adequacy of graduate school training was identified by Robbins and Trabichet (2009). Their research revealed that educational administrative training programs give insufficient consideration to the process of ethical decision making, often neglecting skill building in cross-cultural competency. A fair leader must

be self-aware of cultural biases and respectful of equally legitimate perspectives of other cultures. Approaching dilemmas from a multicultural lens increases the likelihood of a resolution that will be perceived as reasonable and appropriate (Robbins & Trabichet, 2009). Without adequate training in cross-cultural decision making, a leader may be perceived as insensitive or even oppressive.

Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the literature related to ethical decision making models and processes in student affairs, particularly student conduct administration. Little is known about the theories, professional codes, political pressures, or personal values that inform the decisions of student conduct administrators when disciplining a student. This study attempts to fill that gap in the research and contribute to the body of knowledge.

The chapter is organized into three main sections: professional organizations and their ethical codes, (b) ethical theories, and (c) related research studies. Emphasis is placed on Kitchener's five ethical principles which provide the theoretical framework for the study. The history of student conduct administration is included to provide a contextual background for understanding how lenses of ethical decision making are influenced by changing political and social forces. The literature review underscores the importance of using theories, models, and organizational codes to ensure that practitioners' ethical decision making is aligned with the best professional practices. The chapter concludes with a discussion of potential implications for graduate school preparation programs as well as professional organizations that promulgate ethical codes.

Chapter III

Research Framework

The purpose of this study was to identify the nature and frequency of ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators. Also explored were the theories, professional codes, and core values informing ethical decision making. The study investigated whether student conduct administrators are incorporating ethical models and professional codes in their ethical decision making versus relying on legal concerns or subjective factors, such as personal values or political ramifications. Additionally, the study examined whether correlations exist between knowledge of ethical principles and codes, and use of the ethical principles and codes when engaged in ethical decision making. Finally, respondents were asked about the extent of their graduate school training in preparing them to address ethical dilemmas.

An embedded mixed method design was used with qualitative, open-ended questions assuming a secondary role in a quantitative census type survey (Sweetman, Badiee, & Creswell, 2010). The study was intended to test Kitchener's ethical principles which predict that the type of ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators fall within Kitchener's schema of moral reasoning. As such, Kitchener's model for resolving ethical dilemmas has direct relevance to the practice of student conduct administration.

A researcher-developed survey instrument with open-ended questions and Likert-scale items was disseminated online to members of the Association for Student Conduct

Administration to compare and contrast the ethical dilemmas of student conduct officers at public and private colleges and universities.

A survey was selected as an effective means of gathering information from a large group of professional administrators from across the country. “Survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, and opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2009, p. 234).

The survey was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the factors influencing the ethical decision making processes of student conduct administrators?
2. Do the ethical decision making processes of student conduct administrators differ by gender, ethnicity, size, or type of institution?
3. Is there a relationship between respondents’ reported reliance on ethical theories in decision making and use of ASCA principles?
4. Is there a relationship between respondents’ reported reliance on ethical theories in decision making and use of Kitchener’s principles?
5. Is there a relationship between respondents’ reported knowledge of ASCA principles and actual use of ASCA principles and/or Kitchener’s principles in decision making?
6. Do respondents who use ASCA principles in decision making also know and use Kitchener’s principles in decision making?
7. Do respondents with knowledge of Kitchener’s principles use Kitchener’s principles in decision making?

8. Is there a correlation between the extent of ethical instruction in graduate school and knowledge/application of ASCA and/or Kitchener's principles?
9. What are the most challenging ethical dilemmas experienced in the professional lives of student conduct administrators?
10. What are the most common ethical dilemmas experienced in the professional lives of student conduct administrators?
11. Do the ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators in their professional lives fit within Kitchener's model of ethical principles?

Respondents

Respondents in the study were members of the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA) whose job involved some aspect of disciplining students for violations of institutional policy. Such positions are typically situated in the Office of Student Conduct, Department of Residential Life, Student Activities, or Greek Life. Most positions require a Master's degree to meet minimum qualifications.

ASCA is the only organization exclusively for professionals who specialize in student conduct. The membership base includes approximately 1,600 professionals from 700 college and universities in the United States, Canada, and abroad. Founded in the late 1980s, ASCA offers expertise in the best professional practice of student discipline.

The research committee of ASCA must approve all requests to survey the membership. A detailed proposal was submitted by the researcher on November 1, 2010, and permission was granted on December 7, 2010. An initial invitation to participate with a link to the study was emailed by the ASCA main office on February 15, 2011, to

professional staff belonging to ASCA. Graduate students belonging to ASCA were not included. Reminder emails were sent on March 2, 2011, and March 8, 2011. The survey closed on March 22, 2011.

Method

A mixed method design was the chosen strategy of inquiry because the study of ethical dilemmas is complex and interdisciplinary. Mixed method studies are considered an appropriate and legitimate type of research in social and behavioral science. By collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, deeper insight can be obtained than what could be expected using one method alone (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative responses explain the quantitative findings of the study.

From a philosophical perspective, a mixed method approach aligns well with a pragmatic worldview (Feilzer, 2010; Creswell, 1994). This study used pluralistic approaches to gain knowledge about a topic that has not been studied in depth. Emphasis was placed on the research questions and identifying how the findings of the study could be applied to enhance the practice of student conduct administration.

The mixed method procedure for this study consisted of a concurrent transformative strategy. A concurrent transformative strategy was selected because the purpose, questions, and data analysis of the research study relate to Kitchener's ethical framework. The choice of a concurrent embedded strategy helped facilitate this approach. Specifically, open-ended questions about the ethical dilemmas experienced by survey respondents were embedded in a survey with mostly closed-ended questions.

Equal weight was given to qualitative and quantitative data. Although time

consuming, a mixed method approach adds depth and credibility to the findings (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008). Quantitative data presented the big picture of what is happening in the profession while qualitative data fine-tuned the day-to-day experiences of student conduct administrators. Words and numbers tell a more complete story than either by itself.

Data Collection Procedures

Instrumentation. The researcher constructed a survey instrument entitled *Ethical Dilemmas of Student Conduct Administrators*. The survey was comprised of items considered germane to the topic based on a review of the literature. The first 10 questions asked for demographic data. This information was intentionally placed at the beginning of the study because it was crucial to identifying the characteristics of the respondents to check for a possibly skewed sample of the population.

Question 11 asked respondents to indicate how frequently certain factors derived from other studies influence respondents' ethical decision making. Questions about the number of Division I sports offered, the number of doctoral programs offered, and total enrollment were added demographic questions designed to measure whether there are unique challenges, such as pressure to give preferential treatment to certain students (Question 12), e.g. athletes at large, prestigious institutions. Questions 13, 18, and 19 pertained to respondents' knowledge and application of their Association's Ethical Principles and Standards.

Questions 14, 15, and 16 required open-ended responses that were coded into categories that were then analyzed in relation to Kitchener's theoretical model and the

results of an ethical dilemma survey of NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education members conducted by Janosik et al. (2004).

Question 17 asked respondents to comment on the extensiveness of their graduate school training specific to ethical theories and models. Questions 20 and 21 directly asked respondents if they are knowledgeable about Kitchener’s five ethical principles, and whether they refer to the Kitchener model when weighing solutions to ethical dilemmas.

Survey Monkey was used to collect data on the survey instrument during the pilot survey and the actual study. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected at the same time - a single-stage sampling procedure. The results were imported into SPSS.

In compliance with Minnesota State Mankato’s Institutional Research Board’s requirements, consent information was provided to identified respondents in the online survey that was sent via Survey Monkey, a secure online research program. In an email from the central office of ASCA, respondents were specifically asked to read the consent information before clicking on a link that brought respondents to the survey instrument.

Confidentiality and anonymity were stressed given the sensitive nature of the questions. The consent information and survey can be found in Appendix A.

Time frame of data collection. An application was submitted on November 1, 2010, to the Institutional Research Board (IRB). On November 11, 2010, a letter was received indicating the research proposal had been approved for one calendar year (IRB Proposal Log #3684).

A pilot study was done in January 2011 using Survey Monkey to obtain feedback on the draft survey instrument. The questionnaire was sent to a convenience sample of 10 staff and 18 graduate assistants whose job involved some aspect of student discipline. A total of 14 individuals responded; 8 were graduate assistants. No problems were reported with the survey and only minor adjustments made to the formatting of the instrument. A question was added to the survey asking respondents to identify which geographical circuit they belonged to in the ASCA organization. Because graduate assistants typically have limited experience working with ethical dilemmas, a decision was made not to include graduate assistants in the actual survey even if they belonged to ASCA. Following adjustments to the survey instrument, the actual survey was emailed in February which is typically a less busy time of the year for student conduct administrators, possibly bolstering the return rate.

The first invitation to respondents was emailed on February 8, 2011. A second invitation was sent February 22, 2011. A third and final email was sent March 8, 2011. The survey remained open through March 22, 2011. Data analysis commenced shortly thereafter.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was bolstered by conducting a pilot study at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The survey instrument was emailed to a convenience sample of 28 staff that handles student conduct issues. Staff included hearing officers and advisors in the Office of Student Conduct, Affirmative Action Office, Residential Life, Student Activities, and Greek Life. In addition to completing the survey, respondents were asked

to comment on clarity of the questions, and whether the survey instrument ostensibly measured the intended constructs.

The researcher is a female director of Student Conduct and interim Dean of Students at Minnesota State University, Mankato and recognizes her personal experiences at a state university may have influenced her analyses of open-ended responses to questions on the survey instrument. Validity was bolstered by checking the coding method and results with dissertation committee members and a peer in the doctoral cohort. At the same time, trustworthiness is enhanced because the researcher is an insider to the phenomenon.

Reliability

After data from the pilot study was imported to SPSS, internal consistency of two subscales was measured by Cronbach Coefficient Alpha. The purpose of Cronbach's alpha is to determine if individual survey items are internally consistent with other survey items in measuring the same construct. Cronbach alpha estimates range from 0.0 to 1.00, with higher correlation coefficients indicative of higher reliability.

Internal consistency was high (.925) between Question 10 – knowledge of Kitchener's principles and Question 11 – application of Kitchener's ethical principles. Internal consistency was positively correlated (.588) between Question 8 – knowledge of the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA) ethical principles and standards and Question 9 – application of ASCA standards and principles. Caution is necessary in interpreting the results because of the low response rate and few questions on the subscales.

