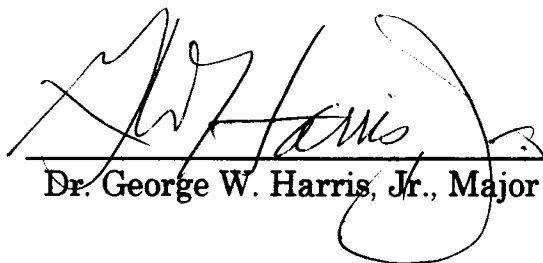
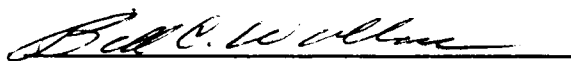


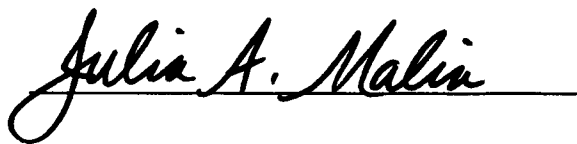
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Tracy Michelle Stidham Lakin entitled "A Study of the Approaches School Administrators Use in Making Ethical Decisions Within the Typical County Public School District." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Educational Leadership.


Dr. George W. Harris, Jr., Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:









Accepted for the Council:


Associate Vice Chancellor
and Dean of the Graduate School

**A Study of the Approaches School Administrators
Use in Making Ethical Decisions
Within the Typical County Public School District**

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Education

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

**Tracy Michelle Stidham Lakin
December, 1995**

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DEDICATION

**This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Douglas Gene Lakin,
and to my parents, Franklin and Billie Stidham, for their support and
encouragement.**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Several people have assisted and supported me through the completion of this project. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my major professor and dear friend, Dr. George W. Harris, Jr., for his guidance and encouragement throughout my doctoral program. I would also like to thank my other committee members, Dr. Glenn C. Graber, Dr. Bill C. Wallace, Dr. Julia A. Malia, and Dr. Mary Jane Connelly, for their time and assistance with this project.

To my parents, Franklin and Billie Stidham, I express my thanks for their endearing love throughout the years and their support of my educational goals. To my sister, Andrea Stidham, I say thank you for the many hours she has put into this project by serving as my typist. I would finally like to thank my dear husband, Doug, for his patience, love, support, and help with this project, and my sweet dog, Daisy, for her special love and support.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the approach made by public school administrators to ethical dilemmas. This study also looked at influential circumstances that could affect one's ethical decisions and asked school administrators to describe typical ethical dilemmas they had faced. Through the use of a questionnaire and an interview guide, data were collected. In the selected school system, 29 administrators responded to the questionnaire, making the response rate 85 percent. Fifteen of these administrators agreed to participate in a follow-up interview.

Major findings of the study revealed the following:

1. Most school administrators used either a situational or a utilitarian approach to ethical situations.
2. While a little more than half of the respondents were influenced by the circumstances stated in the questionnaire, most of the circumstances were positive (good) circumstances rather than negative (bad) circumstances.
3. The number of years experience as an administrator was not related to one's ethical approach.
4. While school administrators were faced with many types of

ethical dilemmas, they mentioned problems with (1) special education, (2) staff conflicts, and (3) student discipline more frequently.

5. Most of the interviewed administrators felt that the number of ethical dilemmas and the intensity of each increased every year.
6. Sixty percent of the interviewed administrators said that they had made ethical decisions that later they regretted.

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CHAPTER I

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Ethics has long been a topic of concern among human beings, but since the Watergate scandal, it has become a more prominent issue for Americans. Webster (1986) defines ethics as "the principles of conduct governing an individual or profession" (p. 780). One's principles may be developed by a religious background, family teachings, educational background, and/or other environmental influences. These standards of behavior govern an individual in making decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas.

The ethical conduct of public managers is closely scrutinized and often publicized (Rudder, 1991). Public managers are responsible for making numerous decisions every day, decisions that often require much thought and ethical consideration. There are many occasions when these managers are judged according to their involvement with ethical decisions. If they are involved in too many scandalous situations where they make

incorrect decisions (according to the viewing public), they soon lose their credibility and their jobs. One's ethical conduct is an important element of his/her survival as a public manager.

Background of the Problem

School administrators are one specific group of public managers who are faced with the task of decision-making every day. Some decisions they make require little time and effort to resolve, while others may take hours or even days. Decisions may range from a simple bus duty roster to the importance of a bomb threat situation. When a problem arises that involves moral decision-making, the administrator's job becomes even more difficult because it is harder to make a final decision when the possible choices involve "complex and ambiguous circumstances" (Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 1988, p. 3). Administrators must risk many consequences and often set precedents when they finally rule on an ethical situation, similar to that of a judge handing down a court decision. These types of decisions are not easily made. Often an administrative decision will set the foundation for decisions to be made by other administrators in the future.

School administrators have been asked numerous times to name the kinds of ethical situations they face. Such situations form an almost endless list, but some of administrators' most common answers have been: racial/sexual discrimination, violation of confidentiality, teacher competence, nepotism (Rudder, 1991), special education placement, athletic eligibility, and suspected drug/alcohol abuse (Perry, 1988). School administrators must be able to handle each of these different situations with an ethical approach.

There are several approaches one may choose to use in ethical decision-making. Several authors have written about the approaches that people use to make ethical decisions. This study focuses on three such approaches that an individual may follow. They are: (1) the utilitarian - examining consequences to seek the greatest balance of good over evil, (2) the legalistic - strictly following a set of rules and regulations, and (3) the situational - entering decision-making with principles that may be compromised after careful reasoning. Each of the previously mentioned approaches is practiced by some officials, but the question that arises is what specific approach do most administrators use?

In chapter two, these three approaches are discussed in further detail. They are used in the study to classify the approaches that

administrators use in solving ethical dilemmas to determine if there is a pattern of behavior that most administrative personnel follow.

Statement of the Problem

While a great deal of material has been published concerning ethics and values in relation to school administration, few studies have been done that actually examine how administrators respond when faced with an ethical dilemma. Authors have discussed ways that ethics and ethical decision-making can be taught. Bok (1976) wrote about the need for ethical standards to be discussed openly. He felt that colleges and universities must see their role in the subject of ethics by adding it to the curriculum in all fields of study. Bok gave three objectives that ethics courses could accomplish. These objectives are: (1) "help students become more alert in discovering the moral issues that arise in their own lives," (2) "teach students to reason carefully about ethical issues," and (3) "help students clarify their moral aspirations" (Bok, 1976, p. 26).

In The Ethics of School Administration, Strike, Haller, and Soltis (1988) posed ethical case studies to be used by ethics instructors in the field of educational leadership. Their purpose in writing the book was to

make students aware of the possibility and importance of objective ethical reasoning. They also wanted learners to engage in ethical reflection and justification (Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 1988). By ethical reflection and justification, the authors meant that learners should engage in a self-examination of their ethical practices and through such examination, be able to justify their actions in moral situations. These authors' (Strike, Haller, and Soltis) intentions are valid and important because Carruth and Carruth (1991) found in their research study that most respondents felt that their formal education had significantly influenced their values systems. This finding shows that the study of ethics is important for young adults.

A few authors have written codes of ethics for school administrators. The American Association of School Administrators (1976) has written (and revised several times) an extensive code of ethics that they feel should be followed by all educational administrators. Seldin (1988) stated five key commandments to help principals maintain professional ethics. These commandments are:

- (1) The educational welfare of the students is always paramount.
- (2) Principals must respect the dignity and worth of teachers.
- (3) All communication with teachers (verbal and

- written) is privileged and confidential.
- (4) The principal must be a model of ethical behavior.
 - (5) Ethical behavior must be consistent and reliable
- (Seldin, 1988, pp. 10-11).

Each of these guides can help administrators make good ethical decisions.

Authors have also expressed, in many discussions, the importance of practicing good ethics. Rotberg (1990) states that due to the fact that some public figures are acting more unethical than ever before, it is even more critical for educational administrators to see the need to practice good personal and professional ethics. The public demands accountability in professional fields. A profession serves as a normative group of reference. Through the profession's code of ethics, the expected norms of professional behavior are measured against the practiced norms of professional behavior (Frankel, 1989). To be an effective administrator in the public's view, one must be an ethical administrator. He/she must have ethical guidelines that include "respect for all members of society, tolerance for divergent opinions and cultures, equality of persons, and equal distribution of resources" (Calabrese, 1988).

The importance of practicing good ethics must be recognized because "neither the culture of a school, nor the educational philosophy it espouses, is value-free" (Bottery, 1992, p. 19). As our world changes from one year to

the next, the concern for ethics grows greater (Immegart & Burroughs, 1970). Because ethical decisions are often made under stress, it can be difficult to make choices that exemplify to the public one's use of ethical standards (Linn, 1984). Therefore, opportunities should exist at the college level that allow students to practice ethical decision-making and to learn helpful skills that can aid in the process.

While the aforementioned writings provide a good base of teaching strategies, ideal ethical standards, and sound reasonings for practicing good ethics, they do not provide adequate information concerning the actual practices of current administrators. Until such knowledge is gained, these writings can be viewed as the *ideal way* that ethical situations should be handled, but they may not in any way depict what is actually being practiced in school systems today. When authors and researchers are made aware of how administrators are actually handling ethical decisions, they may find that some administrators follow that which has been determined as the *ideal way*, while others respond and are guided along by other methods of approach. Therefore, a study was needed to assess how school administrators respond to ethical dilemmas and to determine what approach(es) they use in making their decisions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine how school administrators respond to ethical dilemmas. Specifically, the study examined the approach made by administrators to ethical situations. The knowledge gained from this study adds to the limited amount of research on practiced ethics and may stimulate further research in this area.

A number of doctoral students have previously researched similar topics on ethics and school administration. Williams (1993) interviewed special education administrators and found that they felt a constant ethical struggle on the job between providing appropriate services for children and controlling the inflating costs of such services. In coping with this continual ethical conflict, it was suggested that administrators use a flexible approach that encompasses care and justice. Administrators must also learn to live with some ambiguity (Williams, 1993).

In a study that questioned principals and special education teachers, Strax (1993) sought responses to ethical dilemmas in the education of disabled children. Principals were found to have greater sensitivity to issues of justice than special education teachers, and females were found to have greater sensitivity to issues of care than males (Strax, 1993).

Walker (1991) examined educational leaders' nature of ethical decision-making. He found that most leaders related the word "ethical" to the following expressions: community, dichotomy, core value, difficulty, code, mandate, people, vice-avoidance, fitting-in, and rational altruist. The ethical problems these leaders faced were considered by them to either be "misdeeds" or to be "quandaries." Misdeeds were viewed as acts against such values as caring/respect, fairness, professional conduct, resource stewardship, integrity, loyalty, honesty, and citizenship. Quandaries usually involved conflicting demands and difficulties with respect to relationships or responsibilities, and system-wide problems with no apparent solutions, such as scarcity of resources, inequities, employment concerns, student welfare, and general leadership challenges. When faced with the task of ethical decision-making, these leaders felt influenced by personal factors (familial or professional role models and individual motivations) and internal factors (pressures resulting from economic diversification and community factors) (Walker, 1991).

By examining administrators from two-year colleges in Wisconsin, Christensen (1991) discovered that most administrators acted on their espoused values most of the time. However, academic vice presidents, administrators with less than twenty years of experience, and

administrators at smaller colleges showed no correlation between values they indicated on the survey and actions they stated they would take in ethical scenarios posed at the interviews. It was concluded that an infinite number of approaches, viewpoints, and/or solutions exist to a problem.

While these studies have helped add to the knowledge of ethics and school administration, this research study further addressed issues of concern. The results of this study provided insight into how administrators make difficult decisions. Some of the determining factors that help them make final decisions were made apparent. It is hoped that these findings will provide other school administrators with support and aid in making ethical decisions.

Importance of the Study

There are several important reasons this study was conducted. First, it raises the awareness of school administrators to the relevance of practicing good ethics, therefore, making this issue a common topic of concern. Rotberg (1990) stated such concern by saying that "administrators must be more self-conscious about the choices that they and their institutions make." As more administrators join in the practice

of good ethics and further develop a single code of ethics that all administrators should adhere to, similar to that of attorneys and physicians, they further professionalize themselves and others in the educational field. This element of professionalization is very pertinent to everyone who is a part of the educational sphere of activity.

Secondly, although many educational leadership departments at colleges and universities already teach courses on ethics, there are still a number of academic departmental units that are not involved. This study increases the awareness of those departments to the importance of training in ethics for future school administrators. Bok (1976) stated such importance in the following quotation:

. . . it does seem plausible to suppose that the students in these courses will become more alert in perceiving ethical issues, more aware of the reasons underlying moral principles, and more equipped to reason carefully in applying these principles to concrete cases . . . the goal [of ethics courses] has never been more important to the quality of the society in which we live (p. 6).

Oliveira (1991) found in his research study from responses given by principals, that school administrators would benefit from ethics being included as a fundamental part of their professional program. Not only does this study raise awareness for the need of ethics courses, but it aids

current ethics professors by providing further information for them to convey to their students. This information was found, by Oliveira, to be important to practicing administrators.

This study also provides beginning and inexperienced school administrators with information concerning involvement with ethical dilemmas which are part of the school's daily routine of operation. These experiences may help them make better judgments in their own initial ethical confrontations. By examining the actions of fellow school administrators who have been practicing for many years, one can evaluate himself/herself in similar circumstances. He/she can determine through this self-analysis whether his/her end results are satisfying or whether changes should be made in his/her ethical decision-making process to arrive at results like those of other administrators that appeared to resolve a conflict better.

Finally, because ethical decisions are never easily made, the results of the study provide the opportunity to assist in reducing the tension of administrators by letting them observe that others are faced with some of the same difficult situations when making choices. This bonding component allows administrators to unite and work together toward solutions to many problems, not just those of an ethical nature.

Need for the Study

When school administrators make decisions, their choices affect the lives and well-being of those who are under their care (Witmer, 1989). It is necessary for school administrators and ethics educators to understand the approaches used in making ethical decisions in order to develop their own method for dealing with such decisions. Ethical decisions should not be made frivolously, with little thought or concern, but should be belabored until the best decision is reached. Unethical choices cannot be risked by school administrators.

This study was needed to further aid current and future school administrators in making decisions through the following of a careful plan of action. By understanding the approaches used by current administrators and possible influencing factors, others can learn what approaches are most common and how difficult it can be to ignore intervening factors. The information gained from this study is essential to other educators as well as individuals of other disciplines. These results are also a small part of a step in education to make administrators more aware of the importance of ethical standards and practice.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this research study.

1. What approach do school administrators use in addressing ethical dilemmas (utilitarian, legalistic, or situational)?
2. Are there particular circumstances that may affect a school administrator's final decision when faced with an ethical dilemma?
3. Do men and women differ in their approaches to ethical dilemmas?
4. Does the number of years experience as an administrator affect one's approach to ethical dilemmas?
5. What types of ethical dilemmas do school administrators face?