Data Analysis

Data from Survey Monkey were collected and studied using concurrent qualitative and quantitative methods. Descriptive statistics and written responses were obtained from a compilation of survey responses.

Qualitative Analysis

The narrative responses will be analyzed using a systematic method from grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Themes and categories were allowed to emerge from the data. The process of analysis described by Creswell (1998) involves open coding – a method of examining and labeling words and phrases without a predetermined notion of what to expect. As recommended by Creswell a method of constant comparison was utilized to compare and contrast new data with existing codes. The process of categorization is designed to “...encourage researchers’ persistent interaction with their data, while remaining constantly involved with their emerging analyses. Data analysis proceed simultaneously and each informs and streamlines the other” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 1).

A coding method described by Tesch (1990) was followed. Consistent with Tesch, responses were reviewed line by line, a random response was selected and notes made about its significance, several more responses were reviewed and a list of topics developed. The topics were compared to a coding scheme originally developed by Janosik et al. (2004). The topics were abbreviated as codes and recorded next to the response in a spreadsheet. Finally, frequencies were tabulated for each code.

Memos of the researcher's thoughts and observations during coding were maintained to assist with data analysis and enhance trustworthiness. The paper trail supports transferability of the research findings and assisted in critiquing the study.

Quantitative Analysis

Closed-ended responses were saved in Microsoft Excel and imported into PASW, Version 18, formerly called SPSS Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program. For purposes of this study, PASW was used for descriptive statistics, t-tests, Pearson chi square, and Pearson product moment correlations of interval responses.

The categorical Independent Variables (IV) were selected demographic variables. The continuous Dependent Variables (DV) were: (a) extent to which personal values, spiritual beliefs, cultural perspectives, professional code of ethics, institutional mission, legal ramifications, and ethical models and theories influence ethical decision making; (b) adequacy of respondents' graduate school preparation related to ethical theories and models; (c) extent of respondents' knowledge about the Ethical Principles and Standards of the Association for Student Conduct Administration; and (d) extent of the respondents' use of the Ethical Principles and Standards of the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA) when attempting to resolve ethical dilemmas.

An unpaired t-test was the method used to assess the differences in means between the independent variable of gender and selected dependent variables. The statistical significance of the difference will be evaluated by the probability of error (p-

value). For purposes of this study, a p-value ≤ 0.05 represents a statistically significant difference.

Summary

This chapter articulated the theoretical framework, design, and procedures that were used in a national study of ethical dilemmas faced by student conduct administrators who belong to the Association for Student Conduct Administrators. The chapter included a restatement of the research questions and an explanation of the mixed method strategies of inquiry to be deployed in addressing the research questions.

Chapter IV

Findings

This chapter describes the results of a mixed method study of ethical dilemmas faced by professionals belonging to the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA). The purpose of this national study was to identify the most challenging and common ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators and to test the applicability of Kitchener's model as a framework for resolving ethical dilemmas.

Also examined were the theories, professional codes, and core values informing ethical decision making and what differences might be found depending on gender, ethnicity, size, and type of institution. Additionally, the study explored possible correlations between knowledge of ethical principles and codes, and use of the ethical principles and codes when engaged in ethical decision making. Finally, respondents were asked about the extent of ethical instruction in their graduate school training to ascertain what relationship, if any, may exist between graduate school preparation and actual use of professional codes and ethical models in their work.

A researcher-developed survey instrument with open-ended questions and Likert-scale items was disseminated online to the 1,595 professionals belonging to the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA). After the survey closed, Survey Monkey data were entered into a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet and uploaded into PASW, Version 18, formerly called SPSS for descriptive and inferential analysis. This chapter includes the survey response rate, demographics, and quantitative analysis of

survey findings along with qualitative interpretation of open-ended survey responses relevant to the research questions framing this study.

Response Rate

An invitation and reminders to participate in the survey were sent from the Central Office of ASCA in February and March 2011. This census type survey was sent to all professionals belonging to the Association for Student Conduct. Of the 1,595 individuals who received an email inviting them to participate, a total of 389 (24.38 %) responded to some or all of the questions.

Demographics

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of years they had been working in their current student conduct positions. Answers given by the 384 individuals who responded to the question ranged from less than 1 year to 27 years. The average response was 4.96 years in their current position. Only 40 of the 384 respondents (10.41 %) had been in their current position for more than 10 years.

A related question looked at how long respondents had been in the field of student conduct. Responses from the 383 respondents who answered the question ranged from less than 1 year to 37 years in the field. The average number of years in the field was 10.11. The majority of respondents (66.06%) had been in the field of student conduct for 10 years or less.

Respondents were asked to specify the office location of their current position. Almost half (N = 187, 48.2%) of the 388 respondents who answered the question worked in the Office of Student Conduct. The second most common location mentioned was the

Dean/Assistant Dean of Students Office (N = 70, 18.04%) and the third largest category was the Department of Residential Life (N = 50, 12.9%). Others mentioned infrequently included Student Affairs (N = 29, 7.4%), Student Life (N = 17, 4.3%), Student Activities (N = 5, 1.3%), Greek Life (N = 1, .3%) and Other (N = 29, 7.4%).

To determine if there was representation in the study from all areas of the country, respondents were asked to indicate which of the 11 circuits of ASCA they belonged to at the time of the survey. The largest group of respondents (N = 43, 12.8%) was from Circuit Four (District of Columbia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia). The smallest group of respondents (N = 21, 6.3%) was from Circuit Eight (Arkansas, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota).

Respondents were also asked to indicate the type of institution where they were currently employed. Respondents were instructed to mark all applicable descriptors, such as 2-year and public. The majority of the 382 respondents (N = 240) who answered the question worked at a public institution (62.82%).

Unfortunately, only 209 of the 382 (54.71%) respondents who answered the question also indicated whether the public or private institution where they were employed was a 2-year or 4-year college. Possibly, respondents did not read the question carefully and overlooked the directive to check all that apply. Table 1 summarizes respondents' type of institution.

Table 1*Type of Institutional Affiliation*

| Institution Type | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Public | 240 | 62.82 |
| Private – church affiliate | 70 | 18.32 |
| Private – non-church affiliated | 70 | 18.32 |
| Private – for profit | 2 | 0.52 |
| Total | 382 | 99.98 |
| Sub-categories | | |
| Two-year institution | 36 | 15.40 |
| Four-year institution | 173 | 74.24 |
| Commuter | 24 | 10.30 |
| Total | 233 | 99.94 |

Additional questions were asked about respondents' institutions to learn more about the environmental press that might have bearing on respondents' perceptions and experiences. Answers provided insight into whether survey respondents were typical of the surveyed population. Respondents were asked whether they worked at an institution that offered Division I sports which are indicative of schools that have high profile athletic teams competing at the national level. When student athletes engage in misconduct, the consequences can include sitting out games or dismissal from school which can have high stakes, particularly at the Division I level. Slightly over half of

respondents (N = 179, 54.2%) stated that their institutions did not have any Division I sports. Some respondents (N = 59, 15.16%) did not answer the question; it is possible they did not know how many of their sports were Division I.

Respondents were also asked about the number of doctoral programs offered at the respondents' current institution. This question was included because the culture of a doctoral institution emphasizes research, academic scholarship, and best practice. Of the 314 respondents who answered the question, slightly more than half (N = 165, 52.5%) indicated that their institution offered one or more doctoral programs. The number of programs offered ranged from one doctoral program to 212 reported doctoral programs. Only one respondent reported 212 doctoral programs; all other respondents reported 139 doctoral programs or fewer.

Total enrollment, including undergraduate and graduate, was another institutional characteristic examined. The largest group represented was schools under 8,000 (N = 162, 43.3%). Breakdown by enrollment is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Total Enrollment of Institution, Undergraduate and Graduate

| Enrollment | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Low enrollment – 0-7,999 | 162 | 43.3 |
| Medium enrollment – 8,000-15,999 | 84 | 22.5 |
| High enrollment – 16,000 and up | 128 | 34.2 |
| Total | 374 | 100.0 |

Respondents were asked to specify gender in question nine. Of the 383 individuals who provided this information, there were 200 females (52.2%) and 183 males (47.8%). The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Gender of Respondents

| Gender | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Male | 183 | 47.8 |
| Female | 200 | 52.2 |
| Total | 383 | 100.0 |

Because the survey examined graduate school preparation, respondents were asked to indicate the highest degree received to verify the assumption that most members of ASCA had a Master's degree or higher level of education. The majority of respondents (N = 270, 69.8%) had a Master's degree and 89 respondents (22.9 %) listed a degree higher than a Master's degree confirming that the clear majority of respondents had graduate school training which is essential to answering the research questions related to ethical training in graduate school. Only 24 respondents (6.2%) held a Bachelor's degree.

Demographic information related to ethnicity was requested in survey item 11. Of the 386 respondents who shared the information, the majority (N = 318, 82.4%) were Caucasian. The low response rate from other ethnic categories limited generalizability of

the findings to underrepresented populations. The breakdown for ethnic background is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Ethnic Background

| Ethnicity | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| African American | 39 | 10.1 |
| Asian American | 3 | 0.8 |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | 1 | 0.3 |
| Caucasian | 318 | 82.4 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 13 | 3.4 |
| Native American | 1 | 0.3 |
| More than one ethnicity | 2 | 0.5 |
| International | 2 | 0.5 |
| Other | 7 | 1.8 |
| Total | 386 | 100.1 |

Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive and inferential analysis examined the data in light of the research questions designed to test the applicability of Kitchener's model to the ethical decision making processes of student conduct administrators. Empirical data are organized around the related research question.

Factors Influencing Ethical Decision Making

Descriptive statistics were used to examine research question one: What are the factors influencing the ethical decision making processes of student conduct administrators? This information was obtained in survey item 12.

More than any other factor, respondents (N = 173, 63.6%) reported that their professional code of ethics “almost always” influences their decision making. Legal ramifications “almost always” influence the decision making of 133 respondents (48.5%).

The results further revealed that personal values factor heavily in the ethical decision making of many student conduct administrators as indicated by the number of respondents who frequently (N = 92, 33.7%) or almost always (N = 104, 38.1%) allow their personal values to influence their ethical decision making.

Spiritual beliefs “almost never” influence some respondents (44.1%, N=120) although almost one third (N = 84, 30.7%) of the respondents indicated that their spiritual beliefs influence their ethical decision making “frequently” or “almost always.” This is a little higher than the number of respondents (N = 70, 18.32%) in survey item five who indicated they worked at a church-affiliated private college.

Only 23 (8.6%) respondents indicated that cultural perspectives almost never influence their ethical decision making. Less than 1% of respondents indicated that their professional code of ethics “almost never” influences their ethical decision-making.

The third highest factor was institutional mission with 112 respondents (41.5%) reporting that institutional mission “almost always” influences their decision making. Ethical theories and models were less influential with only 52 respondents (19.2%) referring to ethical theories and models “almost always.” A few respondents (N = 39, 14.4%) “almost never” consult ethical theories or models when resolving ethical dilemmas. Results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5*Influences on Ethical Decision Making*

| Influences | N | Almost Never | Occasionally | Frequently | Almost Always |
|--------------------------|-----|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Personal Values | 273 | 6.6% (18) | 21.6% (59) | 33.7% (92) | 38.1% (104) |
| Spiritual Beliefs | 272 | 44.1% (120) | 25.0% (68) | 18.0% (49) | 12.9% (35) |
| Cultural Perspectives | 269 | 8.6% (23) | 36.4% (98) | 40.9% (110) | 14.1% (38) |
| Prof. Code of Ethics | 272 | 0.4% (1) | 7.4% (20) | 28.7% (78) | 63.6% (173) |
| Institutional Mission | 270 | 1.9% (5) | 18.1% (49) | 38.5% (104) | 41.5% (112) |
| Legal Ramifications | 274 | 2.2% (6) | 14.2% (39) | 35.0% (96) | 48.5% (133) |
| Ethical Theories, Models | 271 | 14.4% (39) | 31.0% (84) | 35.4% (96) | 19.2% (52) |

Ethical Decision Making and Demographic Patterns

Inferential statistical tests examined research question two: Do the ethical decision making processes of student conduct administrators differ by gender, ethnicity, size, or type of institution? The intent was to ascertain if demographic characteristics (independent variables) influenced the dependent variables listed in survey item 12: personal values, spiritual beliefs, cultural perspectives, professional code of ethics, institutional mission, legal ramifications, and ethical models/theories.

Gender. A *t* test was administered to analyze the impact of gender as an independent variable on the influences of ethical decision making (survey item 12). Using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Almost Never* to 4 = *Almost Always*, respondents indicated the extent to which certain factors may influence their process of ethical decision making.

The means and standard deviations were computed for each of the variables. A .05 level of statistical significance was used. As shown in Table 6, there was a statistically significant level of difference between men and women for two variables.

The most statistically significant finding related to the influence of ethical models and theories $t(265) = -2.408, p = .017$, in which women ($M = 2.74$) were more likely to be influenced by ethical models and theories than men ($M = 2.46$). Women ($M = 3.30$) were also more likely than men ($M = 3.10$) to indicated that they are influenced by the mission statement of their institution which was statistically significant at the .05 level $t(264) = -2.048, p = .041$.

Table 6

Influences of Gender on Ethical Decision Making

| Values | Men | | Women | | T | df | p |
|-------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|--------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | | | |
| Personal Values | 3.1 | 0.903 | 2.98 | 0.942 | 1.126 | .267 | 0.261 |
| Spiritual Values | 1.92 | 1.008 | 2.08 | 1.113 | -1.265 | 266 | 0.207 |
| Cultural Perspectives | 2.55 | 0.817 | 2.67 | 0.838 | -1.109 | 263 | 0.268 |
| Code of Ethics | 3.49 | 0.658 | 3.62 | 0.621 | -1.707 | 266 | 0.089 |
| Mission Statement | 3.1 | 0.793 | 3.3 | 0.773 | -2.052 | 264 | .041* |
| Legal Ramifications | 3.27 | 0.806 | 3.35 | 0.765 | -0.881 | 268 | 0.379 |
| Ethical Models/Theories | 2.46 | 0.968 | 2.74 | 0.922 | -2.408 | 265 | 0.170* |

Ethnicity. Pearson's chi square test for independence of cell distribution frequencies was administered to examine the effect of ethnicity on ethical decision making processes. No statistically significant findings resulted from chi square analysis of the relationship between ethnicity and the factors influencing the ethical decision

making processes of student conduct administrators. Because Caucasians represented 82.8% (N = 318) respondents, the independent variables used were Caucasian and non-Caucasian.

Only use of ethical theories and models approached significance $\chi(3, N = 71) = 6.785, p = .079$ with Caucasian respondents (N = 44, 84.6%) reporting they “almost always” use ethical theories and models as compared to non-Caucasians (N = 8, 15.4%) who reported “almost always” referring to ethical theories and models.

Institutional size. To examine a possible connection between enrollment size and the factors influencing ethical decision making, institutions were categorized according to whether enrollment was above or below the average enrollment of 15,589. Only one factor, institutional mission, was found to be significant $\chi(3, N = 270) = 9.658, p = .022$. Respondents (N = 80, 71.4%) from smaller schools (under 15,589) were more likely than respondents (N = 32, 28.6%) from larger schools to state they “almost always” are influenced by institutional mission. Perhaps, institutional mission more readily permeates campus culture in smaller institutions.

The following factors were not influential: personal values, $\chi(3, N = 273) = .1, p = .992$; spiritual beliefs, $\chi(3, N = 272) = 2.399, p = .494$; cultural perspectives, $\chi(3, N = 269) = 1.328, p = .723$; legal ramifications, $\chi(3, N = 274) = .902, p = .825$; ethical models and theories, $\chi(3, N = 271) = 7.076, p = .070$; and preferential treatment, $\chi(3, N = 274) = 1.489, p = .685$.

Institutional type. A chi square analysis of institutional type and factors influencing ethical decision making revealed two statistically significant findings.

Respondents affiliated with public institutions indicated spiritual factors “almost never” influence their decision making (N = 86, 31.6%) as compared to respondents from private institutions who reported spiritual beliefs “almost never” influence their decision making (N = 34, 12.5%), $\chi(3, N = 272) = -13.876, p = .003$. The result is consistent with the clearly defined values articulated and practiced by private institutions, many of which are faith-based.

Respondents from public institutions “almost never” or only “occasionally” consider cultural perspectives (N = 90, 33.4%) when making decisions as compared to respondents from private institutions (N = 31, 11.5%) who “never” or only “occasionally” consider cultural perspectives, $\chi(3, N = 269) = 9.219, p = .027$. It is unclear why respondents from public institutions are less inclined to be influenced by cultural perspectives. Possibly, respondents working in private schools have more latitude to consider individual circumstances.

No significant correlations were found between type of institutional affiliation and personal values, $\chi(3, N = 273) = 6.468, p = .091$; professional codes, $\chi(3, N = 272) = 4.620, p = .202$; mission, $\chi(3, N = 270) = 1.708, p = .635$; or legal ramifications, $\chi(3, N = 274) = 3.850, p = .278$.

As part of institutional type, the study looked at the office location of respondents within the institution using a chi square test shown in Table 7. A statistically significant difference was found between office location and the extent to which personal values influence respondents’ decision making processes, $\chi(9, N = 272) = 19.538, p = .021$.

Results suggest the respondents in Residential Life may be less likely than respondents working out of other disciplinary offices to be influenced by personal values in decision making. A possible explanation may be the uniform sanctioning grids often used by Residential Life staff to ensure that sanctions for routine violations, such as underage drinking, are assigned consistently.

Table 7

Correlations Between Respondents' Office Location and the Extent to Which Respondents are Influenced by Personal Values in Decision Making

| | Almost Never N (%) | Occasionally N (%) | Frequently N (%) | Almost Always N (%) | χ | Φ |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--------|--------|
| Conduct Office | 11 (8.3) | 22 (16.7) | 46 (34.8) | 53 (40.2) | 19.538 | .021* |
| Residential Life | 4 (10.3) | 17 (43.6) | 7 (17.9) | 11 (28.2) | | |
| Student Activities | 0 | 0 | 1 (33.3) | 2 (66.7) | | |
| Other | 3 (3.1) | 20 (20.4) | 37 (37.8) | 38 (38.8) | | |

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

No significant findings were observed between office location and the extent to which respondents were influenced by spiritual beliefs, $\chi(9, N = 271) = 13.806, p = .129$; cultural perspectives, $\chi(9, N = 268) = 7.568, p = .578$; professional code of ethics, $\chi(9, N = 271) = 7.279, p = .608$; institutional mission, $\chi(9, N = 269) = 13.384, p = .146$; legal ramifications, $\chi(9, N = 273) = 9.840, p = .364$; ethical theories, $\chi(9, N = 270) = 5.906, p = .744$; or pressure to give preferential treatment, $\chi(9, N = 273) = 10.772, p = .292$.

Ethical Theories and Use of ASAC Principles

Inferential statistics were used to answer research question three; is there a relationship between respondents' reported reliance on ethical theories in decision-making and use of ASCA principles? The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient test was conducted to evaluate possible correlations for respondents' use of ethical theories and models (survey item 12 g.) with respondents' knowledge of ASCA principles (survey item 19) and/or use of ASCA principles (survey item 20).

When using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient test, the resulting "r" coefficient of correlation indicates the confidence level of statistical significance. Cohen (1988) defined the level of confidence as follows: $r = .50 - 1.0$ (high); $r = .30 - .49$ (medium), and $r = .10 - .29$ (low) correlation. Confidence is further influenced by the degrees of freedom.

The results in Table 8 indicate a statistically significant correlation $r(267) = .326$, $p < .001$ between the extent to which respondents are influenced by ethical theories and their use of ASCA principles for resolving ethical dilemmas. In other words, respondents who said they are influenced by ethical models and theories are much more likely than other respondents to also refer to ASCA principles and standards when resolving ethical dilemmas. This could be interpreted to mean that respondents who recognize the importance of models and theories see relevance and value in ASCA principles.

Table 8

Pearson's Product Moment Correlations for Extent to Which Respondents' Decisions are Influenced by Ethical Theories with Knowledge/Application of ASCA Principles

| | Extent to Which Ethical Theories Influence Respondents' Decisions |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Knowledge of ASCA Principles | .290* |
| Application of ASCA Principles | .326* |

*Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Ethical Theories and Use of ASCA Principles

Inferential statistics were used to answer research question four: Is there a relationship between respondents' reported reliance on ethical theories in decision making and use of Kitchener's principles? The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient test was conducted to determine possible correlations for respondents' use of ethical theories and models (survey item 12 g.) with respondents' use of Kitchener's principles (survey item 22).