Definition of Terms

The terms listed below are defined for their intended meaning in relation to this study.

Ambiguous

Ambiguous means being difficult to distinguish or classify.

Amoralists

Amoralists are individuals who believe that one does not have an obligation to moral principles. They are not moral or immoral, but simply indifferent.

Analytic Ethics

Analytic ethics was developed to clarify ethical discourse by analyzing ethical terms. This theory does not attempt to tell people how to live or to list rules to follow, but simply helps clarify existing ethical theories. It is practiced primarily by the British.

Antinomian Approach to Moral Decision-Making

The antinomian approach to moral decision-making is entering an ethical situation "with no principles or maxims whatsoever, to say nothing of rules" (Fletcher, 1966, p.22). When a person uses this approach, he/she relies upon the situation itself to provide the ethical solution, claiming to have an innate sense of what is right when circumstances arise that warrant an ethical decision (Fletcher, 1966).

Axiological Ethics

Axiological ethics is the philosophical study of values (in relation to ethics, aesthetics, or religion). The theory has been so broadly defined that theorists have allowed themselves a wide range of moral standards for discussion, never clearly committing to any particular ideas.

Ethical or Moral Decision-Making

Ethical or moral decision-making is the process one undergoes when determining the final resolution to an ethical dilemma. This process may involve reflecting upon one's principles, looking up rules and policies in books, discussing the situation with others, gathering background information about the ethical situation, and determining the possible solutions. One may take a great deal of time in making a decision or may only contemplate upon the matter for a few brief moments.

Ethical or Moral Dilemma

An ethical dilemma is a "situation where each of two incompatible alternatives is favoured by some strong moral requirement, but there seems to be no objective way to resolve the conflict" (Sinnott-Armstrong, 1988, p. 1).

Ethicality

Ethicality is the act of being ethical or moral.

Ethician (Ethicist)

An ethician is one who philosophizes in the field of ethics (dealing with values relating to human conduct).

Existential Ethics

Existential ethics is an ethical viewpoint that stresses the individual's position as a self-determining agent responsible for his/her own choices. Everything is rational, has an understandable explanation, and occurs according to a fixed pattern. One must accept the responsibility and make choices with the understanding of the theory's properties.

Hedonism

Hedonism is the belief that pleasure or happiness is the highest good. Devotion is given to seeking pleasure and self-gratification throughout life.

Legalistic Approach to Moral Decision-Making

The legalistic approach to moral decision-making is such that the solutions to ethical situations are preset in principles held. These principles are a list of rules and regulations that must be followed exactly. Therefore, when a person uses this approach, he/she merely recalls the directives to be followed or may consult a book, such as the Bible or a confessor's manual, to determine the given solution (Fletcher, 1966).

Naturalistic Ethics

Naturalistic ethics is a philosophical belief that all human actions can be explained in terms of experiences in the world around. Since all phenomena are covered by the laws of science, they are therefore without ethical value.

Phenomenological Ethics

Phenomenological ethics is the ethical study that classifies phenomena relevant to itself. One must rely solely on his/her intuition when practicing this theory.

School Administrator

A school administrator is someone who holds a supervisory position in a school system and may perform such duties as: supervising instructional programs, coordinating and supervising teachers, disciplining students, greeting and addressing the community, managing funds, purchasing supplies, and maintaining order within an organization. Some of the titles held by a school administrator are: principal, assistant principal, supervisor, director, specialist, assistant superintendent, and superintendent.

Situational Approach to Moral Decision-Making

The situational approach to moral decision-making involves holding a set of principles that stem from one's community and heritage, but also examining each situation to determine if these principles should be set aside in order to better serve love. A person who uses this approach "follows a moral law or violates it according to love's need" (Fletcher, 1966, p. 26). "The situational variables are to be weighed as heavily as the normative or 'general' constants" (Fletcher, 1966, p. 29).

Sophists

Sophists were ancient Greek teachers of philosophy who were known for their ingenuity and deceptiveness in debate or discussion. They did not recognize an obligation to moral principles. Instead, they encouraged individuals to seek their own identity by letting their intellect become the attribute of focus.

Thinkers

The thinkers were a group in ancient Greece whose faculties for thinking were well developed. Among of these people were Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. They laid a solid foundation of ethics for future generations.

Utilitarian Approach to Moral Decision-Making

The utilitarian approach to moral decision-making involves the examination of all possible consequences in seeking the moral standard that will achieve the greatest balance of good (or happiness) over evil (or pain) for those within one's moral reference group.

Utilitarian Ethics

Utilitarian ethics is the philosophical belief in the concern for utility

or usefulness rather than beauty, ornamentation, etc. Seeking the greatest happiness for the greatest number of persons without causing pain is the major goal of such believers.

Assumptions of the Study

The assumptions relative to this study were as follows:

1. Ethical decision-making is a part of the school administrator's job.
2. The school administrators who participated in the study had been in ethical situations before that required them to make decisions in order to resolve those situations.
3. The school administrators involved in the study provided candid responses to the questionnaire.
4. The school administrators were capable of providing candid responses because they could accurately assess their personal ethical practices.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study were as follows:

1. The survey was limited to one group of school administrators from an East Tennessee school system.
2. The accuracy and quality of the findings were limited by the school administrators' perceptual skills of their own ethical practices and their accuracy in reporting them.
3. The study examined school administrators whose experiences and years of service varied. Those who were more recently appointed to administrative positions may have had little experience in ethical decision-making in the educational setting.

Methods and Procedures

The population selected for study was a group of school administrators who worked for a medium-size public school system in East Tennessee. The school system contained twelve elementary, four middle, and two high schools. For the school year 1994-1995, the projected enrollment was 4200 elementary school students, 2000 middle school

students, 2600 high school students, and 270 special education (CDC) students. According to the superintendent of the school system, most of the students (approximately 50%) were from middle-class homes. A smaller number came from both lower-class and upper-class homes (approximately 25% in each group). The group of administrators that were questioned consisted of twelve elementary, four middle, and two high school principals, with four assistant middle and four assistant high school principals. There were also seven supervisors and one superintendent at the central office. Permission was sought from the school district's superintendent, both by letter (see Appendix A) and through personal contact, before performing the study.

The administrators who participated in the study were asked in the letter of introduction (see Appendix C) to fill out a questionnaire (see Appendix D) that contained three sets of questions, all dealing with ethical decision-making. The first section asked the respondent to solve an ethical dilemma concerning a child who was HIV positive. The second section questioned the individual on how he/she approaches ethical situations. The third section asked if intervening circumstances could affect the respondent's decision on an ethical matter. All the questions were set up on a five-point Likert-type scale with the range being strongly agree (5) to

strongly disagree (1). The responses to this questionnaire reflected how the administrators respond to ethical dilemmas, what approach(es) they use in making ethical decisions, and what circumstances might affect their final decisions. The respondents' responses were reported collectively to protect the individuals and adhere to the promise of confidentiality made to them before participating in the study.

The survey results produced mean scores for each respondent in reference to the three ethical approaches studied. These scores were used to answer several of the research questions. Because the sample size was small, most statistical work was of a descriptive nature. However, when examining research question number four, concerning the number of years experience in administration, a chi square test was used to determine if there was any significant difference. Ethnographic discussion was also used to aid in the answering of the research questions, providing a more detailed and specific view of the findings.

To further add to the results of the study, administrators were asked, on a voluntary basis, to participate in a short interview where more specific follow-up questions were asked. A separate sheet at the end of the questionnaire asked the administrators if they would be willing to answer a few more questions in a short, 15-minute interview. This form was kept

separate from the questionnaire to maintain confidentiality. For those who agreed to be interviewed, a time was set up with the interviewer to ask the questions found in the questionnaire guide (Appendix E). The results of these interviews were reported in an ethnographic format due to their qualitative nature.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters.

Chapter one encompasses an introduction, the background and the statement of the problem, and the purpose and the importance of the study. The research questions are stated, and definitions of relative terms are given. The first chapter concludes with the assumptions, limitations, methods and procedures, and organization of the study.

Chapter two, a review of related literature, begins with a historical background and leads up to current writings concerning the topic at hand.

Chapter three describes the methods and procedures used in conducting the study.

Chapter four focuses on the presentation of data and findings of the study.

Chapter five concludes with a summary, conclusions, discussions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Since the beginning of time, man has struggled with ethical questions and dilemmas (Leskinen, 1993). Many great ethicists, such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, and Kant, have led in philosophic discussions that have helped to shape our individual value systems. Ethical questions continue to arise today asking for the most appropriate ethical behavior. Because of the controversial nature of ethics, there may never be absolute solutions to ethical problems.

Those who have written and researched on ethics have provided a substantial background for the evolution of ethics. This chapter will first examine a historical background of ethics. It will then take a penetrating view of three current approaches to moral decision-making. The third section will review writings that specifically relate to administration and ethics. Finally, the last section will discuss current research studies performed on ethics.

The selection of literature comes from a variety of sources. Articles and research studies have been taken from educational and business journals. Many books dealing with ethics have been examined, and a number of papers presented at associational meetings have also been reviewed. A combined effort of the above mentioned literature will assist the reader in bringing the subject of ethics into focus concerning this study.

Historical Perspectives on Ethics

It is believed that since the beginning of time man has had moral conceptions. During the Glacial and early Post-Glacial period, man lived among tribes in caves, fissures in rocks, or under overhanging rock formations. They hunted and fished in groups with their primeval instruments, struggling to survive among the glaciers that covered the earth (Kropotkin, 1924). These primitive peoples of the Glacial and early Post-Glacial period learned the ways of a social life through Nature, their teacher of morals. By watching the animal world, man learned that there were certain rules that everyone must submit to and other rules that one could choose to submit to if he/she so desired. If the obligatory rules were

not followed, the group developed a "means of social compulsion" (Kropotkin, 1924, p. V). Establishment of customs, tribal manners, justice, and a mode of life could be found for each group or tribe of people. With certain individuals striving for power and domination over others, division into classes and estates resulted among tribes (Kropotkin, 1924). "The conceptions of good and evil, [often referred to as mutual aid], were . . . evolving not on the basis of what represented good or evil for a separate individual, but what represented good and evil for the whole tribe" (Kropotkin, 1924, p. 77).

Just as primitive man placed great value on the tribe or kinship group, so did the ancient Egyptians, for they were a homogeneous population in reference to morality and race. The Ancient Egyptians' beliefs were strongly influenced by the idea of "continued existence after death" (Myers, 1913, p. 31). Morals and practices were based upon a concern of positive behavior during the present life that resulted in one earning a blessed life after death. The sun-god Ra was considered to be the expert concerning moral worthiness and would judge all after their deaths (Myers, 1913). "As the righteous judge, as the father and protector of the reigning Pharaoh, and as the guardian divinity of the Egyptian state" (Myers, 1913, p. 32), the conception of Ra helped to mold the moral

development of ancient Egypt.

As dependency upon the gods in ancient Greece for moral rightness began to wane, moral development split into two groups of belief: (1) Sophists and amoralists, and (2) thinkers who laid a solid base of ethics for future generations, such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The Sophists and amoralists did not recognize an obligation to moral principles. Each was encouraged to seek out his/her own individuality, and one's intellect became the important attribute of focus. The power of custom and faith was not believed to be as relevant as they had been in the past (Kropotkin, 1924). In their teachings, the Sophists were alleged to have stated that "might is right" (Bourke, 1968, p. 14), meaning whatever the interest of the strong party is, that is what is right or just (Bourke, 1968).

This intellectual movement did not satisfy many people, therefore, it brought about the theories and ideas of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Socrates is best known for his method of philosophic discussion that involved: "the asking of questions, the profession of ignorance, and the search for definitions" (Bourke, 1968, p. 15). He professed that all moral virtues originated in practical wisdom. Through self-examination, observation of others, reflection on one's own moral convictions, and acting or feeling with moderation, one could find the right answer to anything..

And "if one knows what is right and good, one will do it" (Bourke, 1968, p. 15).

As a follower of Socrates, Plato took his ideas and expanded them, making a more "idealistic conception of morality" (Kropotkin, 1924, p. 90). Plato held that Nature contained all the principles of good and justice, and he strove to reveal this good and justice so that it could guide all human behavior. Unlike Socrates, he did not feel that man would accidentally discover morality through philosophic discussion, or what he called one's social life. But he did feel that one would do what is right, if he/she knew the right answer. Therefore, he introduced an idealistic interpretation to morality, his ideal being love (friendship). The soul would blend reasoning, feeling, and will to develop wisdom, courage, and moderation. These factors would be guided by love to determine the correct answer that laid in Nature's ways (Kropotkin, 1924).

After Plato, the works of Aristotle followed. Plato reasoned that there was a world where one could gain knowledge through his/her senses, and also a world where one could not gain knowledge simply through the senses. Aristotle strove to unite these two worlds in his writings and ideas. He (Aristotle) did not recognize faith nor personal immortality (Kropotkin, 1924). Virtuous action, he said, requires three conditions: (1)

knowledge, (2) choice, and (3) a consistent means of reacting to similar passions or affections. The second condition (choice) was most important to Aristotle. He felt that one must be allowed to choose, and the choice must be made for its own sake, not for the good of something else (Cavalier, Govinlock, & Sterba, 1989).

During the last centuries before Christ's birth and for many centuries to follow, religious teachings became a focal part of the philosophical teachings on ethics. Guided by rules of conduct written by various philosophers, such as Aurelius and Plotinus, people were concerned about their actions in reference to their ultimate destiny and relations with divinity. During the medieval period, people's actions became controlled through God's will for them. As Emil Brunner stated, "The Good consists in always doing what God wills at any particular moment" (Bourke, 1968, p. 47-48). Not only were people's actions directed by the will of God, but their actions were also influenced by their personal motivation and attitude toward external events (Bourke, 1968). Many Christian writers, such as Aquinas and Bacon, guided the development of ethics during this period.

As the modern era began, a philosopher named Hobbes was well known for his writing Leviathan. While he claimed to be a materialist or

naturalist, he did not deny the existence of God nor the immorality of the soul. He believed that the will of God controlled things that happened, but that God's will was merely fate, which was the inevitable in any situation. Although man had moral freedom according to Hobbes, he could not be blamed for his actions since he could only act as destined to under given circumstances (Swabey, 1961). So while man followed God's will and experienced moral freedom in decision-making, his decisions were based more on consent and conformity to sovereign laws. These notions were the foundation of Hobbes' theory of obligation (Cavalier, Govinlock, & Sterba, 1989).

Another recognized philosopher on ethics in the modern era was John Locke. The major elements of his theory of ethics are as follows:

- (1) a hedonistic definition of good,
- (2) denial of innate ethical principles,
- (3) founding of ethics on fear of divine punishment,
- (4) assertion of the existence of a law of nature which is also the law of God,
- (5) the possibility of a deductive science of ethics,
- (6) assertion of the freedom of man (rather than of the will) in the sense of 'you can if you choose' but not in the sense of an explicit denial of divine omnipotence and universal causation (Swabey, 1961, pp. 26-27).