The results indicate a statistically significant correlation $r(265) = .310$, $P < .001$ between the extent to which respondents reportedly rely on ethical theories and their use of Kitchener's principles when resolving ethical dilemmas.

The results shown in Table 9 indicate that respondents who incorporate ethical models and theories into their ethical decision making processes are much more likely than other respondents to know about Kitchener's principles and to use them in their

work. This suggests that respondents who value ethical theories and frameworks also endorse Kitchener's principles.

Table 9

Pearson's Product Moment Correlations for Extent to Which Respondents' Decisions are Influenced by Ethical Theories with Knowledge/Application of Kitchener's Principles

| | Extent to Which Ethical Theories Influence Respondents' Decisions |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Knowledge of Kitchener's Principles | .204* |
| Application of Kitchener's Principles | .310* |

*Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Knowledge and Use of ASCA Principles

Inferential statistics examined research question five: Is there a relationship between respondents' reported knowledge of ASCA principles and actual use of ASCA principles and/or Kitchener's principles in decision making? Specifically, this question looked at correlations between respondents' knowledge of ASCA principles and whether they actually refer to ASCA principles and/or Kitchener's principles when resolving ethical dilemmas. This was important to determine because it cannot be assumed that knowledge translates into application. Student affairs practitioners study many ethical codes, principles, and theories in graduate school that may fall into disuse.

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to assess respondents' knowledge and use of ASCA principles as well as Kitchener's principles. The results showed a strong correlation between familiarity and utilization as depicted in Table 10.

Table 10

Pearson's Product Moment Correlations for Respondents' Knowledgeable of ASCA Principles with Application of ASCA and/or Kitchener's Principles

| | Knowledge of ASCA Principles |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Application of Principles | |
| - ASCA Principles | .527* |
| - Kitchener's Principles | .339* |

*Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Use of Both ASCA Principles and Kitchener's Principals

Inferential statistics explored research question six: Do respondents who use ASCA principles in decision making also know about and use Kitchener's principles in decision making? This question considered whether respondents who use ASCA principles to resolve ethical dilemmas also know about and find value in the application of Kitchener's principles.

The results of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation show a statistically significant relationship that is reported in Table 11. This finding is very important in the study as it shows that respondents who refer to ASCA principles when resolving ethical dilemmas also find relevance in Kitchener's principles as applied to the practice of student conduct administration.

Table 11

Pearson's Product Moment Correlations for Respondents' Application of ASCA Principles with Application of ASCA and/or Kitchener's Principles

| | Application of ASCA Principles |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Knowledge of Kitchener's Principles | .221* |
| Application of Kitchener's Principles | .363* |

*Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Knowledge and Use of Kitchener's Principles

Inferential statistics examined research question seven: Do respondents with knowledge of Kitchener's principles use Kitchener's principles in decision making? In survey item nine, respondents were asked whether respondents who are familiar with Kitchener's principles actually refer to those principles when attempting to resolve ethical dilemmas.

Results of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation shown in Table 12 were very significant $r(268) = .688, p = 0.01$ indicating that respondents who are most familiar with Kitchener do use Kitchener's principles in the course of their work. This supports that Kitchener's principles can potentially be of value to student conduct administrators when faced with difficult ethical challenges.

Table 12

Pearson's Product Moment Correlations for Respondents' Knowledge of Kitchener's Principles with Application of Kitchener's Principles

| | Respondents' Knowledge of Kitchener's Principles |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Application of Kitchener's Principles | .688* |

*Relation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Graduate School Preparation and Ethical Foundations

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to explore the relationship between graduate school course work in ethics and subsequent use of ethical principles. Research question eight inquired: Is there a correlation between the extent of ethical instruction in graduate school and knowledge/application of ASCA and/or Kitchener's principles?

Descriptives. When asked about their graduate school training, 267 respondents provided information which can be found in Table 13. Only 13 respondents (4.9%) reported receiving "very extensive" training related to ethical theories and models that inform decision making. The majority of respondents (N = 181, 67.8%) characterized their graduate training related to ethical models and theories as "not extensive."

Table 13*Amount of Graduate School Training Related to Ethical Theories and Models*

| Extent of Training | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Not Extensive | 181 | 67.8 |
| Extensive | 73 | 27.3 |
| Very Extensive | 13 | 4.9 |
| Total | 267 | 100.0 |

When asked specifically about their familiarity with the Ethical Principles and Standards of the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA), the majority of respondents were “knowledgeable” (N = 146, 54.7%) or “very knowledgeable” (N=32, 12%). However, approximately one in three respondents (N = 89, 33.3%) who belong to ASCA were not knowledgeable about the Ethical Principles and Standards of the ASCA organization (Table 14).

Table 14*Knowledge of the Ethical Principles and Standards of the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA)*

| Extent of Knowledge | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| Not Knowledgeable | 89 | 33.3 |
| Knowledgeable | 146 | 54.7 |
| Very Knowledgeable | 32 | 12.0 |
| Total | 267 | 100.0 |

Respondents were then asked the extent to which they refer to the Ethical Principles and Standards of the ASCA when attempting to resolve ethical dilemmas (Table 15). Even though the majority of respondents (N = 178, 66.6%) indicated in survey item nineteen that they were knowledgeable about ASCA Ethical Principles and Standards, the majority of respondents (N = 168, 62.2%) said they “almost never” refer to the ASCA Ethical Principles and Standards. Only 18 respondents (N=17, 6.3%) refer to them “frequently” or “almost always” (N = 1, .4%).

Table 15

Use of ASACA Ethical Principles and Standards When Resolving Ethical Dilemmas

| Extent of Use | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Almost Never | 168 | 62.2 |
| Occasionally | 84 | 31.1 |
| Frequently | 17 | 6.3 |
| Almost Always | 1 | 0.4 |
| Total | 270 | 100.0 |

Table 16 shows that respondents (N = 271) were less familiar with Kitchener’s principles than the ASCA principles. Just under 50% of the respondents (N = 135, 49.8%) did not have knowledge of Kitchener’s principles. Only 24 respondents (8.9%) considered themselves “very knowledgeable” of Kitchener’s principles.

Table 16*Knowledge of Kitchener's Five Ethical Principles*

| Extent of Knowledge | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| Not Knowledgeable | 135 | 49.8 |
| Knowledgeable | 112 | 41.3 |
| Very Knowledgeable | 24 | 8.9 |
| Total | 271 | 100.0 |

Even though Kitchener's principles were less well known to respondents than the ASCA principles, more respondents indicated they used Kitchener's principles "frequently" (N = 20, 7.5%) or "almost always" (N = 4, 1.5%) as compared to respondents who refer to the ASCA principles "frequently" (N = 17, 6.3%) or "almost always" (N = 1, .4%). This is noted in Table 17.

Table 17*Use of Kitchener's Principles When Resolving Ethical Dilemmas*

| Extent of Use | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Almost Never | 179 | 66.7 |
| Occasionally | 65 | 24.3 |
| Frequently | 20 | 7.5 |
| Almost Always | 4 | 1.5 |
| Total | 268 | 100.0 |

Inferentials. Pearson's Product Moment Correlations were calculated to determine if the extent of respondents' graduate school preparation correlated with knowledge and application of ASCA principles and/or Kitchener's principles. As noted in Table 18 below, there was a statistically significant correlation at the .01 level.

This finding suggests that respondents who are adhering to high professional standards as demonstrated by knowledge and use of ethical codes, theories, and models also had extensive graduate school preparation. Subsequently, it could be surmised that introduction to ethical codes, theories, and models in graduate school is very important. However, the overwhelming majority of respondents (N = 181, 67.8%) described the extent of their graduate school preparation as "not extensive."

Table 18

Pearson's Product Moment Correlations for Extent of Graduate School Training with Knowledge/Application of ASCA Principles, and Knowledge/Application of Kitchener's Principles

| | Extent of Graduate School Training |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Knowledge of ASCA Principles | .241* |
| Application of ASCA Principles | .229* |
| Knowledge of Kitchener's Principles | .365* |
| Application of Kitchener's Principles | .310* |

*Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data were considered important in this mixed method study to provide richness and depth to the experiences of student conduct administrators. Open-ended

questions were included to provide an opportunity for the generation of new information. It also provided a method of enhancing the validity of the findings.

Earlier in the survey, respondents were asked in survey item 12 which of the listed values and beliefs influenced their decision making in an attempt to address research question two: What are the factors influencing the ethical decision making processes of student conduct administrators? The results of survey item 12 analysis indicated that the majority of respondents rely heavily on personal values. Qualitative inquiry attempted to answer, what are those personal values?

Open-ended survey item 17 asked respondents to list the three most important core values that inform ethical decision making to obtain nuanced information to help answer research question two referenced above. The core values articulated are shown in Table 19.

Out of the 389 respondents, 240 (61.7%) answered open-ended survey item 17. Several different but related values emerged when respondents were asked to identify the core values that inform their ethical decision making.

The majority of respondents (N = 95) mentioned fairness. Also mentioned frequently: Integrity (N = 68); Learning/Growth (N = 60); Honesty (N = 60); adherence to professional codes, mission, or law (N = 57).

Table 19*Core Values that Inform Ethical Decision Making*

| Core Value | Frequency | Rank |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------|
| Fairness | 95 | 1 |
| Integrity | 68 | 2 |
| Learning, Growth | 61 | 3 |
| Honesty | 60 | 4 |
| Professional Codes, Laws... | 57 | 5 |
| Personal Responsibility | 38 | 6 |
| Consistency | 37 | 7 |
| Treat with Respect, Dignity | 36 | 8 |
| Do No Harm, Show Concern | 32 | 9 |
| Objectivity | 32 | 9 |
| Impact on Others, Community | 31 | 11 |
| Social Justice | 31 | 11 |
| Personal Beliefs | 27 | 13 |
| “Do What is Right” | 24 | 14 |
| Safety | 20 | 15 |
| Due Process | 19 | 16 |
| Empathy | 18 | 17 |
| Transparency | 8 | 18 |
| Diversity | 7 | 19 |
| Benefit Others | 6 | 20 |
| Trust | 5 | 21 |
| Others <5 | 47 | |

To further reveal the world of the student conduct administrators, survey item 16 asked respondents to answer research question nine: What are the most challenging ethical dilemmas experienced in the professional lives of student conduct administrators? Respondents were instructed to provide a 2-3 sentence description of the most challenging ethical dilemma they have experienced in their current student conduct position.