Finally, the most important ethician during this era, who began a revolution in ethics, was Kant. His basis for why people do what they

should and avoid evil was because of their personal awareness to duty. While the fear of punishment and desire for happiness seem to be logical motivators for good will, Kant stated that they do not outweigh the importance of "intellectual integrity and sophistication" (Bourke, 1968, p. 171), the tools needed in order to reason. In his endeavors, Kant's goal was to create rational ethics, like many thinkers before him (Kropotkin, 1924).

Rousseau had introduced the idea of political equality into legislation during the latter part of the modern era. This idea offered equal rights to all citizens within a state. Thus, as we entered the beginning of the nineteenth century, many thinkers centered human morality around this idea of justice. Others were on the other side of the conflict and centered their idea of human morality around personal domination, or power over others. The first view of justice, however, prevailed with most ethicists. Charles Darwin explained how this justice came about by saying that man felt a moral sense of duty that came about after his natural ethical evolution that occurred within his environmental surroundings (Kropotkin, 1924).

Looking at the idea of justice through a sociological viewpoint, Spencer wrote that man feels a need to satisfy the interests of society as a

whole in order to support the group, even though the actions may sometimes contradict his personal impulses and desires. "Maintenance of society requires the mutual cooperation of men" (Kropotkin, 1924, p. 302). If this cooperation does not exist, the gratification of such necessary needs as food and dwelling will soon be lost. Thus, ethical considerations are essential to the support of the physical, biological, and psychological needs, according to the sociological view (Kropotkin, 1924).

The twentieth century has brought about many contemporary theories on ethics. Axiological ethicists are concerned with the study of values (as concerned with ethics, aesthetics, or religion). Theorists in this field hold two basic principles: (1) they claim to "see" something that is not defined concretely bad or good, but is "like an essence of the good" (Bourke, 1968, p.238), (2) they tend to believe that morally good actions will fulfill or perfect a person in some way (self-realization). By using the term value that means so many different things to different people, the axiological theorists enabled themselves to discuss a wide range of moral standards without clearly committing to any particular ideas. Therefore, this type of ethical discussion has quickly dissolved from contemporary ethics (Bourke, 1968).

Utilitarian ethics (pertaining to having a regard to usefulness rather

than beauty or ornamentation) says that a person must act toward the end that will produce the greatest proportion of happiness without causing pain. By utility, the theorists mean that the action chosen will "produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness, . . . or prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered" (Bowie, 1984, p. 303). One must consider the number of people who will benefit and the number of people who will experience pain from an action, and must make a decision where the greatest proportion of happiness possible is the achieved goal (Bowie, 1984).

A third contemporary theory is that of the naturalistic ethicians. These ethicians try to explain their actions in terms of their experiences in the world around them. There are four basic tenets to their theory. First, all explanations given in terms of the world around are opposed to use of any superior references, "such as God or an ideal Absolute" (Bourke, 1968, p. 263). Second, data supporting the ethical philosophy come from both ordinary experience and findings of modern science. Third, naturalistic theorists continue the journey of progress and betterment, striving for the advancement of men and their institutions to higher levels. Fourth, naturalistics maintain the idea "that ethical statements may be true and

capable of verification" (Bourke, 1968, p. 264).

The development of analytic ethics came about after David Hume expressed concern about unclear terminology used by various groups of ethicists. This theory's main focus is to clarify ethical discourse, not to attempt to tell people how to live and/or to list rules to follow. The purpose of writings by these ethicists is to analyze ethical terms. Analytic ethics has been primarily practiced in Britain. However, a few native Americans have become interested and have studied under the theory (Bourke, 1968).

The final contemporary theories to be examined are existential and phenomenological ethics. Because they are similar, they will be addressed together. Phenomenology starts with the facts, giving a concise description of what is apparent to the consciousness (the phenomenon). Essential knowledge of the phenomenon is then sought. Existentialism stresses the essences as the most important aspects of reality, instead of the phenomenon. Existentialists believe that by the choices they make everything is rational, has an understandable explanation, and occurs according to a fixed pattern. Each person acts as a self-determining agent, free to make his/her own choices with acceptance of the responsibility. The phenomenologists, on the other hand, must rely upon solely on one's intuition (Bourke).

These many theorists and ethicists have shaped the views and ethical practices of people around the world since the beginning of time. Ethical problems have been experienced by everyone, including the animal world as noted in the primitive era. The development of all these theories and viewpoints is inevitable in a world where social life exists. These historical writings have influenced the current literature on ethics that will now be examined. Three current approaches to moral decision-making will be examined first.

Three Approaches to Moral Decision-Making

Throughout history many possible approaches to moral decision-making have been theorized. Three approaches that are considered current theories of discussion are: (1) utilitarian, (2) legalistic, and (3) situational. Because they represent an important part of this study, these approaches will be examined extensively.

The utilitarian approach to moral decision-making is "a type of consequentialism," (Reich, 1978, p. 424) where moral actions are determined by examining their consequences. According to this approach, the greatest possible balance of good over evil is the ultimate goal in

discerning moral standards. This premise presumes that good and evil are quantitatively measurable in some way. Bentham, a famous utilitarian, attempted to measure good and evil, or pleasures and pains, using a scale comprised of seven dimensions: intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, purity, and extent. Another well-known utilitarian, J. S. Mill, sought to measure pleasures qualitatively as well as quantitatively, but had difficulty communicating this notion to others (Frankena, 1973).

In deciding "what is right to do" (Reich, 1978, p. 242), a utilitarian must define the moral reference group (i.e., those toward whom he/she considers himself/herself to have moral obligations). A moral reference group may be (1) limited to the individual himself/herself, (2) defined by some identifiable trait, such as race, sex, or nationality, or (3) determined according to one's definition of those noted for moral consideration, such as dictated by humanism (to include all human beings and only human beings), personalism (to include all persons and only persons), or universalism (to include all sentient creatures and only sentient creatures) (Graber, pp. 7-8). By clearly defining the moral reference group, one should be able to easily examine the consequences and determine moral standards by identifying the greatest happiness without causing pain for the greatest number of members in the reference group.

Fletcher (1966), who authored the book Situation Ethics, is a modern day ethicist who postulated the idea of three possible approaches to moral decision-making, (1) the legalistic, (2) the antinomian, and (3) the situational (Fletcher, 1966). Before Fletcher defined the three approaches to moral decision-making, he reviewed the history of morals and found that these three approaches have dominated humankind's past experiences. Each of these approaches stemmed from various theories and discussions of historical ethicists. The antinomian approach is considered outdated, but will also be examined in order to provide full background information.

The legalistic approach had been far more common and persistent in the history of morals. Using this approach, one would enter a decision-making situation with a list of preset rules and regulations. These rules and regulations were not to be used as mere guidelines for decision-making, but were considered directives to be followed out explicitly. Solutions to problems were already determined. One would only have to recall the proper solution or look it up in a book, such as a Bible or a confessor's manual (Fletcher, 1966).

Legalism can be found in all major Western religious traditions, like Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism. The doctrine of each of these

religions explains the morals that are to be followed (Fletcher, 1966).

Those belonging to the religious groups adhere to the prescribed morals in order to please God, earn a better place in their life after death, and/or cause good things, instead of evil, to happen to them. Fletcher (1966) argues that these groups who practice legalism find themselves in situations where they must apply human reason in order to determine the best solution to a problem. They find that they cannot strictly practice legalism, but also must consider love in decision-making. By love, Fletcher means showing compassion and human understanding toward an individual and his/her particular situation.

The antinomian approach to moral decision-making is the opposite of legalism. When one enters into a decision-making situation guided by this belief, he/she "must rely upon the situation of itself, there and then, to provide its ethical solution" (Fletcher, 1966, p. 22). There are no principles or rules to follow or even to guide one in choosing an appropriate solution. The individual operates on faith alone and not obedience to moral law.

Antinomianism, meaning literally against law, has been practiced by some Anabaptists, some sects of English Puritanism, some of John Wesley's followers, and some Hellenistic Jew-Christians visited by Paul. Some of these people took too literally the belief, that by grace and faith-in

Christ you will be forgiven of all sins. They believed that once they were Christians, they no longer had to follow laws or rules because they were saved. They were no longer concerned with refraining from sinful actions. But most followers of the antinomian belief claimed to have a special knowledge and no longer needed principles or rules as guidelines. "They would just *know* what was right when they needed to know" (Fletcher, 1966, p. 23). Moral decision-making by these people is spontaneous, random, unpredictable, erratic, abnormal, and literally unprincipled, influenced only by their superconscience. Fletcher (1966) states that this belief notes each situation's particularity and requires the examination of the circumstances at hand before making a decision.

The final approach to moral decision-making, the situational, is what Fletcher (1966) believed to be the best and often most inevitable choice when faced with an ethical problem. Situation ethics lies between the two extremes of legalism and antinomianism. The situationist enters a decision-making situation with principles and rules that act as guidelines. These principles and rules, however, may be set aside in the situation "if love seems better served by doing so" (Fletcher, 1966, p. 26). Decisions are made hypothetically, not categorically, according to love's need. The only universal law to be followed is to love (Fletcher, 1966). Situational ethics

involves choosing what is appropriate within the particular context - - "not the 'good' or the 'right' but the fitting" (Fletcher, 1966, p. 28).

The point that Fletcher (1966) makes concerning these three approaches is that situation ethics becomes the inevitable. While one may try to adhere to the legalistic or the antinomian approach, he/she will find him/herself looking at the particulars, the extenuating circumstances, and/or the context of the situation before determining what the best solution is (Fletcher, 1966). The struggle to determine what is right for the situation is guided by the concern and love for fellow neighbors (Fletcher, 1967). Many have questioned how people can be assured to act in love toward their neighbors. Fletcher (1967) defends that love and justice are the same thing, meaning when we act in love we are choosing the just act, or when we act justly we are choosing an act of love. He says that people will act in justice and love, as God commands and requires of men, if and when they are obedient to God (Fletcher, 1967).

The situationist does not view anything as inherently good or evil, except love and hate. All decisions discerning good and evil, or right and wrong, are made according to the situation. Goodness is relative to the circumstances the situationist faces (Cunningham, 1970). Therefore, it is extremely important that the situationist hold the quality of moral

responsibility (Fletcher, 1967). Niebuhr (1963) gave four elements, in his book entitled The Responsible Self, which a morally responsible person must have. They are:

- (1) response to God and fellow man
- (2) interpreting the demand made in each decision-making situation
- (3) looking forward to reaction of others in reference to the response
- (4) appreciate the continued membership in an interactive community.

This moral responsibility is what keeps situationists obedient, serving the interest of love and not evil.

Fletcher's (1967) theory of situation ethics is best summed up in his six propositions that he considers fundamental to the situational approach.

They are as follows:

- (1) Only one thing is intrinsically good, namely, love: nothing else.
- (2) The ultimate norm of decisions is love: nothing else.
- (3) Love and justice are the same, for justice is love distributed.
- (4) Love wills the neighbor's good whether we like him or not.
- (5) Only the end justifies the means: nothing else.
- (6) Decisions ought to be made situationally, not prescriptively (Fletcher, 1967).

While many encouraged the work of Fletcher, such as Cross, Weiss,

and McCormick (Cox, 1968), there were others who felt that this "new morality," as it was called, was distressful, such as Fitch, Pike, and Seifert (Cox, 1968). One man, in particular, began a debate with Fletcher. His name is McCabe. He rejects the situationist theory because he feels that it inadequately accounts for human moral behavior. He argues that there are some things one must never do under any circumstances, but says that the situationist would proceed with such actions, justifying them with circumstantial evidence. He feels that not everyone can be guided by love and justice. There will be non-Christians and atheists who adopt the approach and make decisions without the obedience to God and man. McCabe feels that by promoting this new morality, we, as a society, would promote a radical environment. People would not know where to set limits to consequences that must be encountered from situational decision-making (Cunningham, 1970).

Fletcher answered McCabe's concerns with further explanation and clarification of his theory. Fletcher explains that in ethics, decisions are made with future consequences in consideration, as well as the present consequences. Because decisions are carefully determined, no consequence will involve harm to others unless warranted absolutely necessary. Situation ethics is not a haphazard approach to making moral decisions,

but a more systematic approach when compared to those ideas that were previously expressed by other ethicists (Cunningham, 1970). This approach is meant to stir one's ethical cognition in decision-making, not to determine "what substantive values are to be in control" (Cunningham, 1970, p. 274).

Fletcher encouraged the comments and critiques he received from other ethicists because he used them to help refine and further clarify his main theory concerning the situational approach to ethical decision-making (Cunningham, 1970). All three approaches to ethical decision-making are considered an important part of Fletcher's work. Two of these approaches, the legalistic and the situational, have relevance in this study, as well as the utilitarian approach that was discussed earlier in this section.

Administration and Ethics

Many authors have written about topics concerning administration and ethics. These authors have addressed the following issues: (1) the importance of practicing good ethical standards, (2) the parts that one's values, the law, and the organization's policies play in making ethical

decisions, (3) ways that ethical decisions can be handled, (4) and other topics of interest. These writings will be reviewed in this section.

In his book Ethics for Public Managers, Gortner (1991) discusses the special context within which public administrators must make ethical decisions. Because they are constantly under the scrutiny of the general public, public administrators cannot avoid decisions. They are mandated to act upon each situation in order to carry out their public responsibility. These actions must be considered carefully because public administrators are held accountable for all consequences that may come about due to decisions made. Actions taken always affect a great number of people, whether they are directly involved in the situation or will be indirectly affected at a later date (Gortner, 1991).

Public administrators used to be thought of as those working within the government bureaucracy. Gortner (1991) defines a public administrator with an updated definition as follows:

anyone who is creating or carrying out publicly mandated policy that uses public resources to have an impact on individuals or groups of society (p. 12).

In further defining their duties, Gortner (1991) states that public administrators make decisions that "affect people's lives, are made in the

name of the public, and use public resources" (p.7). As one can see, these are duties that are carried out by school administrators. Therefore, Gortner's (1991) ideas are in reference to school administrators as well as other public management positions.

In analyzing and resolving ethical dilemmas, Gortner (1991) makes several suggestions. Analysis of a situation should be thorough and objective. Asking the right questions to learn the specifics in a situation is invaluable. Upon resolving the conflict, one's own values, the law, the philosophical and cultural setting, the organization's dynamics, and one's own professional background could all be possible considerations that would help in seeking the appropriate resolution (Gortner, 1991).

Lawler and Fielder (1991) offer a seven-step approach to analyzing an ethical situation. They state that: (1) the problem must be defined, (2) objectives should be set, (3) alternative responses should be determined, (4) those alternatives should be evaluated using the objectives, (5) the alternative that best meets the objectives should be selected, (6) a plan of action should be developed to put the choice into motion, and (7) the events that follow should be monitored and adjustments made if necessary. This plan, when followed, can help administrators make ethical decisions with greater ease (Lawler & Fielder,

1991).

Many other authors have written articles concerning the analysis and resolution of ethical dilemmas. Generally, their ideas are much like Gortner (1991) and Lawler and Fielder (1991). However, Walker (1993) suggested two additions to the decision-making process that are: "identifying the stakeholders, and identifying and eliminating unethical options" (p. 14). In an article published in Adult Learning, Zinn (1993) noted that: (1) one may wish to explore relevant codes of ethics, (2) try critical reflection techniques, (3) talk with peers and other professionals in the field who may have more experience, (4) listen to one's heart, (5) look for a win/win solution, and (6) sleep on the decision before taking any action.

Even with guidelines steps to follow, one will still occasionally experience conflict between his/her own values and the organization's structure making an ethical problem harder to resolve. Petrick, Wagley, and Von der Embse (1991) advise that the ideal scenario exists when one can use his/her sound managerial reasoning within an organization climate. Within this setting, these authors suggests a five-step plan of action is dealing with an ethical problem. These steps of consideration are:

(1) ethical context

- (2) ethical problem analysis
- (3) evaluation of alternative ethical solutions
- (4) recommended ethical decision with justification
- (5) implementation and control of the ethical decision (Petrick, Wagley, & Von der Embse, 1991)

To effectively make ethical decisions, one must intertwine his/her values along with the policies and culture existent within the organization (Petrick, Wagley, Von der Embse, 1991).

Jos and Hines (1993) further supported this idea of intertwinement between one's own values and the organization's policies and culture, when they discussed the importance of the "ethic of care" and the "ethic of justice." Although some people have argued in the past that these two standards of public ethics cannot be considered simultaneously, Jos and Hines (1993) argue that both the "ethic of care" and the "ethic of justice" should and must be incorporated into a public administrator's decision-making practice.

Parsons (1993) describes the conflict that public administrators must face as a struggle between the loyalties of oneself, the organization, the profession, and society. She states that one must face more and more ethical problems today due to the social trends of the past quarter of a century. The increase in communication between organizations and their

public has caused an increase on the focus of ethics in practice within the organizations (Parsons, 1993). The public has demanded a right to know, and this has placed a great emphasis on social responsibility for organizations.

The emphasis on social responsibility has caused many professions to reconsider the importance of a standard code of ethics for their field.

After reviewing literature, Jenkins (1983) found that a profession consists of the following characteristics:

- (1) possesses a unique set of abilities,
- (2) is based on a systematic body of knowledge,
- (3) is client-centered,
- (4) bonds its members together in associations,
- (5) is accorded a monopoly of licensure to protect standards,
- (6) possesses a regulatory code of ethical conduct,
- (7) assumes responsibility for professional acts, and
- (8) is accorded a fee for services (Jenkins, 1983).

In order for the educational field to become a member of the professional society, Jenkins (1993) feels that a regulatory code of ethics must be developed and enforced.

In a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration in Atlanta, Georgia, Holifield (1990) expressed the need for a code of ethics to aid educational

leaders in the decision-making process. This code of ethics would serve as a guideline for administrators when faced with ethical dilemmas. Holifield (1990) suggests several inclusions to consider for a code of ethics like: (1) respect individual rights, (2) seek the promotion of the general welfare of institution over one's own gain, (3) seek power along with one's followers, not over them, (4) provide equal opportunities, (5) maintain a good balance between organizational and individual needs, (6) practice shared leadership, allowing subordinates opportunities to make decisions and providing support and encouragement to subordinates, and finally, (7) be a peacemaker, practicing the Golden Rule (Do unto others as you would have them do unto you).

Immegart and Burroughs (1970) agree with Jenkins about the importance of a code of ethics for a field that wishes to be considered professional. They also agree with Ford and Richardson concerning their view that a code of ethics should serve as a guideline for administrators when faced with an ethical situation. Further, they state that no two ethical problems are the same, and no one code of ethics can solve all problems. The circumstances that arise in each situation are peculiar to that individual problem. One must use good judgment. There "are no substitutes for honesty, decency, courtesy, competence, common sense, and

good taste" (Immegart & Burroughs, 1970, p. 56). A number of individuals feel that there is no substitute for these aforementioned characteristics, therefore, the debate may never be resolved concerning professionalization and whether or not there is a need for a code of ethics (Freeman, Shaeffer, & Whitson, 1993). But, as these previous authors have stated, Egan (1990) says that a code of ethics is the beginning of ethical responsibility and, when used as a guideline, makes the administrator's job less cumbersome.

Whether or not a profession has a code of ethics is just one of the situation specific variables identified by Ford and Richardson (1994) in a review of literature. Other situational variables they (Ford and Richardson) found to affect one's ethical decisions are referent groups, rewards and sanctions, the type of ethical conflict, organization effects, and industry and business competitiveness. Ford and Richardson (1994) also identified variables that are unique to the individual decision-maker and influence his/her ethical choices. These variables are nationality, religion, sex, age, education, employment, and personality. Both the situational variables and the individual variables play a vital role in influencing the ethical decision-maker.

Another situational variable that may affect someone making an

ethical decision is existing policies. Duffee (1991) states a different view to be looked at concerning the law and how it affects educators in policy-making. He says that for too long educators have viewed the law as "what is," but suggests that the more appropriate view would be to define law as "what ought to be" (Duffee, 1991, p. 1). The law is a vehicle by which students, teachers, and members of society are treated fair, open, and honest. The policies developed in reference to the law should also reflect these attributes. School administrators must develop policies that are people-oriented rather than control-oriented. These policies should be broadly based to allow for flexibility, empathy, and tolerance, instead of being rigid, causing further alienation and conformity (Duffee, 1991). When this type of policy is made the standard to follow, educational administrators will find it a little easier to resolve ethical dilemmas.

Rudder (1991) further reiterates this idea of careful policy formulation stating that if one establishes laws or law-like policies to regulate conduct, he/she will deny the ethical decision-maker the opportunity of making a reflective practical judgment. There will be no room for a competent person to explore the possible alternatives to what is prescribed by law or policy. These laws merely protect the administrator who wishes to escape the responsibility of ethical judgment. One must be

allowed the freedom to examine all consequences and determine, through ethical reasoning, the best solution. This is unless he/she is considered incompetent to judge as a result of ignorance or error, pathologically incompetent to judge, or to be arguing or acting in bad faith. Rudder (1991) believes that ethical policies should be established as useful, practical guidelines that allow for the flexibility of ethical deliberation. It is under these circumstances that the right or best solution can come about (Rudder, 1991).

If administrators are going to be capable of writing policies that meet such requirements, they should be trained, in some manner, on the topic of ethics. Many authors have addressed the issue "Can Ethics Be Taught?" Bok (1970) wrote that many Americans have been reluctant in talking openly about ethical standards, and even professors have shied away from the topic for fear of appearing to seem censorious or trite. But this topic cannot be ignored in higher education, because of its necessary contribution to the future working society (Bok, 1970). Calabrese (1991) feels that administrator preparation programs must realize their responsibility to properly train their students in dealing with ethical dilemmas, making them capable of handling any situation that may arise with some knowledge and structure. Bok (1970) feels that the following

objectives can be met in a course of study on ethics: (1) help students recognize and become aware of moral issues that arise in their lives, (2) teach students to reason carefully in ethical situations, and (3) help students clarify their own moral aspirations.

In achieving such objectives, a college or university must have a competent professor to teach an ethics course. Bok (1970) states that a capable professor must have background knowledge of moral philosophy in order to select the most appropriate readings for students to make them aware of the most prevalent theories and arguments in dealing with ethical dilemmas. One must also have an adequate understanding of the field that students are taking the course under. For instance, if the course is meant to prepare teachers in ethical problem-solving, then the professor should have experience in the educational field and the ethical dilemmas particular to the field. Not only does this characteristic provide credibility among the students, but it also makes the course practical when students enter the work force. Finally, a professor must be able to conduct class discussions that elicit pertinent information rather than lofty student opinions (Bok, 1970).

In an article by Poynter and Thomas (1994), Harvard Business School found that not only do schools need competent professors to teach

ethics courses, they also need the support of a majority of the faculty to make an ethics education program successful. When several professors do not support such courses, they tend to belittle the relevance of those courses in the presence of students. This negative attitude is mimicked by the students, and the courses are not taken seriously.

To overcome some of the negative feelings toward an ethics course and make students aware of the importance of the subject, many ethics professors have used a variety of mediums to get the attention of students. These mediums include textbooks, case problems, videotape presentations, educational novels, and articles from publications related to the students' field of study (Smith, 1993). By using such examples, professors make students aware of ethical dilemmas that occur in their field. When students see that they will be faced with such dilemmas, they become interested and want to learn more about how to deal with such situations.

Luoma (1989) supports the idea that students' attitudes must be changed. He states that professionals who work in society must be willing to come to universities and colleges to visit classes for the purpose of discussing ethics with the students who will enter their field of work (Luoma, 1989). This sort of advocacy for ethics programs will help to alter students' attitudes and make classes more interesting and relevant.

As one can see from these sources dealing with administration and ethics, administrators must be aware of ethical situations, be capable of dealing with them, and have some logical format to follow if they are going to be successful at their job. Ethical dilemmas are frequently experienced in management (Hosmer, 1987). If one does not have the skills needed to handle such issues, he/she will experience difficulties as a school administrator. Higher education must address ethics in either a separate course of study or within existing courses in order to properly prepare administrators for the work force.

Current Studies on Ethics

Ethics has been researched by many fields of study in order to better understand how people and their values relate when making ethical decisions. In a study conducted at a public alternative high school for at-risk students, Mouritzen (1992) questioned students and teachers. She found that the students at this school had difficulties in determining acceptable right and wrong solutions when faced with cheating situations. She designed a twelve week teaching unit for English classes that would focus on four goals. The students would: (1) understand the principles

and motives behind cheating, (2) learn strategic methods for use in making moral decisions, (3) understand the meaning of plagiarism, and (4) develop research methods that would help them avoid plagiarism (Mouritzen, 1992).

Once the twelve week teaching unit was completed, Mouritzen (1992) found that the experimental unit had achieved partial completion of the desired goals. These results showed that the methodology used in the study could assist students in dealing with issues of right and wrong and would be worthwhile as a part of the English curriculum.

In a similar study performed by Carruth and Carruth (1991), juniors and seniors at a college of business were questioned about how well they felt college was preparing them on the subject of ethics. Over half of the participants (56%) felt that college courses had significantly influenced their value systems. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents said that their ethical principles were "found upon an educated and informed basis" (Carruth & Carruth, 1991). Most students (68%) also stated that their formal education had adequately prepared them to make ethical decisions (Carruth & Carruth, 1991).

Both of these studies show the importance that education can play upon shaping one's value system. They display the significance of needed

training in all fields on the subject of ethics.

Linn (1984) performed a study to compare one's moral developmental stage, using Kohlberg's levels of moral development, to his/her moral functioning stage when faced with a real-life decision. Kohlberg's six stages of moral development suggest that one's moral knowledge used in solving moral dilemmas is naturally developed over time and through experience. With each successive stage, one is expected to have a wider field of vision for moral decision-making.

Linn's study took place in a day care center, and participants were experienced early childhood educators. These participants responded to questions on Kohlberg's Standard Moral Judgement Interview to determine their level of moral development according to Kohlberg's stages. This instrument has been documented as an excellent tool for research in identifying individuals' stages of moral development in relation to Kohlberg's theory. In the Kohlberg test, the participants were asked to respond to a hypothetical dilemma. They were then tested on a constructed dilemma that was prepared to appear as lifelike as possible (Linn, 1984).

What Linn (1984) discovered was a great discrepancy existed between most participants' level of moral competence and their level of

moral functioning. An individual would test as capable of functioning at Kohlberg's level four of moral development, but when faced with a real-life dilemma, would regress to a lower stage of moral functioning. Linn (1984) concluded that such a discrepancy may be caused by factors that impede the development of teachers' autonomy that would allow them to initiate their own moral decisions.

Terpstra, Rozell, and Robinson (1993) looked at the influence of personality and demographic variables on ethical decisions for college business students in upper divisions. The variables were possible influences on one's ethical decisions in relation to insider trading in the business world. The following list was studied: interpersonal competitiveness, locus of control, need for achievement, self-esteem, religious beliefs, frequency of attendance at religious services, social class, parents' annual income, year in college, college major, college GPA, exposure to an ethics course, age, and gender. Participants answered questions concerning eight ethical dilemmas posed to them on a questionnaire (Terpstra, Rozell, & Robinson, 1993).

The results of Terpstra, Rozell, and Robinson's (1993) study indicated that interpersonal competitiveness, locus of control, religious beliefs, age, and gender were significant indicators of individuals' levels of

ethicality. The researchers also noted that "it is possible that situational variables exert relatively more influence over observed differences in ethicality than individual variables" (Terpstra, Rozell, & Robinson, 1993, p. 386). They suggested future examinations of the two different types of variables.

Students' preferences to making decisions that are ethical or practical in nature were examined by White and Dooley (1993). Graduate and undergraduate students were asked to evaluate lead characters in scenarios to determine whether the characters' actions were ethical or practical. The researchers wanted to know if the students would more likely evaluate another's action according to their own ethical standards or would more likely judge another's action in reference to the practicality of it (White & Dooley, 1993).

The responses elicited show that the students perceived practicality more important than ethicality.

Similar to Fletcher's three approaches to ethical decision-making, Pope and Forsyth (1983) described four different types of individuals in reference to their ethical decisions. These four groups are: (1) situationists (high on idealism and relativism), (2) subjectivists (low on idealism, high on relativism), (3) absolutists (high on idealism, low on

relativism), and (4) exceptionists (low on idealism and relativism). Pope and Forsyth (1983) defined idealism as the degree to which an individual thinks that correct moral actions will result in desirable consequences. Relativism is the degree to which an individual rejects universal moral principles, making moral judgments relative to the situation at hand (Pope & Forsyth, 1983).

To determine which category an individual most often functions within, Pope and Forsyth (1983) developed "The Ethics Position Questionnaire." This questionnaire asked participants to respond to contemporary issues, moral vignettes, classical psychological experiments, responses given after accusations regarding a possible lie, and moral behavior. The nine-point Likert-scaled instrument helped to categorize people's responses into the four groups (Pope & Forsyth, 1983).

The results of the study indicated that situationists determined answers to moral situations by making the situation the central focus. Subjectivists were affected by their personal values and concerns. Rigid adherence to traditional moral principles guided the absolutists' decisions. Finally, exceptionists seemed to be concerned with moral rules, but were willing under particular circumstances, to lay these rules aside (Pope & Forsyth, 1983).

More directly related to the dissertation topic are studies performed on ethics within school administration. Ashbaugh and Kasten (1984) interviewed 19 principals, asking them to describe two or three of the most difficult administrative decisions they had ever made in their careers. As they described these experiences, they were asked to do the following: (1) clarify major conflicts in each instance, (2) tell all available options, (3) name those who would benefit or lose from each option if chosen, (4) describe constraints they felt while making a decision, and (5) tell about personal convictions that affected their decision at the time. The interviewer also asked the participants to define their own approach to decision-making by specifying sources or experiences that help develop their personal convictions (Ashbaugh & Kasten, 1984).