A total of 220 respondents answered this question. Open and axial coding techniques were used to identify categories and themes that were reviewed by members of the dissertation committee and a colleague in the researcher's doctoral cohort. The responses readily fit under many of the categories identified by Janosik (2007) in a study of student affairs administrators as depicted in Table 20.

Table 20

Categorical Grouping of Ethical Dilemmas

| Code | Category | Definition |
|------|------------------------------------|---|
| BAL | Balance | Dilemmas related to balancing the rights or interests of different individuals, or the rights of the individual with the rights of those impacted. Example: balancing rights of accused and accuser in a sexual assault case. |
| COI | Conflict of Interest | Dilemmas involving competing interests or role conflicts. Example: hearing a case against an advisee. |
| CONF | Conflict at Work | Disagreement related to philosophy, actions, opinions, or policy. Example: mandate to follow policy inconsistent with best practice or personal values. |
| CVC | Caring Versus Consistency | Dilemmas related to extending compassion for the individual contrasted with expectations of standard, consistent sanctions. Example: considering mitigating factors for one of two students involved in the same incident. |
| INSF | Insufficient Evidence | Dilemmas involving decisions made and actions taken in the absence of reliable evidence. Example: deciding cases in absence of witness cooperation. |
| FAIR | Fairness | Dilemmas pertaining to questions of equality, adherence to process, appropriate sanctions. Example: determining sanctions appropriate and proportional to the violating behavior. |
| ICEP | Inconsistent Enforcement of Policy | Dilemmas involving inconsistent application of policies and procedures. Example: culture of arbitrary sanctions for similar violations. |

Table 20 (continued)

| Code | Category | Definition |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| MS | Misstatement of Facts | Dilemmas centering around misrepresentation, omission or distortion of information. Example: pressure to slant a report a certain way. |
| PAT | Patronage | Dilemmas involving the inappropriate use of power or position to influence the student conduct process. Example: administrative interference with standard disciplinary processes or sanctions. |
| QPRO | Questionable Professional Behavior | Dilemmas related to the behavior of other professionals acting in an unethical manner. Example: interacting with co-workers who are prejudicial in their decision making. |
| RFP | Respect for Privacy | Dilemmas that involve disclosure of private/protected information about others. Example: uncertainty over what to share with parents. |
| ST | Special Treatment | Dilemmas involving the inappropriate granting of exceptions or advantages. Example: pressure from Board of Trustees members, faculty, parents, coaches, or donors to handle a case a certain way. |
| ST - Granted; Denied; Unspecified | | Pertains to whether or not requests for special treatment were granted, denied, or not explained by the respondent. |

Coding Adapted and Modified from Janosik, 2007, p. 291-292.

The most challenging ethical dilemmas are listed related to situations involving Patronage. Typically, this involved being pressured by a high level administrator to handle a situation in a manner that was dismissive of the respondents' philosophy, point of view, or knowledge of best practice. Respondents were torn between their duty to comply with supervisory directives and desire to serve students appropriately.

The next frequently mentioned category was Special Treatment. Respondents shared personal stories of being asked to discipline a certain student in a manner that was inconsistent with how similarly situated students had been treated. The pressure often came from parents, donors, coaches, advocates, advisors, Board of Trustees members, and elected officials who insisted on dismissal of a pending disciplinary case or less severe sanctions. In some situations, a higher authority capitulated to the pressure on appeal. Respondents also shared examples of decisions being changed outside the normal disciplinary process. The third most frequently cited category was Conflict in the Workplace. This encompassed situations where co-workers or supervisors had conflicting views on resolving emotionally charged situations. A summary can be found in Table 21.

Table 21*Most Challenging Ethical Dilemmas Reported by Respondents*

| Theme | N | % | Rank |
|--|-----|-------|------|
| Patronage | 72 | 22.8 | 1 |
| Special Treatment | 58 | 18.4 | 2 |
| Special Treatment Granted N = 24 | | | |
| Special Treatment Denied N = 14 | | | |
| Special Treatment Not Specified N = 20 | | | |
| Conflicts | 33 | 10.4 | 3 |
| Caring Versus Consistency | 25 | 7.9 | 4 |
| Fairness | 25 | 7.9 | 4 |
| Questionable Professional Behavior | 20 | 6.3 | 6 |
| Inconsistent Enforcement of Policy | 19 | 6.0 | 7 |
| Balance | 17 | 5.4 | 8 |
| Insufficient Evidence | 12 | 3.8 | 9 |
| Respect for Privacy | 11 | 3.5 | 10 |
| None Recalled by Respondent | 11 | 3.5 | 10 |
| Conflict of Interest | 9 | 2.8 | 12 |
| Misstatement of Facts | 4 | 1.3 | 13 |
| Total | 316 | 100.0 | |

The study also addressed research question ten: What are the most common ethical dilemmas experienced in the professional lives of student conduct administrators? Survey item 17 asked respondents to provide a 2-3 sentence description of the most common ethical dilemmas they have experienced in their current student conduct position. A total of 220 respondents answered this question.

Interestingly, the most common ethical dilemma (Caring versus Consistency) differed slightly from the most challenging ethical dilemma (Patronage) identified by survey respondents in survey item 16. Examples of dilemmas related to Caring versus

Consistency typically dealt with situations where respondents were conflicted between their desire to be consistent and their desire to be humanistic. Student conduct administrators described the ethical dilemma as a conflict between the principles of justice and benevolence.

Many examples were shared of situations where a hearing officer knew that a harsh sanction was deserved but the student's behavior was related to an underlying psychological disability, absence of family support, poverty, or other mitigating personal factors. The resulting dilemma dealt with the extent to which a student conduct administrator should consider mitigating circumstances while preserving their core values of personal responsibility and accountability. Student conduct administrators wrestled with the question of how to be empathic without enabling unacceptable behavior.

The ethical dilemmas most commonly experienced by respondents are summarized in Table 22.

Table 22*Most Common Ethical Dilemmas Reported by Respondents (N = 220)*

| Theme | N | % | Rank |
|--|-----|-------|------|
| Caring Versus Consistency | 43 | 15.6 | 1 |
| Patronage | 41 | 15.2 | 2 |
| Special Treatment | 41 | 15.2 | 2 |
| Special Treatment Granted N = 9 | | | |
| Special Treatment Denied N = 6 | | | |
| Special Treatment Not Specified N = 26 | | | |
| Fairness | 31 | 11.5 | 4 |
| Conflicts (Other) | 29 | 10.7 | 5 |
| Conflict of Interest | 20 | 7.4 | 6 |
| None Recalled by Respondent | 20 | 7.4 | 6 |
| Balance | 13 | 4.8 | 8 |
| Inconsistent Enforcement of Policy | 12 | 4.4 | 9 |
| Respect for Privacy | 9 | 3.3 | 10 |
| Insufficient Evidence | 6 | 2.2 | 11 |
| Questionable Professional Behavior | 4 | 1.5 | 12 |
| Misstatement of Facts | 1 | 0.4 | 13 |
| Total | 270 | 100.0 | |

Responses to open-ended survey items 15 and 16 also revealed common topical issues of concern. Sexual assault cases were mentioned as being very difficult to address due to contradictory evidence, media coverage, and pressure from interested third parties, including advocates and attorneys. Several respondents discussed their experiences investigating cases involving high profile student-athletes and fending off pushy coaches.

Inappropriate parental involvement was another often cited challenge.

Respondents recalled incidents where parents expected special treatment for their son or daughter because the parent or grandparent was an affluent community member, a

generous benefactor, an alum, a politician, an attorney, a faculty member, or a Board of Trustees member. Respondents were bothered when such requests were arbitrarily granted by other institutional officials causing respondents to ponder whether to let it go, take the issue to a higher authority, or even the media. Rationalization for granting the requests included such things as fear of alienating privileged constituents and an interest in keeping the situation low profile to protect the image of the college or university.

Several respondents talked about being pressured by faculty to find a student responsible for cheating in the absence of compelling evidence. There were reports of faculty insisting on harsher sanctions for a particular student than what would typically be assigned in that sort of situation.

Respondents working in an Office of Student Conduct mentioned being challenged by staff in Residential Life who were dissatisfied with the decision or sanctions in a case that had been referred to the Office of Student Conduct by Residential Life. Respondents felt pressured to find referred students responsible and immediately remove the student from housing or the school despite questions about whether such action was warranted.

Many respondents referenced cases related to drugs and alcohol, especially when respondents' personal beliefs were in conflict with their institution's policies on underage drinking, marijuana use, and parental notification. Situations related to cross-cultural issues, hazing, and mental health complications were described by a few respondents.

Eleven respondents reported that they had not experienced any common or challenging ethical dilemmas on the job which seemed unusual given the nature of the

work. Two of the 11 respondents had only been in their position for a few months which could be an explanation. The small number of respondents limits any meaningful conclusion, but it is interesting to note that nine of the 11 respondents were male, and nine out of 11 respondents worked at a public institution.

Table 23 shows a side-by-side comparison the most challenging and most commonly reported ethical dilemmas of student conduct administrators.

Table 23

Comparison of Issues Identified in the Most Challenging and Most Common Ethical Dilemmas Reported

| Issues Identified in the Most Challenging Dilemmas | | | Issues Identified in the Most Common Dilemmas | | |
|--|-----|-------|---|-----|-------|
| | N | % | | N | % |
| Political Interference | 34 | 24.5 | Alcohol/Drug Cases | 25 | 24.5 |
| Sexual Assault Cases | 29 | 20.9 | Situations Involving Athletes | 18 | 17.6 |
| Situations Involving Athletes | 26 | 18.7 | Interactions with Parents, Relatives | 16 | 15.7 |
| Interactions with Parents, Relatives | 17 | 12.2 | Situations with Racial Factors | 11 | 10.8 |
| Situations with Racial Factors | 8 | 5.8 | Faculty Interactions | 10 | 9.8 |
| Communication with Attorneys | 7 | 5.0 | Political Interference | 10 | 9.8 |
| Hazing | 6 | 4.3 | Sexual Assault Cases | 6 | 5.9 |
| Faculty Interactions | 5 | 3.6 | Hazing | 2 | 2.0 |
| Alcohol/Drug Cases | 4 | 2.9 | Mental Health Issues | 2 | 2.0 |
| Mental Health Issues | 3 | 2.2 | Communication with Attorneys | 2 | 2.0 |
| Total | 139 | 100.1 | Total | 102 | 100.1 |

Qualitative analysis of open-ended responses to survey items 15-16 addressed research question eleven: Do the ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators in their professional lives fit within Kitchener's model of ethical principles?