Being ethnographic in nature, this study produced many individualistic results. But, in general, there were three descending categories of values that emerged. They were personalistic (values drawn from personal experiences), organizational (values based on organization's norms, systems concerns, and professional ethics), and transcendent (values more broadly based on codes of behavior, perhaps rooted in philosophy or religion). Most responses reflected personalistic or organizational values. The development of these values was attributed to

religion or educational training by nine of the participants. Others in the study, either stated that they did not know what had influenced their values or said that they felt all of their experiences in life thus far had helped to develop their values. Some of the factors they mentioned as influences toward their personal convictions were role models (parents and mentors), personal life events, experiences as a teacher, experiences as a parent, and personal tragedies (Ashbaugh & Kasten, 1984).

In determining what type of decisions were most difficult for the administrators, Ashbaugh and Kasten found that 51% of the respondents dreaded decisions concerning staff because, as adults, staff members resented and often disputed by law those decisions made by administrators concerning them. Student related decisions were the second most difficult, followed by school-community related decisions (Ashbaugh & Kasten, 1984).

Kirby, Paradise, and Protti (1990) identified typical ethical dilemmas for educational administrators and the normal levels of ethical reasoning. In the first phase of the study, a group of principals was asked to describe a typical ethical dilemma, including all alternatives considered, the course of action taken, any input provided by others, intended and unintended consequences, amount of support received from immediate

supervisors, and an evaluation of the decision made. More than half of the dilemmas involved questions concerning teacher competence. The others were about student behavior, teacher/student conflicts, and teacher/parent conflicts. The VanHoose and Paradise model was used in determining each administrator's level of ethical reasoning according to his/her self-reports of the decision-making process.

In the second phase of the study, principals were asked to evaluate their peers' level of ethical reasoning. This was then compared to their own reported level of ethical reasoning. Administrators saw themselves as operating at a higher ethical level than their peers, however, they were all shown to function at the same level when questioned about themselves. Researchers also found that one's ethical behavior is influenced by his/her superordinates' ethical behavior, that reported behavior does not indicate high levels of ethical reasoning, and that the levels of moral growth may be related to one's experience in an institution. Because of this, it is suggested that school administrators participate in workshops that address ethical issues in educational administration to further develop their level of ethical reasoning and gain support from fellow colleagues (Kirby, Paradise, & Protti, 1990).

After reviewing widespread evidence from his study concerning

principals in Chicago who violated rules and directives, Crowson (1989) decided to reread the data from interviews, asking why principals behave in "creative insubordination" (p. 412), as he called it. This reanalysis of the data focused on two new questions. First he asked, how often do principals face ethical decisions? Second, is this creative insubordination a conscientious attempt to make impersonal bureaucracy more humane, as was previously concluded in the first data analysis (Crowson, 1989)?

In determining how often principals are faced with ethical decisions, Crowson (1989) stated that most all decisions required some amount of ethical consideration. However, he specified the interest for this study to be on those decisions that require a conscious weighing of alternatives. The conclusion, after examining the principals responses, is that principals face ethical decisions fairly often.

Crowson's second question concerned principals bending the rules occasionally to meet circumstantial needs. This was answered by observing the beneficiaries of ethical decisions. Principals were noted as saying that their main concern was that the students be best served from the resulting decision in an ethical situation. Teachers and staff members were the principals next concern, followed by the school-site at large and then the principals themselves. Principals bent or broke rules and

directives, often while trying to meet the best needs of the beneficiaries in this hierarchical order. Reanalysis of the data further confirmed the notion that principals make ethical decisions with particular circumstances in mind for each individual situation (Crowson, 1989).

All of these studies indicate that ethics is an important issue that needs to be considered in all fields. While much research has been performed, more is needed to continue to gain a better understanding of one's value system, how it is formulated, and what values are actually practiced in real-life dilemmas. This research study extends the knowledge of ethics in educational administration by providing further information concerning decision-making approaches used by school administrators when faced with ethical dilemmas.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

The methods and procedures are an important formula needed to carry out any research study. In this project, these steps were carefully planned to enable the researcher to uncover the answers to the study's research questions. The primary goal of this study was to examine administrators' approaches to ethical dilemmas. As the methods and procedures were followed, data were gathered to help reach this major goal.

In this chapter, the process of selecting the study population, the methods used in collecting data, and the procedures used to analyze the collected data will be discussed.

Selection of the Study Population

This study was designed to examine a group of administrators who work together in one school system. Therefore, the population chosen was not randomly selected, but was chosen because the researcher felt that the school system as a whole would cooperate and participate in the study. Cooperation and participation were two important keys to the success of this research project because by choosing one school system as the target population, the number of possible subjects who may or may not have responded to the researcher's instrument(s) was limited.

This particular school system was also selected because it was felt to represent an average public school system in East Tennessee. It was of medium-size, consisting of twelve elementary, four middle, and two high schools. The student body, from these schools, came from each of the three socioeconomic classes with the distribution being 25% upper class, 50% middle class, and 25% lower class.

The researcher felt that although the system was specifically chosen (not randomly selected), it was appropriately and necessarily selected to make the study work. This school system was felt to adequately meet an average representation of East Tennessee school systems, though the

findings could not be generalized to the larger population as they would if the system had been randomly selected.

The group of administrators in this school system consisted of twelve elementary, four middle, and two high school principals, and four assistant middle school and four assistant high school principals. At the central office, there were one superintendent and seven supervisors. This made a total of 34 possible respondents for the study. Each of these administrators was asked to participate in the study once permission was granted by the superintendent to perform the study (Appendix B).

Instrumentation

In order to examine an administrator's approach to ethical dilemmas, a structured, close-ended survey questionnaire (Appendix D) was developed by the researcher. This instrument allowed the researcher to gather the necessary data in a short amount of time and with little expense. It also provided the participants with the opportunity to fill out the questionnaire on their own, without the pressure of the researcher being present.

The questionnaire was designed to measure an administrator's

approach to ethical dilemmas in relation to three possible categorical approaches: utilitarian, legalistic, and situational. The utilitarian approach focuses on the examination of consequences in a situation to seek the greatest balance of good over evil. The legalistic approach is when one strictly follows a set of rules and regulations. The situational approach involves entering decision-making with principles that may be compromised after careful reasoning. The questions addressed each of these three approaches as well as other related ethical questions of concern that met the study's goals.

The questionnaire contained four sections. The first section was created to obtain demographic information from respondents. Age, gender, race, level of education, administrative title, years of experience, previous administrative titles, and native of the county were items addressed by section I. Some of this information was used to help in specifically answering the research questions, while some of it was gathered only to help provide background information on the study population.

In section II, a case study was posed, asking questions about possible solutions to the ethical dilemma described. The scenario pictured a parent meeting concerning a student who was diagnosed HIV positive. The parents wanted to alert the administrators to the child's condition so

that he/she received proper emergency care if circumstances warranted. However, the parents did not want anyone else to know that their child was diagnosed HIV positive. The participants in the study had to then decide if they would respect the parents' wishes and, if so, to what extent by responding to the four posed solutions to the situation. This section was used merely as a warmup activity to allow the participants to get an idea of what was meant by the term ethical dilemma as it relates to the rest of the study. However, the findings will be discussed in chapter IV along with all other findings.

Section III asked questions about one's approach to ethical decisions. While many ethical approaches have been theorized throughout history, this study focuses on three approaches that are considered current theories of discussion. These approaches are as follows: utilitarian, legalistic, and situational. Nine statements were given that reflected each of the three approaches being studied: utilitarian, legalistic, and situational. Three questions were used to focus on each of the three different approaches. For instance, three of the questions were related to the situational approach, asking the respondent to what extent he/she might think about and approach an ethical dilemma in the way described by the question. These questions were used to determine which approach

might best fit the respondent's style of dealing with ethical dilemmas.

Finally, section IV asked the participants to examine fourteen possible circumstances that could arise in an ethical situation and to determine whether or not each of these circumstances could possibly influence their final decision. Such circumstances as bribery or having a personal friend involved in a situation were listed as possible influences on one's ethical decisions. These questions were asked to determine if the respondents might allow particular situational circumstances to affect their final ethical decisions.

In sections II, III, and IV, the respondents were asked to circle their response to each statement on a Likert-type scale ranging strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. This allowed the respondents to rate each statement according to the strongest possibility of their acting or practicing ethics in such a manner as stated.

At the end of the questionnaire, a final sheet followed which asked the respondents if they would be willing to participate in a short 15-minute interview. While the questionnaire provided the base of the study's findings, the interview allowed for more extensive and specific information to be gathered. The interview guide used at these meetings can be found in Appendix E.

Data Collection and Analysis

To begin the data collection process, each member of the selected population was given the letter of introduction to the study (Appendix C) and a questionnaire during a monthly administrative meeting. The researcher was given a few minutes to introduce the study, to assure confidentiality at all stages of the study, and to answer any questions the administrators had concerning the study. A few minutes were taken during the meeting to allow those who wished to fill out the questionnaire at that time to do so. Some administrators handed the completed questionnaire back to the researcher that day, while others chose to wait to complete the questionnaire later and mail it back to the address given in the letter of introduction.

After a two-week waiting period, several questionnaires had not been returned, so the researcher secured the names and addresses of all administrators in the school system. From this list and the signed consent forms already received, it was determined which administrators had not yet responded and would need to be mailed a reminder. Each of these administrators was mailed another letter of introduction and a questionnaire accompanied by a short memo (Appendix F), reminding

them to please complete the survey as soon as possible. It was also determined from the master list of names and addresses that there were several assistant principals who were not present at the meeting, and they were sent the mail-out as well.

The expected response rate was 75 percent or better. With the return of twenty-nine questionnaires out of a possible thirty-four responses, the actual return rate came to 85 percent, which was considered an excellent rate. The researcher was both pleased and astonished to find that fifteen respondents had agreed to set up an interview.

One month after the initial meeting where the study was introduced and the questionnaires were first distributed, the researcher contacted each participant of the study who had agreed to a follow-up interview. Two days had been chosen to conduct the interviews at one-hour intervals. The administrators were asked to select one of these days and a time that would be most convenient for them to be interviewed. The researcher met each administrator at his/her scheduled time to perform the interview, keeping each one around fifteen minutes as had been promised in the original agreement. The interviews were not recorded because the researcher felt that the respondents' answers would be more candid and the atmosphere would be more relaxed in the absence of a recording

device. The researcher took careful notes during the interviews to develop a record of the meetings.

Two administrators were never reached by phone to schedule the interviews. The researcher decided to stop by these two respondents' offices during a break between interviews on each of the scheduled days to see if the administrators could possibly be seen. These schedule breaks happened to work well for both administrators, so all fifteen interviews were conducted within the two days set up for this part of the study.

When the questionnaires were collected and the interviews were performed, the data were then calculated and analyzed. Because there were only twenty-nine participants in the study, the statistics used were primarily descriptive in nature. This simply means the statistics could only describe this particular studied population and could not be generalized to any other larger population.

The data analysis was organized according to each research question being answered. For research question number 1 (What approach do school administrators use in addressing ethical dilemmas?), the questions in section III of the questionnaire were separated according to which one of the three approaches they were addressing. Questions one, five, and eight dealt with the situational approach, questions two, four, and six dealt with

the utilitarian approach, and questions three, five, and nine dealt with the legalistic approach. A mean score was determined for each set of questions to decide what approach each respondent tended to use when he/she faced ethical situations. The mean scores were categorized and ranked in order to examine the respondents' responses to each approach.

Research question number two (Are there particular circumstances that may affect a school administrator's final decision when faced with an ethical dilemma?) dealt with data from section IV of the questionnaire. Only those questions that were answered undecided, agree, and/or strongly agree were of concern because these responses showed that the circumstances could possibly influence one's final decision in an ethical dilemma. These responses of interest were then categorized into positive and negative circumstances and were charted. Further discussion of the positive and negative categorization will occur in chapter IV.

For research question number three (Do men and women differ in their approaches to ethical dilemmas?), the demographic data from section I and mean scores for each approach that were calculated for research question number one were used to generate discussion. However, because the study had only a small number of participants ($n = 29$) and very few of them were women ($n = 5$), little could be drawn from the data to answer

this research question.

Research question number four (Does the number of years experience as an administrator affect one's approach to ethical dilemmas?) was answered by using the demographic data from section I and the mean scores for each approach to conduct a chi square analysis.

The final research question (What types of ethical dilemmas do school administrators face?) was answered ethnographically from the data gathered during the interviews. The interview data were used as well for discussion on each of the other four questions where it was applicable.

The results from section II of the questionnaire, the warmup case study, were discussed descriptively because this information, although not directly related to the research questions, was also a valid part of the study's results. Demographic data were also reviewed to provide a background on the target population for the reader.

These discussed methods and procedures were conducted in order to gather and analyze the data so that findings could be made and conclusions could be drawn. The next chapter will discuss the findings of this study.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND FINDINGS OF STUDY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how school administrators approach ethical situations. A limited amount of research has previously been conducted on the topic of ethics. The findings of this study therefore are an important addition to an area of much needed investigation. These findings hopefully will stimulate further research on the topic of ethics.

The data presented in this chapter were collected through the use of a questionnaire and an interview guide. These instruments were specifically designed for this study to determine what approach(es) school administrators use when faced with ethical dilemmas. The target administrative population of the school district was 34 administrators, and the number of actual respondents was 29 administrators. This limited the findings mostly to descriptive statistics and ethnographic discussion. The results, from the twenty-nine questionnaires completed and the fifteen

follow-up interviews conducted, were analyzed in terms of the research questions that guided the study. These questions are as follows:

1. What approach do school administrators use in addressing ethical dilemmas (utilitarian, legalistic, or situational)?
2. Are there particular circumstances that may affect a school administrator's final decision when faced with an ethical dilemma?
3. Do men and women differ in their approaches to ethical dilemmas?
4. Does the number of years experience as an administrator affect one's approach to ethical dilemmas?
5. What types of ethical dilemmas do school administrators face?

The findings and results of the study are organized into six sections. In the first section, the results from the general demographic data and the warmup activity in section II of the questionnaire will be discussed.

In section two, research question number one is answered by looking at the data gathered from section III of the questionnaire. Each respondent was given a mean score for each of the three approaches (utilitarian, legalistic, or situational). These mean scores were then used to categorize and rank each respondent by the three approaches, giving

the reader several perspectives of the results. Qualitative data from the follow-up interviews were also used to add to the results of this research question.

Section three will consider research question number two that explores possible circumstances that might affect an administrator's final decision in an ethical dilemma. Data from section IV of the questionnaire were used to determine if certain circumstances could influence the administrator's final decision. If a question was answered disagree or strongly disagree, the posed circumstance was considered not to be a possible influence. Therefore, only those questions that were answered undecided, agree, or strongly agree were considered for the data analysis.

Research question number three is dealt with in section four. Because the study's total number of participants was small ($n = 29$) and very few of them were women ($n = 5$), this question is only briefly discussed using the limited findings.

Section five answers research question number four by using demographic data from section I of the questionnaire and the mean scores for each approach that were produced to answer question one. A chi square analysis of this data was conducted to determine if the number of years experience as an administrator was related to the approach used in

facing ethical dilemmas.

The final research question is examined in section six through an ethnographic discussion of data gathered during the follow-up interviews. As stated previously, most of the findings are presented through descriptive statistics and ethnographic discussion. These research analyses were chosen through the guidance of statistical consulting from the University of Tennessee Computing Center. Whenever possible, data are presented in tabular form to make reading of the results more comprehensible for the reader.

Demographic Data and Case Study Results

The demographic data on the twenty-nine respondents help to provide a background on the target population used for the study. By examining Table 1, it can be seen that most respondents' ages fell between 40 to 59 years of age. No one was found between ages 20 and 29. Only one (3 percent) respondent was between ages 30 and 39. The largest group of seventeen (59 percent) respondents was found in the category of ages 40 to 49. In the category 50 to 59, eleven (38 percent) respondents were present. Finally, no one was categorized as 60 years of age and above.

Table 1. Age of Respondents

Years				
20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and above
0%	3%	59%	38%	0%

Total N of Administrator Questionnaires Analyzed = 29

Table 2 shows that most of the administrators in this study were male. Twenty-four (83 percent) respondents were male, while only five (17 percent) respondents were female.

Table 2. Sex of Respondents

Male	Female
83%	17%

Total N of Administrators Questionnaires Analyzed = 29

When analyzing the data on race, it was found that almost all the administrators studied were white. Twenty-eight (97 percent) of the twenty-nine respondents were white, and only one (3 percent) was black. No other races were represented in the study. Table 3 shows the results of the race inquiry.

Table 3. Race of Respondents

Black	White	Other
3%	97%	0%

Total N of Administrator Questionnaires Analyzed = 29

When looking at the educational level of the respondents, all the respondents possessed at least a master's degree, as was anticipated. Thirteen (45 percent) respondents had a master's degree, and nine (31 percent) respondents had a master's degree plus 45 more graduate credit hours. In the educational specialist degree category, one (3 percent) respondent was found. Six (21 percent) respondents had doctorate degrees. These results are tabulated in Table 4.

Table 4. Level of Education of Respondents

Bachelor's	Master's	Master's + 45	Ed. Specialist	Doctorate
0%	45%	31%	3%	21%

Total N of Administrator Questionnaires Analyzed = 29

The respondents were asked to give their current administrative title. As Table 5 shows, six (20.69 percent) respondents were assistant principals, and sixteen (55.17 percent) respondents were principals. There

were five (17.24 percent) respondents who were supervisors. The school system also had one (3.45 percent) superintendent and one (3.45 percent) assistant superintendent.

Table 5. Current Administrative Title of Respondents

Asst. Principal	Principal	Supervisor	Asst. Supt.	Supt.
20.69%	55.17%	17.24%	3.45%	3.45%

Total N of Administrator Questionnaires Analyzed = 29

Table 6 illustrates the number of years experience each respondent had in his/her current administrative position. These categories were fairly evenly distributed. Eight (28 percent) respondents had 0 to 5 years experience in their current position. Five (17 percent) respondents had 6 to 10 years experience. For 11 to 15 years experience, six (21 percent) respondents were listed. In the categories 16 to 20 and 21 or more, five (17 percent) respondents were found in each of these categories.

Table 6. Number of Years Experience in Current Administrative Position of Respondents

Years				
0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21 or more
28%	17%	21%	17%	17%

Total N of Administrator Questionnaires Analyzed = 29

When asked about previous administrative titles held, twenty-one (72 percent) respondents replied that they had held one or more other administrative titles. Eight (28 percent) respondents listed no previous administrative titles. By examining Table 7, it can be seen that out of the twenty-one respondents who held previous administrative titles, fifteen (52 percent) held one other title, three (10 percent) held two other titles, two (7 percent) held three other titles, and one (3 percent) held five other titles.

Table 7. Number of Previously Held Administrative Titles of Twenty-One Respondents

0	1	2	3	4	5
28%	52%	10%	7%	0%	3%

Total N of Administrators Who Held Previous Administrative Titles = 21

The administrators were also asked to give their total number of years experience in administration. As shown in Table 8, three (10.34 percent) administrators had 0 to 5 years experience, six (20.70 percent) administrators had 6 to 10 years experience, nine (31.03 percent) administrators had 11 to 15 years experience, one (3.45 percent) administrator had 16 to 20 years experience, and ten (34.48 percent) administrators had 21 or more years experience in administration.

Table 8. Total Number of Years Experience in Administration of Respondents

Years				
0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21 or more
10.34%	20.70%	31.03%	3.45%	34.48%

Total N of Administrator Questionnaires Analyzed = 29

Finally, the administrators were asked if they were natives of the county in which they were currently employed. The results were surprising. Fifteen (52 percent) respondents were natives of the county, and fourteen (48 percent) respondents were not natives of the county. It was anticipated that most of the administrators would be natives of the county. The results showed that this was not true, but that the two groups

were almost even. Table 9 tabulates these results.

Table 9. Response of Respondents as to Whether They Were a Native County Resident

yes	no
52%	48%

Total N of Administrator Questionnaires Analyzed = 29

The case study results are much like the demographic data.

Although they do not specifically answer any of the research questions, they do provide interesting knowledge about the target population and how they might resolve a particular ethical dilemma.

In the case scenario, used in the questionnaire, the parents of a young boy met with the principal, a supervisor, and the superintendent. The parents wished to inform the participants of the meeting that their child was diagnosed as HIV positive. The reason the parents were telling the administrators was because they wanted their son to receive proper emergency care immediately if circumstances ever required such actions. They asked that no one else be told about their son's condition. In the case study, the respondents were reminded of how careless staff members can be when dealing with situations where they should wear gloves, but

oftentimes do not take the time to put the gloves on before assisting in such a situation. The respondents had to decide, as participants of this hypothetical meeting, if they would respect the wishes of the parents and keep the information from the staff, or if they would tell some or all of the staff members involved.

The respondents were given four possible solutions and had to decide to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each. The solutions were: (1) I would tell the staff about the student and give his name. (2) I would tell the staff that we have a student who is HIV positive, alerting them to be more cautious with injured students, but would not reveal the name of the student. (3) I would tell only the staff members who work with the student when he most likely could be injured (i.e., the elementary homeroom teacher, the physical education teacher, any coaches). (4) I would not tell anyone under any circumstances.

As shown in Table 10, in response to solution one, telling the staff and naming the student who is HIV positive, one (3.60 percent) respondent strongly agreed, two (7.10 percent) respondents agreed, two (7.10 percent) respondents were undecided, eight (28.60 percent) respondents disagreed, and fifteen (53.60 percent) respondents strongly disagreed. For solution two, alerting the staff of an HIV positive student but withholding the

Table 10. Case Study Responses

Case Study Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Tell the staff there is an HIV positive student in the school and give his name.	3.60%	7.10%	7.10%	28.60%	53.60%
2. Alert the staff that there is an HIV positive student in the school, but withhold his name.	14.30%	14.30%	14.30%	35.70%	21.40%
3. Tell only the staff members about the HIV positive student who work with him when he is most likely to be injured (i.e. elementary homeroom teacher, p. e. teacher, any coaches).	0.00%	3.57%	17.86%	42.86%	35.71%
4. Tell no one under any circumstances about the HIV positive student.	21.00%	25.00%	18.00%	18.00%	18.00%

Total N of Administrator Questionnaires Analyzed = 28*

*One respondent did not answer this part of the questionnaire.

name, four (14.30 percent) strongly agreed, four (14.30 percent) agreed, four (14.30 percent) were undecided, ten (35.70 percent) disagreed, and six (21.40 percent) strongly disagreed with the solution. Telling only staff members who work with the student when he is most likely to be injured was responded to by none strongly agreeing, one (3.57 percent) person agreeing, five (17.86 percent) people remaining undecided, twelve (42.86 percent) people disagreeing, and ten (35.71 percent) people strongly disagreeing.

The final solution, telling no one under any circumstances, was responded to by six (21.00 percent) strongly agreeing, seven (25.00 percent) agreeing, five (18.00 percent) undecided, five (18.00 percent) disagreeing, and five (18.00 percent) strongly disagreeing. All of these scores for the case study were calculated on only twenty-eight returned questionnaires because one respondent skipped this section of the questionnaire. This respondent's questionnaire was kept in the study.

The responses to the first three possible solutions posed for the case study were widely varied by the respondents who felt that solution four (not telling anyone) was not the best solution. However, ten respondents, who either agreed or strongly agreed with solution four (telling no one under any circumstances), answered that they either disagreed or strongly

disagreed with the other three solutions. These ten respondents felt strongly about maintaining the confidentiality of the parents and student involved.

Research Question Number One:

What approach do school administrators use in addressing ethical dilemmas (utilitarian, legalistic, or situational)?

In answering the first research question, mean scores were calculated for each of the twenty-nine respondents, using the answers to the questions in section III of the questionnaire. These scores expressed the tendency for one to approach ethical dilemmas by a utilitarian, legalistic, or situational style. Questions one, five, and eight concerned the situational approach, where one allows each situation's circumstances to help determine the solution to a problem. Questions two, four, and six focused on the utilitarian approach, which says that one allows possible consequences to affect his/her solution to a problem. Finally, questions three, seven, and nine reflected the legalistic approach, which is used by those who make decisions in ethical situations according to preset rules and regulations.

By answering the questions on a five-point Likert-type scale, the respondents' mean scores could range from 1.0 to 5.0, with 5.0 being the highest possible score indicating the strongest agreement with the questions concerning that particular approach. Each respondent was categorized according to the approach they scored highest on out of the three approaches used for the study. This was considered to be the approach that each respondent would most likely use when faced with an ethical dilemma. If a respondent had two identical mean scores that were his/her highest scores, he/she was categorized as ambiguous, meaning that the respondent could not be clearly categorized into one group. In one case, a respondent had three identical mean scores and was categorized as ambiguous. So each respondent was categorized in one of the following groups: situational, utilitarian, legalistic, or ambiguous.

In Table 11, one can see that out of the twenty-nine respondents, eleven (38 percent) were categorized situational, nine (31 percent) were categorized utilitarian, one (3 percent) was categorized legalistic, and eight (28 percent) were categorized ambiguous.

Table 11. Categorization of Respondents by Approaches

Situational	Utilitarian	Legalistic	Ambiguous
38%	31%	3%	28%

Total N of Administrator Questionnaires Analyzed = 29

The respondents' mean scores were also ranked to show further distribution of the scores. Each respondent was ranked according to his/her highest (1st), middle (2nd), and lowest (3rd) scores. Again, when a respondent had two identical mean scores, he/she was placed in the ambiguous category. Table 12 reflects the ranking of the mean scores. The highest scores (1st) are the same as the categorization scores. The middle scores (2nd) show that seven (24 percent) people ranked situational second, eight (28 percent) people ranked utilitarian second, two (7 percent) people ranked legalistic second, and twelve (41 percent) ranked ambiguous second. The lowest scores indicate that five (17 percent) respondents ranked situational third, two (7 percent) respondent ranked utilitarian third, seventeen (59 percent) respondents ranked legalistic third, and five (17 percent) respondents ranked ambiguous third. The reader should keep in mind that because the ambiguous category was used for respondents with two identical mean scores, these respondents ranked

ambiguous two or three times.

Table 12. Ranking of Respondents by Approaches

Ranking Order	Situational	Utilitarian	Legalistic	Ambiguous
1st	38%	31%	3%	28%
2nd	24%	28%	7%	41%
3rd	17%	7%	59%	17%

Total N of Administrator Questionnaires Analyzed = 29

By further examination of the ambiguous scores, the researcher found that the respondents' tied scores were between different categories. In other words, the majority of the ambiguous scores were not a tie between the same two categories. Out of the eight respondents who ranked ambiguous first and second, three (37.5 percent) of them tied on the categories situational and utilitarian, three (37.5 percent) of them tied on the categories utilitarian and legalistic, and one (12.5 percent) of them tied on the categories situational and legalistic. The last one (12.5 percent) of these eight respondents, tied on all three categories. For those four respondents who ranked ambiguous second and third, three (75 percent), tied on the utilitarian and legalistic categories, and one (25 percent) tied on the situational and legalistic categories. Tables 13 and 14 illustrate

these results.

Table 13. The Two Approaches With Tied Scores That Caused the Eight Respondents to Rank Ambiguous 1st and 2nd

Situational & Utilitarian	Utilitarian & Legalistic	Legalistic & Situational	All Three Approaches
37.5%	37.5%	12.5%	12.5%

Total N of Administrators Who Ranked Ambiguous 1st and 2nd = 8

Table 14. The Two Approaches With Tied Scores That Caused the Four Respondents to Rank Ambiguous 2nd and 3rd

Utilitarian & Legalistic	Situational & Legalistic
75%	25%

Total N of Administrators Who Ranked Ambiguous 2nd and 3rd = 4

According to the categorization of the mean scores, most administrators use a situational or utilitarian approach to ethical dilemmas. Few administrators use a legalistic approach, including those whose mean scores fell into the ambiguous category.

Examining the results of the fifteen follow-up interviews, the researcher found the responses to remain relatively consistent. Most administrators said they relied on the possible consequences (indicating

the utilitarian approach) and/or the individual circumstances (indicating the situational approach) when faced with an ethical dilemma. Such comments as, "Sometimes you have to look at individual circumstances," and "Possible consequences [need to be considered]," indicated that it was almost impossible to stick to the rules as the only basis for ethical decisions. Though many administrators stated that they were now using the assertive discipline program, which dictates the next disciplinary action to be taken when a school rule is broken, most admitted that individual circumstances and/or possible consequences still played a role in their ethical decisions.

When asked to describe their ethical philosophies, the administrators also gave answers that indicated that they approached ethical situations in a utilitarian and/or situational frame of mind. Most administrators said that they tried to be fair, honest, and compassionate to all their students and teachers. One respondent quoted the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," as his motto. Another respondent said, "I try to treat all my children alike. . . no double standards." It was expressed several times that not everyone can be pleased with the final results and that that is not the goal. Everyone, however, should be treated fairly and be given the benefit of the doubt. A

few administrators said that they relied on prayer and their values to help them as they examined the circumstances and/or consequences of a situation and searched for the best decision. These findings further support the idea that most administrators use a situational or utilitarian approach when faced with an ethical dilemma.

When the researcher compared each respondent's categorical approach to his/her responses on the case study, widely varied responses were found. No patterns of relationship between respondents' ethical approach and their choice of a solution to the ethical case study involving the student who was HIV positive emerged.

Research Question Number Two:

Are there particular circumstances that may affect a school administrator's final decision when faced with an ethical dilemma?