Using a rubric developed by Janosik et al. (2004), the coded ethical dilemmas reported by respondents were grouped into categories linked to Kitchener's principles. This study found a close association between the type of ethical dilemmas reported by respondents and Kitchener's principles, particularly Justice. Table 24 depicts how the categorical themes that emerged in analysis of survey item 15-16 coincide with Kitchener's principles.

Table 24

Categorical Connections to Kitchener's Principles

| Identified Themes | Kitchener's Principles |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Fairness | |
| Patronage | |
| Special Treatment | |
| Conflict of Interest | Justice |
| Conflicts (Other) | |
| Inconsistent Enforcement | |
| Insufficient Evidence | |
| Balance | |
| Caring Versus Consistency | Beneficence |
| Respect for Privacy | Autonomy |
| Misstatement of Facts | Fidelity |
| Questionable Professional Behavior | Nonmaleficence |

Problems related to Fairness, Patronage, Special Treatment, Conflict of Interest, Inconsistent Enforcement, Conflict over Policy, and Balance of competing rights of impacted individuals closely aligned with Kitchener's principle of Justice. Concerns about being consistent while taking into account the unique needs and well-being of the student fit under Kitchener's principle of Beneficence. Respect for Privacy related to Kitchener's principle of Autonomy. Issues stemming from Misstatement of Facts fell

under Kitchener's principle of Fidelity. Questionable Professional Behavior fit Kitchener's principle of Nonmaleficence.

Summary

- Student conduct administrators are well educated; over 90% of respondents held a Master's degree or higher.
- Over 90% of student conduct administrators reported that their process of ethical decision is frequently or almost always influenced by a professional code of ethics.
- Two-thirds of student conduct administrators reported that their process of ethical decision making is frequently or almost always influenced by their personal values.
- Over half of all student conduct administrators reported that their process of ethical decision making is frequently or almost always influenced by cultural perspectives, institutional mission, and legal ramifications.
- Only 14% of student conduct administrators reported that their process of ethical decision making is almost never influenced by ethical models and theories; however, less than 20% of respondents are frequently influenced by ethical models and theories.
- Respondents at private institutions were much more likely to report that their process of ethical decision making is frequently or always influenced by spiritual beliefs.
- Approximately two-thirds of respondents reported that their graduate school training related to ethical theories and models was not extensive; less than 5% received "very extensive" training.

- Despite having paid membership in the Association for Student Conduct Administration, one out of three respondents identified themselves as “not knowledgeable” in ASCA Ethical Principles and Standards.
- Two-thirds of respondents acknowledged that they “almost never” refer to ASCA Ethical Principles and Standards when attempting to resolve ethical dilemmas.
- About half of the respondents reported having knowledge of Kitchener’s five ethical principles.
- A statistically significant relationship ($p < .001$) was found between respondents who reported being influenced by ethical models/theories and the extent to which they referred to ASCA Ethical Principles and Standards when attempting to resolve dilemmas.
- A statistically significant relationship ($p < .01$) was found between the extent of respondents’ knowledge of ASCA principles and whether they refer to ASCA Ethical Principles and Standards and/or Kitchener’s principles.
- A statistically significant relationship ($p < .01$) was found between respondents who refer to ASCA Ethical Principles and Standards and their knowledge and use of Kitchener’s principles when resolving ethical dilemmas..
- A statistically significant relationship ($p < .01$) was found between the extent of respondents’ knowledge of Kitchener’s principles and their use of Kitchener’s principles when resolving ethical dilemmas.

- A statistically significant relationship ($p < .01$) was found between the extent of ethical instruction in graduate school and knowledge/use of ASCA Ethical Principles and Standards.
- A statistically significant relationship ($p < .01$) was found between the extent of ethical instruction in graduate school and knowledge/use of Kitchener's principles.
- Women were significantly more likely than men ($p < .05$) to report being influenced in their ethical decision making by ethical models/theories and institutional mission.
- Respondents from smaller schools ($p < .05$) were more likely than respondents from larger schools to report being influenced by institutional mission.
- The following core values were most frequently cited by respondents as factors that inform their ethical decision-making: fairness, integrity, learning/growth, honesty, adherence to professional codes, mission, or law.
- Respondents indicated that their most challenging ethical dilemmas involved Patronage, followed by requests for Special Treatment and Conflicts in the Workplace.
- Respondents indicated that their most common ethical dilemmas deal with Caring versus Consistency followed by Patronage and requests for Special Treatment.
- The most challenging issues underlying ethical dilemmas were identified as political interference, sexual assault cases, situations involving athletes, and interactions with parents or other family members.

- The most common issues underlying ethical dilemmas were identified as alcohol/drug cases, situations involving athletes, interactions with parents or other family members, and situations with race related factors.
- Categorical grouping of the ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators fit well under Kitchener's principles, particularly Justice.

Chapter V

Discussion

This concluding chapter of the dissertation restates the problem, reviews the methodology, and summarizes the results. Also included is an interpretation of the results, relationship to previous research, implications, and recommendations for further study.

Statement of the Problem

The extent to which professional codes and ethical frameworks are used by student conduct administrators when faced with ethical dilemmas is largely unknown. Similarly, there is a paucity of research in the application of substantive ethical models to the practice of student affairs. Because knowledge and use of ethical models can enhance professionalism, this study attempted to better understand the type of ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators and if theories of ethical decision making are being applied.

Previous researchers have postulated that Karen Kitchener's five ethical principles provide a helpful rubric for ethical decision making, particularly in the fields of medicine, psychology, and business. This study examined the applicability of Kitchener's principles to the practice of student conduct administration.

The following research questions provided the framework of inquiry:

1. What are the factors influencing the ethical decision making processes of student conduct administrators?

2. Do the ethical decision making processes of student conduct administrators differ by gender, ethnicity, size, or type of institution?
3. Is there a relationship between respondents' reported reliance on ethical theories in decision making and use of ASCA principles?
4. Is there a relationship between respondents' reported reliance on ethical theories in decision making and use of Kitchener's principles?
5. Is there a relationship between respondents' reported knowledge of ASCA principles and actual use of ASCA principles and/or Kitchener's principles in decision making?
6. Do respondents who use ASCA principles in decision making also know and use Kitchener's principles in decision making?
7. Do respondents with knowledge of Kitchener's principles use the principles in decision making?
8. Is there a correlation between the extent of ethical instruction in graduate school and knowledge/application of ASCA and/or Kitchener's principles?
9. What are the most challenging ethical dilemmas experienced in the professional lives of student conduct administrators?
10. What are the most common ethical dilemmas experienced in the professional lives of student conduct administrators?
11. Do the ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators in their professional lives fit within Kitchener's model of ethical principles?

Review of Methodology

This mixed method study used a researcher-developed survey instrument with closed-ended, Likert-scale items to generate quantitative data and open-ended questions for qualitative data. The purpose of quantitative study was to obtain empirical findings from a census-type survey that could be generalized to all members of ASCA. Qualitative data provided a rich, thick description of the phenomenon of ethical decision making as experienced by those who participated in the study. The researcher is a member of ASCA and an insider to the phenomenon with 16 years experience in the field of student conduct.

The survey instrument developed by the researcher was entitled *Ethical Dilemmas of Student Conduct Administrators*. The survey is comprised of demographic questions and items considered germane to the topic based on a review of the literature.

Trustworthiness of the survey instrument was bolstered by conducting a pilot study at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The survey instrument was emailed to a convenience sample of 28 staff that handles student conduct issues.

After the researcher obtained permission from the ASCA research committee to use the survey instrument, the central office of ASCA sent an email invitation with a link to the survey to the 1,595 professionals who belong to ASCA during Spring semester 2011. When the survey closed, Survey Monkey data were entered into a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet and uploaded into PASW, Version 18, (formerly called SPSS) for descriptive and inferential analysis. Of the 1,595 individuals who received an email inviting them to participate, a total of 389 (24.38 %) responded.

The narrative responses from open-ended questions were analyzed line by line using grounded theory techniques of constant comparison. Categories emerged that closely aligned with themes identified in Janosik's 2007 study of the ethical dilemmas reported by members of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. Coding analysis was shared with members of the dissertation committee and a peer in the doctoral cohort to check for accuracy. Frequencies were then calculated for each category.

Discussion of Findings

Interpretation of the Findings

The majority of respondents in this study (N = 173, 63.6%) attested they are influenced by their professional code of ethics more than any other factor listed when resolving ethical dilemmas. These results are puzzling given that respondents (N=168, 62.2%) also acknowledged that they "almost never" refer to ASCA Ethical Principles and Standards. This begs the question of whether respondents are overestimating how often they refer to professional codes or possibly referring to codes of professional organizations other than ASCA.

Respondents also reported being heavily influenced by legal ramifications (N=133, 48.5%) and institutional mission (N = 112, 41.5%). The ASCA Ethical Principles and Standards emphasize legal due process and adherence to institutional mission, suggesting respondents are following best practice.

Over two-thirds of respondents acknowledged they "frequently" or "almost always" refer to their personal values when resolving ethical dilemmas. When asked a

qualitative question about their core values, respondents identified fairness, integrity, learning/growth, honesty, and adherence to professional codes, institutional mission, and laws. The qualitative responses corroborate and lend validity to the quantitative responses suggesting that respondents highly value educational discipline. Student conduct administrators seemingly desire to hold students accountable with meaningful consequences designed to teach, not punish.

Less than 20% of respondents stated they were “almost always” influenced by spiritual beliefs, cultural perspectives, and ethical theories/models. With the exception of faith-based schools, it is understandable that spiritual beliefs would not weigh heavily due to separation of church and state. However, the devaluation of cultural perspectives and ethical theories/models indicates that respondents are not as cognizant of these influences as they should be, as per professional codes of ethics.

This study also looked at how the independent variables of gender, ethnicity, size, or type of institution might influence the dependent variables influencing ethical decision making (personal values, spiritual beliefs, cultural perspectives, professional code of ethics, institutional mission, legal ramifications, and ethical models/theories). Of greatest interest was the finding that women were significantly more likely than men to be influenced in their ethical decision making by ethical theories/models ($p = .01$) and institutional mission ($p = .04$). Similarly, the influence of professional code of ethics approached significance ($p = .08$). These findings are counter to Gilligan’s (1982) research where women look deeper into an ethic of caring as opposed to laws and principles when attempting to resolve a multifaceted ethical dilemma.

No statistically significant correlations were found between different ethnic categories and the independent variables listed in the survey. The low response rate of under-represented groups limited meaningful comparison.

Respondents working at institutions with enrollments under 16,000 were significantly more likely than respondents at larger institutions ($p = .02$) to report being frequently influenced by institutional mission. It is proffered that smaller schools may be more homogenous in cultural values and norms. Communication of institutional mission may also be easier to promulgate on a smaller campus.

Further, the results revealed a statistically significant correlation between the extent to which respondents are influenced by ethical theories and whether they refer to ASCA principles ($p < .001$) and Kitchener's principles ($p < .001$) when attempting to resolve ethical dilemmas. The results suggest that respondents who are well versed in ethical models and theories choose to apply ASCA principles as well as Kitchener's principles in their work. This seems to show that individuals who comprehend ethical theories and models feel that ASCA principles and Kitchener's principles are germane to the practice of student conduct.

Strong correlations ($p < .001$) were found between respondents' reported knowledge of ASCA principles and respondents' application of ASCA principles in ethical decision making. Likewise, respondents who are knowledgeable about Kitchener's principles were significantly more likely ($p < .01$) to refer to Kitchener's principles when attempting to resolve ethical dilemmas. These findings are important

because it shows that respondents' degree of familiarity with these principles translates into action.

Additionally, there was a statistically significant correlation ($p < .01$) between respondents who refer to ASCA principles and respondents who refer to Kitchener's principles. This further supports the supposition of this study that student conduct administrators would find Kitchener's principles useful in the same way ASCA principles are useful when an ethical dilemma presents itself.

Not surprisingly, a statistically significant correlation ($p < .01$) was found between the extent of respondents' graduate school preparation and their knowledge and use of ASCA and Kitchener's principles. It can be deduced that professional preparation programs educate students on the importance of theoretical foundations that subsequently shape professional dispositions throughout a student's career. Introduction to ethical theories and models can have a lasting effect. Unfortunately, over two-thirds of respondents reported that their ethical instruction in graduate school was not extensive.

When respondents were asked to identify their most challenging ethical dilemma, the most frequently cited category was "Patronage" which involved being pressured by a high level administrator to handle a situation in a manner that was dismissive of the respondents' philosophy, point of view, or knowledge of best practice. The second most challenging category was "Special Treatment." This consisted of being approached by parents, donors, coaches, advocates, advisors, Board of Trustees members, and elected officials requesting or demanding preferential treatment for a particular conduct student. Several of the incidents described by respondents involved inappropriate administrative

interference at top levels of administration which is quite disconcerting. The documentation of this phenomenon will hopefully generate further conversation.

The most common ethical dilemma reported was “Caring versus Consistency” followed by Patronage and Special Treatment. Student conduct administrators described the difficulty of trying to treat all students the same while allowing for mitigating circumstances. This personal angst speaks volumes about the respect, genuine concern, and positive regard that student conduct administrators hold for students.

The most challenging and most common ethical dilemmas fit under Kitchener’s principles, thereby demonstrating that student conduct administrators could find Kitchener’s model practical when weighing competing interests. This is not to imply Kitchener’s model is the only, or even the best, framework; however, this model shows much promise as a tool for making ethical decisions when the most prudent and virtuous course of action is unclear.

Relationship to Previous Studies

Kitchener (1985), Kohlberg (1984), and Rest (1986) all theorized that justice is the essence of moral decision making. Consistent with these theories, the findings of this study confirmed that the majority of the most challenging ethical dilemmas reported by student conduct administrators center around issues of justice. To resolve an ethical dilemma, student conduct administrators must ask themselves what is fair, just, and equitable. Thus, the theories of Kitchener, Kohlberg, and Rest provide a model for assessing alternatives in challenging situations with ethical implications.

By contrast, the most common ethical dilemmas reported in this study related to balancing care with consistency. Student conduct administrators shared their desire to be consistent in sanctioning while recognizing that sensitivity to mitigating circumstances should also factor into the outcome. Gilligan (1982) is relevant in this regard. Gilligan argued that higher order moral reasoning must go beyond what seems just. The moral approach conceptualized by Gilligan takes into consideration individual circumstances and extends compassion. Kitchener's (1985) principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence also pertain. Kitchener posited that one should do no harm above all else.

Dalton and Healy (1984) surveyed student affairs administrators in an effort to identify the core values that influence student disciplinary sanctions. The core values mentioned in the Dalton and Healy study were a desire to promote personal responsibility, fairness, respect, and personal growth. Remarkably similar results were obtained in this study of student conduct administrators. Core values identified included: fairness, integrity, learning/growth, honesty, and adherence to professional codes, mission, or law.

This mixed method study produced somewhat different results from a qualitative study of values by Kelly (2005). Kelly found that student affairs administrators were more influenced by personal, professional and faith-based values than by professional codes and standards. By comparison, this study of student conduct administrators revealed that personal values are very influential, but less so than professional code of

ethics. A possible explanation may be the emphasis student conduct administrators place on codes, policies, and procedures in all aspects of their work.

Another finding of the study revealed that the overwhelming majority of respondents (N = 251, 92.3%) were frequently or almost always influenced by their professional code of ethics. This contrasted sharply with Bodenhorn's 2006 study of elementary and high school counselors in the Virginia public schools - only 8% of the counselors participating in Bodenhorn's survey indicated that they frequently refer to their professional code of ethics when attempting to resolve an ethical dilemma. Perhaps, student conduct administrators find the ethical code of their profession more useful to their work.

This study supported the findings of Janosik et al. (2004) and Janosik (2007) who analyzed the ethical dilemmas reported by randomly selected members of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (Table 25). Ethical dilemmas dealing with justice and beneficence were most often mentioned in this study as well as the two NASPA studies referenced above. Fidelity was the third largest category cited by respondents in the NASPA study. By contrast, respondents in this study disclosed more dilemmas related to autonomy and nonmaleficence.

Table 25

Comparison of Challenging and Common Dilemmas Research Findings with Janosik, Creamer, and Humphrey (2004) and Janosik (2007) Research Findings

| Kitchener's Principles | Challenging Dilemmas N (%) | Common Dilemmas N (%) | Janosik et al. N (%) |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Justice | 245 (80.3) | 193 (77.2) | 162 (32.4) |
| Beneficence | 25 (8.2) | 43 (17.2) | 118 (23.6) |
| Fidelity | 4 (1.3) | 1 (0.4) | 113 (22.6) |
| Autonomy | 11 (3.6) | 9 (3.6) | 71 (14.4) |
| Nonmaleficence | 20 (6.6) | 4 (1.6) | 36 (7.2) |
| Total | 305 (100) | 250 (100) | 500 (100) |

Limitations

The response rate (N = 389, 24.38%) to this online survey was low. Almost one-third of respondents who answered the demographic questions at the beginning of the survey did not answer the important questions that followed regarding ethical decision making. More data may have been generated by putting the demographic questions at the end of the survey, but this would have severely limited statistical analysis if the respondents had ignored the demographic questions.

The survey instrument was designed by the researcher. Also a post hoc analysis of the instrument with survey respondents was not done to determine if questions were interpreted as intended.

The majority of respondents were Caucasian with less than 1% representation from Asian Americans, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, Native

American, and International. This under-representation limits analysis of the role ethnicity may play in the ethical decision making of these groups.

This study conceptualized an ethical dilemma as a difficult choice between competing but legitimate interests; however, the survey instrument did not provide respondents with a definition of an ethical dilemma. Some of the answers to open-ended questions dealt with making a choice between right or wrong, rather than a true ethical dilemma.

Finally, the study relied on self-reporting which can be less reliable than testing or independent observation. Even though respondents were promised confidentiality and anonymity, respondents may have been reticent to reveal too much personal information. Specifically, some respondents may have been embarrassed to admit lack of familiarity with ASCA principles or Kitchener's principles.

Recommendations for Educators

This study found that student conduct administrators value fairness, integrity, justice, and educational discipline; however, many do not refer to ethical models premised on these core values. Respondents also revealed limited exposure to ethical instruction in graduate school. Following from these premises, recommendations include greater emphasis on ethical training and mentoring in graduate school programs. A required course in ethical theories and models would be a good starting point but infusion throughout the curriculum would be more impactful.

Another recommendation would be expanded training opportunities organized by professional organizations such as ASCA. Topics could include: applying ethical theory

to practice, navigating demands for preferential treatment, systematic resolution of ethical dilemmas, and moral dimensions of decision making.

It is also apparent that student conduct administrators face many dilemmas when adjudicating alleged sexual assaults, alcohol and drug cases, and incidents with cross-cultural aspects. Experts are available to provide training and consultation but the institution needs to allot resources to ensure student conduct staff are properly trained and supported. It is recommended that institutions make it a priority to support the professional development of student conduct administrators and hearing boards.

ASCA is well positioned to champion ethicality in higher education. ASCA has a long-standing commitment to the core values identified in this study. Another recommendation would be to include the membership in the next review of the ASCA Ethical Principles and Standards. It is further recommended that ASCA look for ways of better familiarizing the membership with the Ethical Principles and Standards. Before being granted membership in ASCA, members could be required to pass an online quiz demonstrating their understanding and allegiance to these principles.

Increased attention to institutional ethics is also recommended. Preferential treatment in the conduct system based on factors such as athletic standing or legacy status is an unacceptable practice that must stop. Institutional culture should expect and enforce personal accountability and responsibility across the board starting at the top of the organization.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study focused on Kitchener's five principles as a model that may be useful to student conduct administrators when faced with ethical dilemmas. Additional research could examine other theories and models that student conduct administrators are using to resolve ethical dilemmas.

Online ASCA surveys tend to have a low response rate according to the Central ASCA Office. A phenomenological study might be a better methodology for delving into the ethical dilemmas of student conduct administrators. Narrative interviews with selected respondents could provide a more in depth look at the dilemmas faced and how participants achieve resolution. Interviews with participants who find Kitchener's principles useful to their work would be especially intriguing.