In section IV of the administrator's questionnaire, possible circumstances were listed that could influence one's final decision in an ethical situation. The respondents decided, on the five-point Likert-type scale, to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the possibility of each

circumstance affecting their ethical decisions. If the respondent answered that he/she disagreed or strongly disagreed, then the circumstance was considered not to be a possible influence on the administrator's ethical decisions. By answering disagree or strongly disagree, the respondent indicated that he/she did not consider the circumstance to be a possible influence. If the respondent answered that he/she strongly agreed, agreed, or was undecided about the circumstance, then the circumstance was considered to be a possible influence on the administrator's ethical decisions. By answering strongly agree, agree, or undecided, the respondent indicated that he/she considered the circumstance to be a possible influence. These responses, indicating possible influence, were labeled the responses of interest and were further analyzed and tabulated. As Table 15 shows, sixteen (55 percent) respondents had one or more responses of interest, while thirteen (45 percent) respondents did not have any responses of interest.

Table 15. Number of Respondents Whose Responses on the Influential Circumstances Were and Were Not of Interest

Responses of Interest	Responses Not of Interest
55%	45%

Total N of Administrator Questionnaires Analyzed = 29

The responses of interest were divided into two categories, those whose circumstances were considered positive and those whose circumstances were considered negative. Questions three, five, eight, and thirteen of the questionnaire were considered positive circumstances that could affect one's ethical decisions. These questions are as follows:

3. I would alter my decision if I felt pity toward a person involved.
5. I would alter my decision if I felt compassion for a person involved.
8. I would alter my decision if a person involved was extremely poor.
13. I would alter my decision if a person involved had his/her career at stake.

These questions were categorized as positive because they were not seen as bad circumstances that could affect one's decisions.

Questions one, two, four, six, seven, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, and fourteen of the questionnaire were categorized as negative circumstances that could affect one's ethical decisions. These questions read:

1. I would alter my decision if I was offered bribery money for the school.
2. I would alter my decision if I felt hatred toward a person involved in the situation.

4. I would alter my decision if it could affect a possible job promotion for myself.
6. I would alter my decision if I was offered bribery money for myself.
7. I would alter my decision if a person involved was a good friend.
9. I would alter my decision if a person involved was lazy.
10. I would alter my decision if bad publicity could be a consequence suffered.
11. I would alter my decision if a person involved had cheated other people or the school system.
12. I would alter my decision if a person involved offered to do me a favor.
14. I would alter my decision if I felt scared or threatened by a person involved.

These questions were categorized as negative because they were seen as bad circumstances that could affect one's decisions.

After categorizing the questions into positive and negative groups, the researcher determined how many times each respondent was influenced by positive and negative circumstances. The respondents examined were the sixteen out of the total twenty-nine respondents who

had responses of interest (see Table 15). By looking at those who were affected by positive circumstances, it was found that three (18.75 percent) people were influenced by one circumstance, five (31.25 percent) people were influenced by two circumstances, five (31.25 percent) people were influenced by three circumstances, and three (18.75 percent) people were influenced by four circumstances. When examining the negative circumstances, it was determined that four (25.00 percent) respondents were not influenced by any negative circumstances, eight (50.00 percent) respondents were influenced by one circumstance, three (18.75 percent) respondents were influenced by two circumstances, and one (6.25 percent) respondents was influenced by three circumstances. Table 16 shows these results.

Table 16. Number of Positive and Negative Circumstances That Influenced the Sixteen Respondents Who Had Responses of Interest

Circumstances	0	1	2	3	4
+	0.00%	18.75%	31.25%	31.25%	18.75%
-	25.00%	50.00%	18.75%	6.25%	0.00%

Total N of Respondents With Responses of Interest = 16

Another point of interest for the reader is to see how many responses of interest there were for each question. Table 17 illustrates that for the questions concerning positive influential circumstances, there were forty total responses of interest: eight (20 percent) responses for question 3, fourteen (35 percent) responses for question 5, six (15 percent) responses for question 8, and twelve (30 percent) responses for question 13.

Table 17. Number of Responses of Interest for Each Positive Influential Circumstance

Question Numbers			
3	5	8	13
20%	35%	15%	30%

Total N of Positive Responses of Interest = 40

In Table 18, it is shown that out of a total of seventeen negative responses of interest, seven (41 percent) responses were for question 7 (good friend), five (29 percent) responses were for question 10 (bad publicity), two (12 percent) responses were for question 11 (person who cheated), and three (18 percent) responses were for question 14 (felt scared or threatened). For questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, and 12, no responses of interest were found.

Table 18. Number of Responses of Interest for Each Negative Influential Circumstance

Question Numbers									
1	2	4	6	7	9	10	11	12	14
0%	0%	0%	0%	41%	0%	29%	12%	0%	18%

Total N of Negative Responses of Interest = 17

All of the sixteen respondents, who had responses of interest on section IV of the administrator's questionnaire, were affected by one to four of the positive influential circumstances, while twelve of the sixteen respondents were affected by one to three of the negative influential circumstances. Most of these respondents (eight of them) were only affected by one of the negative influential circumstances.

Research Question Number Three:

Do men and women differ in their approaches to ethical dilemmas?

In this study, out of the twenty-nine responding administrators, only five (17 percent) were females. The researcher felt that because the target population was so small and the percentage of females versus males was

skewed, it would be inappropriate to make any analysis of the data beyond simple description concerning this research question.

The five females who responded to the questionnaire were categorized by approach as follows: Two were situational, one was utilitarian, and two were ambiguous. These results are proportionally equal to the male categorization results. However, if more female responses had been available, the female results may have differed greatly from the male results. With such a small amount of data, it is hard to say what the findings might have been with a larger population that had a more equal number of females versus males.

Research Question Number Four:

Does the number of years experience as an administrator affect one's approach to ethical dilemmas?

To answer research question number four, the administrators were split into two categories based on the number of years experience. These two categories were zero to ten years and eleven or more years experience as an administrator. Although the demographic inquiry in the questionnaire had originally divided the group of respondents into five

categories, the small number of respondents made it necessary to recode them into two categories that were approximately equal.

The two groups were then sorted according to their approach categorization that was determined in research question number one. In Table 19, the number of observed respondents who fell into each categorical approach is tabulated. Table 20 shows the number of *expected* respondents who should fall into each categorical approach. The expected number of respondents was calculated according to what was considered a normal distribution of respondents for each categorical approach. Using these two tables of observed and expected frequencies, a chi square test was run. This test was used to determine if a relationship existed between the two variables, ethical approach and number of years experience as an administrator. The chi square formula is as follows:

$$\chi^2 = \Sigma \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

where χ^2 = chi square

Σ = the sum of

O = observed frequencies

E = expected frequencies

The χ^2 sum was computed to be 1.623. By using a significance level of 5 percent with 3 degrees of freedom, the researcher found that the χ^2 score

required to indicate a relationship is 7.82. Since 1.623 is less than 7.82, there is no reason to believe that a relationship exists between one's ethical approach and the number of years experience as an administrator.

Table 19. Observed Number of Respondents for Each Approach According to Years Experience

Years	Situational	Utilitarian	Legalistic	Ambiguous
0-10	4	2	0	3
11 or more	7	7	1	5

Total N of Administrative Questionnaires Analyzed = 29

Table 20. Expected Number of Respondents for Each Approach According to Years Experience

Years	Situational	Utilitarian	Legalistic	Ambiguous
0-10	3	3	0	2
11 or more	8	6	1	6

Total N of Administrative Questionnaires Analyzed = 29

Research Question Number Five:

What types of ethical dilemmas do school administrators face?

The follow-up interview guide, used at the fifteen voluntary interviews, was designed to ask questions that stimulated the respondents' thoughts toward specific ethical incidents at their schools. This opened the opportunity for the researcher to inquire further about such incidents if the respondents originally did not offer such information. In many cases, the respondents were eager to share the ethical dilemmas they had faced. However, some respondents were a little hesitant to share about their dilemmas. One respondent, involved in special education, had to be careful about what he shared due to legal concerns and his own protection. The interview results showed a pattern of several types of ethical dilemmas that most administrators face.

When asked to describe an ethical situation that they recently faced, several respondents mentioned special education concerns. Special education was mentioned as a topic of ethical dilemmas by more respondents than any other topic of concern. The major thread running through these dilemmas was discipline. With all the new special education laws protecting the certified child, how can an administrator punish two

children for the same misbehavior and be fair? When punishing a regular education student and a special education student, the same correctional action cannot always be administered to both because of the strict guidelines set forth by law. Often an IEP (individualized educational program)-team meeting can be scheduled to work out the punishment for the special education student, but this process can take weeks. By then, the student has already forgotten what he/she did wrong.

One administrator mentioned a story about a special education student whose educational program demanded an excessive amount of money. He wanted to do what was best for the child, but he felt that the cost was unreasonable. He said, "I'm an advocate for kids, but some things they are demanding and getting in special education are unreasonable."

Another administrator spoke about a situation where three girls violated a drug rule. The usual punishment was to send them to alternative school that met in the evening. One of the girls was a special education student whose adoptive parents worked all day. Due to her severe emotional and psychiatric problems and practice of some witchcraft rituals, she could not be left at home alone all day. The administrator had a difficult time trying to decide how to punish this student equally and help the parents with the problem of leaving the child unattended during

the day. He knew the adoptive parents were loving and giving and had made great efforts with the girl since they had taken her into their household. He decided that the best solution would be to send her to alternative school in the evening and to in-school suspension during the day in the special education room, with agreement and support of the special education teacher. This solution helped everyone involved and did not send a wrong message to the other girls who had also broken the drug rule.

Administrators find that special education situations are often ethical dilemmas. Making decisions in these situations is difficult and time-consuming.

Although several administrators commented on how well their staff worked together as a unit and how fortunate it was to have such a great staff, a few administrators stated a staff problem as a recent ethical dilemma they had faced. One respondent described an incident where he was forced to redo some evaluations on a classroom teacher. Instead of instructing her students and expecting them to produce work, she was reading the newspaper and allowing her students to do whatever they wished. Her past evaluations by the previous administrator, however, did not reflect such behavior, but reported that she was an excellent teacher,

performing her job well. The administrator currently at the school decided that he must reevaluate her, and he documented the inappropriate actions, although her husband was a politically influential man in the school system and community.

Other respondents mentioned situations where staff members did not get along. The administrators found themselves trying to decide whether to act as a mediator to help resolve the problem or to stay out of the situation and allow the teachers to work things out on their own.

Discipline problems were discussed by several administrators as ethical dilemmas. In one case, the respondent described the use of profanity and questioned whether or not he was always consistent with his disciplinary actions. He said that sometimes he felt unfair when punishing a child for using profanity because he knew the family background was the cause. Often, it seemed that the child did not "know better," he said. He questioned himself a lot about whether the actions he took were right or not.

Family background often makes decisions hard for administrators. Another administrator described a student whose alcoholic mother was non-caring and whose irresponsible father had died of a drug overdose. The student was a "good kid, but makes spur of the moment decisions," he

said. After the child had been referred to the office twice, the administrator was forced to suspend the him for "talking out." When the student came back to school, the administrator had a discussion with him concerning his behavior. The administrator then moved him to another classroom with a teacher who would be more sympathetic to the child's needs, providing him with nurturance and guidance.

In another situation described by a respondent, an administrator found it hard to discipline a child for overt misbehavior, knowing that the child was being abused by her father. He said that it is "hard to be professional and ethical at the same time." While special education, staff problems, and disciplining students seemed to be the major topics of concern for most of the respondents, other types of ethical dilemmas were described in the follow-up interviews. These situations are as follows:

1. Having a board member try to destroy the reputation of a teacher for no just reason.
2. Parental complaints about controversial books in the library.
3. Racial tension among students, staff, and/or community.
4. Materials allocated for one specified program in the school, but needed for use in other programs at the school as well.
5. Parents who are personal friends seeking special treatment for

their child.

6. Difficult choices in moving staff members to positions where they need to be versus current positions where they do not function adequately.

These described situations give one an idea of the variety of ethical dilemmas that can face a school administrator. When asked if they felt that school administrators were faced with many ethical dilemmas, eleven (73 percent) of the interviewees said yes. Most of them explained that they felt the ethical situations they were faced with grew more in number each year. One respondent said he could "remember the days when we weren't faced with so many [ethical dilemmas]." He said that it "makes me disappointed" and that he had to "look to God above for help." Another respondent said that people had lost respect for authority. A third respondent is quoted as saying, "about everything we do involves ethics." Several administrators said not only had the number of ethical dilemmas grown, but the intensity of them had increased as well.

Four (27 percent) respondents interviewed did not feel that school administrators are faced with many ethical dilemmas. One respondent said that the families knew him and the community was easy to deal with in most situations. Another respondent said that his position was the

"best job in this county." Each of these respondents expressed that they either tried to put themselves in the situation and/or tried to treat equally all individuals when dealing with an ethical situation. By personally relating to the individuals involved, these administrators may have made their jobs easier.

In the interview, the administrators were also asked if they had ever made an ethical decision that later they regretted. Nine (60 percent) respondents said yes, that they had made decisions in the past that later they regretted. Some of the situations they described were:

1. Letting students off too easily when they should have been punished.
2. Allowing parents to have the upper hand in a disciplinary meeting.
3. Paddling a female student and later thinking that maybe the "licks" were too hard.
4. Getting a special education student out of criminal charges and later seeing him commit another similar crime.
5. Compromising with a fellow administrator on hiring a teacher who later had to be terminated.
6. Punishing a child in haste and later finding out that the child

was telling the truth and had done nothing wrong.

7. Recommending children for special services in the community and later realizing that they were recommended to the wrong agency or an agency who did not perform well and as a result the students wound up dead (incidences where children were beaten to death or overdosed on drugs and/or alcohol).

Six (40 percent) respondents said that they had never regretted any ethical decisions they had made. Most said that once they made a decision, they stood by it. One respondent commented that although he may have not always felt good about a decision at first, in the end, it worked out for the best. Another respondent said that the key to making the best decision for him was to "take a lot of time to consider everything before making a decision."

These results from the follow-up interviews have provided a narrative and more descriptive view of the respondents' ethical dilemmas. The results give insight into how some of these dilemmas are dealt with by the respondents. They also show that most administrators feel burdened by ethical situations and find the task of ethical decision-making a difficult one.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, a summary of the study will be given. In section two, the findings of the study will be presented. Section three gives conclusions relative to the findings, and section four contains recommendations.

Summary of the Study

As history shows, humankind has had moral conceptions since the beginning of time. Values and ethical standards have long been a part of the family's responsibility in raising young children. But today's quick changing society has caused us to be more concerned as a nation of our ethical values and standards. This is especially true in our schools where

children's minds are being shaped into the future leaders of tomorrow. School administrators feel the burden of many ethical issues and must be capable of dealing with them when controversial situations arise. While previous research has looked at various aspects of ethics in relation to school administration, few studies have been conducted that looked at how school administrators respond when faced with an ethical dilemma. Therefore, the researcher felt a study was needed that examined the approach(es) administrators use to handle ethical situations in public schools.