Studies into the role of gender in ethical decision making have produced mixed results. There are still many unanswered questions as to how, and if, gender affects an individual's ability to recognize and resolve ethical dilemmas effectively. Data from this study suggested that women may be more influenced than men by ethical models/theories and by institutional methods. Further research could test this finding and pursue an explanation.

The Ethical Principles and Standards of professional organizations encourage consideration of cultural values when ethical dilemmas surface. More research is needed to identify best practices for culturally sensitive decision making.

Ethical instruction in graduate school is another possible research topic, including examination of curricular content, identification of schools that emphasize ethics in

educational programs, and review of their learning outcomes and assessment measures. Another fundamental question is whether classroom instruction in ethicality results in ethical behavior. As suggested by Gunderson, Capozzoli, and Rajamma (2008), perhaps it is not enough to simply talk about ethics in a hypothetical context. Lessons may be more impactful when students have opportunity to reflect on real life ethical circumstances.

It is hoped that the results of this study will stimulate discussion in the field of student conduct administration. As educators and role models for students, we need to recognize the impact we have on students' lives. Students deserve nothing less than highly trained professionals who base their decisions on Kitchener's principles.

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APPENDIX A

Invitation to Participate in Study

Invitation to Participate in Study

Initial Invitation to Participate

Dear Student Conduct Administrator:

You are invited to participate in a voluntary and anonymous study of the ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators in the course of their work. The results may provide insight into the nature and frequency of ethical dilemmas, and the paradigms that can provide a framework for ethical decision making. Although the literature on higher education administration is considerable and spans multiple decades, there is a gap in the research that examines the ethical challenges facing student conduct administrators. This study will address that gap in the literature and contribute to the body of knowledge.

This study will serve as Mary Dowd's dissertation research for an applied doctorate in Educational Leadership. The survey is estimated to take 10 minutes to complete. Your valuable experiences would be greatly appreciated if you agree to respond. Please read the consent information provided before proceeding to the survey.

Thank you,

Mary Dowd
Interim Dean of Students
Minnesota State University, Mankato

Second Invitation to Participate

Dear Student Conduct Administrator:

Recently, I invited you to participate in a voluntary and anonymous study of the ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators in the course of their work. The results may provide insight into the nature and frequency of ethical dilemmas, and the paradigms that can provide a useful framework for ethical decision making.

There is still time to complete this survey, if you have not yet done so. The survey will only take about 10 minutes.

The results will serve as Mary Dowd's dissertation research for an applied doctorate in Educational Leadership. Your valuable experiences would be greatly appreciated if you agree to respond. Please read the consent information provided before proceeding to the survey.

Thank you,

Mary Dowd
Interim Dean of Students
Minnesota State University, Mankato

Third and Final Invitation to Participate

Dear Student Conduct Administrator:

Recently you received an invitation to participate in a voluntary and anonymous study of the ethical dilemmas experienced by student conduct administrators in the course of their work. There is still time to participate if you have not yet done so. The survey will be closing in two weeks. Your valuable experiences would be greatly appreciated if you agree to respond. Please read the consent information provided before proceeding to the survey.

Thank you,

Mary Dowd
Interim Dean of Students
Minnesota State University, Mankato

APPENDIX B

Consent Information for On-line Study

Study

[Exit this survey](#)

CONSENT INFORMATION FOR ONLINE STUDY

Project Title: Ethical Dilemmas of Student Conduct Administrators

Purpose: This online survey will investigate the type of ethical dilemmas encountered by student conduct administrators and identify the factors informing decision making. You are invited to participate because you work in the area of student conduct and belong to the Association for Student Conduct Administration.

Risks: The topic is sensitive, involving participants' disclosure of ethical dilemmas experienced in the performance of their job. The study utilizes an electronic survey deployed through Survey Monkey, a secure online research program. Whenever one works with email or the Internet there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity. Despite this possibility, the risks to your physical, emotional, social, professional, or financial well-being are considered to be minimal. You have the option to skip questions you choose. You may quit at anytime without repercussions. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Benefits: You will receive no compensation or direct benefits for completing the survey, but the results of the study may provide insight into the nature and frequency of ethical challenges experienced by student conduct administrators which will add to the body of knowledge.

Confidentiality: Participation is confidential, anonymous and voluntary. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and not connected to you or your institution in any way other than non-identifying, aggregate demographic data. Responses to open-ended questions will be coded for categorical themes and will not be quoted or paraphrased in any presentation of findings to protect privacy and anonymity. Data will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's secured office accessible only to the researcher and

members of her dissertation committee. Electronic data and hard copies will be destroyed three years after completion of the study.

Consent: Submission of the completed survey will be interpreted as your informed consent to participate and that you affirm you are at least 18 years of age.

Contact Information: If you have any questions about the research, please contact doctoral student, Mary Dowd, Interim Dean of Students, Minnesota State University, Mankato via email at mary.dowd@mnsu.edu or her advisor, Dr. Scott Wurdinger, Doctoral Coordinator in the Department of Educational Leadership, Minnesota State University, Mankato at scott.wurdinger@mnsu.edu. If you have questions about the treatment of human subjects, contact the Institutional Research Board (IRB) Administrator at 507-389-2321. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato Information and Technology Services Help Desk (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager. This study was approved by the Minnesota State Mankato IRB on November 11, 2010 (IRB Log #3684). If you agree to participate in this study, you can click this link to begin the survey.

Next

APPENDIX C

Ethical Dilemmas of Student Conduct Administrators Survey

Study

[Exit this survey](#)

Survey

Ethical Dilemmas of Student Conduct Administrators

Demographic Questions

Number of years experience in current student conduct position:

Number of years experience in current student conduct position:

Office location of current position (Check one):

- Office location of current position (Check one): Office of Student Conduct
- Department of Residential Life
- Greek Life
- Student Activities
- Other(Please specify in the box)

Other (please specify)

Number of years experience in the field of student conduct:

Number of years experience in the field of student conduct:

Please indicate your ASCA membership circuit:

Please indicate your ASCA membership circuit:

Type of current institution: (Check all that apply)

- Type of current institution: (Check all that apply) Public
- Private, church affiliated
- Private, non church affiliated
- Private, for profit
- Two year
- Four year
- Commuter

Number of Division 1 sports offered at your current institution:

Number of Division 1 sports offered at your current institution:

Number of doctoral programs offered at your current institution:

Number of doctoral programs offered at your current institution:

Total enrollment at your institution, including undergraduate and graduate:

Total enrollment at your institution, including undergraduate and graduate:

Gender:

Gender: Male

Female

Highest degree earned:

Highest degree earned: Bachelor's

Master's

Specialist

Juris Doctorate (J.D.)

Doctorate (Ed.D or Ph.D.)

Other

Other (please specify)

Ethnic Background:

Ethnic Background: African American

Asian American

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Caucasian

Hispanic or Latino

Native American

More than one ethnic background

International

Other (Please specify)

Other (please specify)

Study

[Exit this survey](#)

Survey

To what extent do the following influence your process of ethical decision making:

| | Almost Never | Occasionally | Frequently | Almost Always |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Personal values | <input type="radio"/> *To what extent do the following influence your process of ethical decision making: Personal values Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Personal values Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Personal values Frequently | <input type="radio"/> Personal values Almost Always |
| Spiritual beliefs | <input type="radio"/> Spiritual beliefs Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Spiritual beliefs Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Spiritual beliefs Frequently | <input type="radio"/> Spiritual beliefs Almost Always |
| Cultural perspectives | <input type="radio"/> Cultural perspectives Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Cultural perspectives Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Cultural perspectives Frequently | <input type="radio"/> Cultural perspectives Almost Always |

| | Almost Never | Occasionally | Frequently | Almost Always |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| Professional code of ethics | <input type="radio"/> Professional code of ethics Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Professional code of ethics Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Professional code of ethics Frequently | <input type="radio"/> Professional code of ethics Almost Always |
| Institutional mission | <input type="radio"/> Institutional mission Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Institutional mission Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Institutional mission Frequently | <input type="radio"/> Institutional mission Almost Always |
| Legal ramifications | <input type="radio"/> Legal ramifications Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Legal ramifications Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Legal ramifications Frequently | <input type="radio"/> Legal ramifications Almost Always |
| Ethical models and theories | <input type="radio"/> Ethical models and theories Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Ethical models and theories Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Ethical models and theories Frequently | <input type="radio"/> Ethical models and theories Almost Always |

To what extent do you feel pressured to give certain students preferential treatment?

- To what extent do you feel pressured to give certain students preferential treatment? Almost Never
- Occasionally
- Frequently
- Almost Always

To what extent do you feel your personal values conflict with the mission and philosophy of your current institution?

- To what extent do you feel your personal values conflict with the mission and philosophy of your current institution? Almost Never
- Occasionally
- Frequently
- Almost Always

Please provide a 2-3 sentence description of the most challenging ethical dilemma you have experienced in your current student conduct position.

Please provide a 2-3 sentence description of the most challenging ethical dilemma you have experienced in your current student conduct position.

Please provide a 2-3 sentence description of the most common type of ethical dilemma you experience in your current student conduct position.

Please provide a 2-3 sentence description of the most **common type** of ethical dilemma you experience in your current student conduct position.

Please list the three most important core values that inform your ethical decision making:

Please list the
three most
important core
values that

inform your
ethical
decision
making: 1

2

3

How extensive was your graduate school training related to ethical theories and models that inform decision making?

- How extensive was your graduate school training related to ethical theories and models that inform decision making? not extensive
- extensive
- very extensive

How knowledgeable are you with the Ethical Principles and Standards of the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA)?

- How knowledgeable are you with the Ethical Principles and Standards of the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA)? not knowledgeable
- knowledgeable
- very knowledgeable

To what extent, do you refer to the Ethical Principles and Standards of the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA) when attempting to resolve ethical dilemmas?

- To what extent, do you refer to the Ethical Principles and Standards of the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA) when attempting to resolve ethical dilemmas? Almost Never

- Occasionally
- Frequently
- Almost Always

How knowledgeable are you with Kitchener's five ethical principles?

- How knowledgeable are you with Kitchener's five ethical principles? not knowledgeable
- knowledgeable
- very knowledgeable

To what extent, do you refer to Kitchener's five ethical principles when attempting to resolve ethical dilemmas?

- To what extent, do you refer to Kitchener's five ethical principles when attempting to resolve ethical dilemmas? Almost Never
- Occasionally
- Frequently
- Almost Always