The purpose of this study was to determine how school administrators respond to ethical dilemmas by exploring their approaches to ethical situations. The three ethical approaches examined in this study were selected because they are considered current approaches of discussion in the field of ethics. Additionally, this study looked at particular circumstances that might affect administrators' final decisions, and asked administrators to relate ethical dilemmas they had faced. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What approach do school administrators use in addressing ethical dilemmas (utilitarian, legalistic, or situational)?
2. Are there particular circumstances that may affect a school

administrator's final decision when faced with an ethical dilemma?

3. Do men and women differ in their approaches to ethical dilemmas?
4. Does the number of years experience as an administrator affect one's approach to ethical dilemmas?
5. What types of ethical dilemmas do school administrators face?

The data were collected from a survey questionnaire designed specifically for this study. Questionnaires were distributed to each of the 34 school administrators at a medium-sized public school system in East Tennessee. Of the 34 school administrators in the chosen target population, 29 of them returned their questionnaires, making the return rate 85 percent. Fifteen (52 percent) of the respondents agreed to participate in a follow-up interview, where more specific questions were asked.

The collected data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, chi square analysis, and ethnographic discussion.

Summary of the Findings of the Study

The summary of the study's findings will be addressed according to the five research questions in numerical order.

Research Question Number One:

What approach do school administrators use in addressing ethical dilemmas (utilitarian, legalistic, or situational)?

By categorizing the school administrators according to their mean scores for each of the three studied approaches (utilitarian, legalistic, and situational), it was found that many of them (38 percent) used a situational approach to ethical dilemmas. Almost one-third (31 percent) preferred a utilitarian approach, and only one respondent (3 percent) used a legalistic approach. Several administrators (28 percent) fell into the ambiguous category because they had two or three mean scores that were equal. Further examination of these results showed that most of them tied between the categories of situational and utilitarian (37.5 percent) or utilitarian and legalistic (37.5 percent). One respondent (12.5 percent) tied between legalistic and situational, and one other respondent (12.5 percent)

tied on all three categories.

By examining the results of the fifteen follow-up interviews, it was found that most administrators relied on possible consequences (indicating the utilitarian approach) and/or individual circumstances (indicating the situational approach) when faced with an ethical dilemma. It was, therefore, concluded that most school administrators use either a situational or utilitarian approach to ethical situations.

Research Question Number Two:

Are there particular circumstances that may affect a school administrator's final decision when faced with an ethical dilemma?

Out of the 29 respondents, 16 (55 percent) were influenced by one or more posed circumstances. These circumstances were categorized into positive and negative groups according to whether they were seen as good or bad circumstances that could affect one's ethical decisions. All sixteen of the respondents were affected by one to four positive circumstances. Twelve of the sixteen were affected by one or three negative circumstances.

These results showed that a little more than half of the 29 respondents were influenced by the circumstances stated in the

questionnaire. One-fourth of these respondents were only affected by positive (good) circumstances, while three-fourths of them were affected by both positive and negative (bad) circumstances. Eight of the twelve respondents affected by negative circumstances were only affected by one negative influential circumstance.

Research Question Number Three:

Do men and women differ in their approaches to ethical dilemmas?

Because the number of respondents was small (29), and the number of females versus males was askew (5 versus 24), it would be inappropriate to make any conclusions concerning this research question. The limited data showed that two women were categorized situational, one was categorized utilitarian, and two were categorized ambiguous. These findings are comparatively equal to the male categorizations. However, if more female responses had been available, these results may have differed greatly.

Research Question Number Four:

Does the number of years experience as an administrator affect one's approach to ethical dilemmas?

The respondents were grouped into two age categories of 0 to 10 years experience and 11 or more years experience. The respondents' approach results were corresponded with their number of years experience. No significant difference was found when a chi square analysis was conducted. The χ^2 sum equaled 1.623, and the required χ^2 , indicating significance at the 5 percent level with 3 degrees of freedom, was 7.82. It was concluded that the number of years experience is not related to one's ethical approach.

Research Question Number Five:

What types of ethical dilemmas do school administrators face?

Based on the responses given during the fifteen follow-up interviews, many administrators were faced with ethical dilemmas involving special education. They described situations concerning boundaries of discipline set forth by special education laws, unreasonable

costs of special education programs versus regular education programs, and difficult choices of trying to be fair in special education cases.

Some administrators also discussed problems concerning staff members, which included dealing with incompetence and handling disputes among the staff.

Discipline problems were also a topic of concern for several administrators. These respondents had a hard time making decisions pertaining to students whose family backgrounds influenced their behavior problems. Knowing that a child hears profanity all the time at home, has an alcoholic mother and a dead father due to a drug overdose, or has a sexually abusive father makes the ethical decisions concerning the discipline of misbehavior much harder for these administrators.

Other types of situations were mentioned in the interviews. But these three types, (1) special education, (2) staff conflicts, and (3) student discipline, were mentioned more frequently by the administrators interviewed.

The researcher discovered that three-quarters of the interviewees felt that school administrators were faced with many ethical dilemmas. Most of them felt that the number of ethical dilemmas grew and the intensity of each increased every year.

Finally, when asked if they had ever made an ethical decision that later they regretted, 60 percent replied yes.

Conclusions

Based on the study's findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Most school administrators addressed ethical dilemmas by a situational or a utilitarian approach.
2. There were several circumstances that affected school administrators' final decisions, but most of these circumstances were viewed as positive influences.
3. The number of years experience as an administrator was not related to one's approach used to face ethical situations.
4. School administrators were faced with many types of ethical dilemmas, but more often they were concerned with problems dealing with special education, staff conflicts, and student discipline.
5. Ethical dilemmas have grown in number and intensity each year, making school administrators' jobs increasingly harder.

6. Many administrators have made ethical decisions that later they regretted for one reason or another.

Recommendations

The findings and conclusions suggest the following recommendations:

1. Educational leadership departments at colleges and universities must continue to strive in developing and providing the best ethical training to future school administrators.
2. School systems should make in-service training available that deals with the changing ethical issues of concern in public education and possible ethical approaches for school administrators.
3. A school administrator should examine his/her approach to ethical dilemmas and decide if it is meeting his/her needs in addressing and handling situations in the educational setting.
4. School administrators should seek help from outside agencies whenever needed to arrive at the best ethical solution to a problem.

5. Professional administrative organizations should deal more with changing ethical issues and ethical approaches for school administrators in their local and national meetings.
6. Further research on the ethical approaches used by administrators is needed to determine what steps of action work best for the types of approaches researched in this study. With this information, substantial units of study could be developed for use in the college or university classroom, at associational meetings for professional administrative organizations, and at in-service training for school administrators.
7. Further research is needed on the addressed research questions of this study on a broader level. This study may serve as a pilot for future researchers in leading such endeavors. Other questions needing exploration include:
 - What training and experiences prepared you to deal with ethical dilemmas?
 - What training would you like to have had ?
 - What types of training would you currently like to have that would benefit you and your school system?

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter of Permission to Perform the Study Written for Participating School District

[Date]

Dear [Superintendent's Name],

I am writing you to request permission to perform a research study in your school district. As a school administrator, you are aware of the many ethical dilemmas an administrator faces each day.

As a doctoral student studying school administration at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, I am interested in reviewing ethical practices as perceived by school administrators in your school system. The study will specifically examine the approaches used by administrators to ethical situations. Being a recent doctoral candidate yourself, I am sure you know the importance of research studies like this one.

Enclosed is a copy of the *School Administrators' Perceptions Questionnaire*, which asks questions about how one may deal with ethical dilemmas. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. I would like your school administrators, including principals, assistant principals, supervisors, and yourself, to participate in completing this instrument. I have also included the cover letter that will be sent with each questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire, I have asked for volunteers who would be willing to participate in a short, follow-up interview. This interview would be about 15 minutes in length. An interview guide may be found in the attachments as well.

I can assure you that the study's results will be reported collectively in order to protect the individual respondents and maintain confidentiality.

I would like to give the questionnaire to your school administrators at one of your monthly meetings. As stated above, the questionnaire will take only a few minutes to complete and would not take up much of your meeting time. I would also be on hand to answer any questions that might arise.

This study will be beneficial because it will raise the awareness of school

administrators to the relevance of practicing good ethics, therefore, making the issue a common topic of concern. For each participant, it is hoped that he/she will gain a better understanding of his/her ethical decision-making process and choose to maintain the process or alter it to better suit the needs of his/her job and individual circumstances.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this study. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (615) 689-1499.

Sincerely,

Michelle Lakin
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX B

Letter From the Superintendent Granting Permission to Perform the Study

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN HAMBLÉN COUNTY SCHOOLS

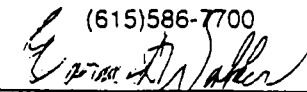
1. Name and mailing address of the researcher(s):
Michelle Lakin
6603 Hickory Way Lane
Knoxville, TN 37919
2. Telephone number where the researcher(s) can be reached in the daytime:
(615) 689-1499
3. Position(s) of the principal researcher:
☒ undergraduate student, graduate student, college professor
(circle one and specify institution)
☐ Hamblen County employee (specify job and location)

☒ other (specify occupation and affiliated institution, if any)
music teacher for Knox County Schools
4. Exact title of the proposed study:
A Study of the Approaches School Administrators Use in Making Ethical Decisions Within the Typical County Public School District
5. Attach the following items:
A. Brief description of the proposed study which is not limited to, but must include, (1) purpose; (2) targeted population--who and how many; (3) data collection procedures; (4) estimated time required by Hamblen County Schools participants; and (5) projected value of the study to Hamblen County Schools, if any
B. Single copies of all questionnaires, surveys, tests, answer sheets, structured interviews, or other instruments that will be used by Hamblen County Schools participants
C. Single copies of cover letters, copies of instructions, parent permission statements (for student participation), etc.
6. Approximate proposed times for beginning and ending the study:
March through April of this year (1995)

Prior to making an appointment for a personal interview*, above material should be sent to:

Dr. Earnest Walker, Superintendent
Hamblen County Schools
210 East Morris Boulevard
Morristown, TN 37813
(615) 586-7700

APPROVED*:



Superintendent, Hamblen County Schools

DATE:

2/22/95

*Prior to approval, a personal interview may be required to clarify information provided

APPENDIX C

Letter of Informed Consent to Participating Administrators

Dear School Administrator:

I am requesting your participation in a research project entitled "A Study of the Approaches School Administrators Use in Making Ethical Decisions Within the Typical County Public School District." As a school administrator who deals with ethical dilemmas, your involvement in this study will provide important information concerning ethics and school administration.

As a doctoral student studying school administration at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, I am interested in learning about your perceptions of your own ethical practices at work in public schools.

Enclosed is a copy of the *School Administrators' Perceptions Questionnaire*, which asks questions about how you deal with ethical dilemmas. Please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire. At the end of the study, there is also an opportunity to participate in a short, follow-up interview. Because only a small group of school administrators are involved in this study, **your participation is crucial to the success of the investigation.**

I pledge to you that your responses in this project are strictly confidential and voluntary, and will only be reported in a collective format. This signed consent form will be kept in a locked drawer at The University of Tennessee, and all questionnaire results will be tabulated without the identity of the participants known. Once the study is completed, all documents will be destroyed. If you do not wish to participate in the study or choose to withdraw at a later date, you will not be penalized in any way. There are no risks involved in participating, and you may gain a better understanding of your own ethical decision-making process.

Thank you for your time and participation in this important research study. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 1810 Dry Gap Pike, Knoxville, TN 37918 or call (615) 689-1499.

Sincerely,
Michelle Lakin
Doctoral Candidate

* * * * *

I have read and understand the explanation of this study and agree to participate.

Name

Date

Signature

APPENDIX D
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS
QUESTIONNAIRE

I. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

DIRECTIONS: Please circle the response that best describes you.

1. Age: 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60 and above

2. Gender: Female Male

3. Race: Black White Other_____

4. Level of Education - Highest Degree Earned:

 Bachelor's Master's Ed. Specialist Doctorate

 Other_____

5. Administrative Title:

 Assistant Principal Principal Supervisor Superintendent

 Other_____

6. Years Experience in the Position Given in Question 5:

 0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21 or more

7. Previous Administrative Titles:

 Assistant Principal Principal Supervisor Superintendent

 Other_____

8. Total Number of Years Experience in Administration:

 0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21 or more

9. Are you a native of the county in which you are employed? yes no

II. A CASE STUDY

DIRECTIONS: The following case study describes an ethical dilemma. Please read the case and then circle the response that best expresses your feeling concerning each decision stated as a possible solution. Use the following key:

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
U = Undecided
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

Mr. and Mrs. Black schedule a meeting with the principal, a supervisor, and the superintendent concerning their child, Jeremy. As one of the participants in the meeting, you are informed by the parents that Jeremy is HIV positive. The parents want you to know just in case Jeremy ever has a medical emergency at school. Their concern is for their son to receive proper emergency care immediately if circumstances ever require such actions. They have only informed you of his condition for this reason and ask that the conference be kept confidential. You, along with your colleagues, assure them that this information will be held in complete confidence.

After the Blacks leave, you and the other administrators begin discussing the carelessness of staff members when aiding an injured student. They have been told to always use the rubber gloves available to them as a precautionary measure, but often they don't take the time to put them on before assisting a student with an open wound.

You must decide if you will respect the rights of the parents and student by keeping this information to yourself, or if you will inform the staff of the student's condition in order to protect their safety.

- SA A U D SD 1. I would tell the staff about the student and give his name.
- SA A U D SD 2. I would tell the staff that we have a student who is HIV positive, alerting them to be more cautious with injured students, but would not reveal the name of the student.
- SA A U D SD 3. I would tell only the staff members who work with the student when he most likely could be injured (i.e. the elementary homeroom teacher, the physical education teacher, any coaches).
- SA A U D SD 4. I would not tell anyone under any circumstances.

III. PERCEPTIONS OF ATTITUDINAL APPROACH TO ETHICAL DECISIONS

DIRECTIONS: The following statements represent attitudes one may have when approaching ethical decisions. After reading each statement, circle the response that best reflects your perception of whether or not the statement describes your approach to an ethical situation. Use the following key:

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
U = Undecided
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

- | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|----|---|
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 1. I consult others for advice before making a decision. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 2. I examine the possible consequences and decide what would be best. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 3. No matter what, I adhere to the rules and policies of the organization. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 4. When an ethical situation arises, I try to make as many people happy with the final decision as I possibly can. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 5. I consider the rules and policies of the organization, but may decide against them under certain circumstances. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 6. By examining the possible consequences of an ethical situation, I can determine the proper moral standard. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 7. I rely on preset rules and regulations to make decisions, often looking up the solutions in a Bible or a confessor's manual. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 8. I make decisions situationally by examining the circumstances and determining the best solution for each individual situation. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 9. I adhere to divine commands, leaving no room for question or consideration in an ethical situation. |

IV. CIRCUMSTANCES INFLUENCING ETHICAL DECISIONS

DIRECTIONS: Many times circumstances exist that could alter one's decision concerning an ethical situation. For each statement, circle the response that best expresses your feeling of whether or not the statement could possibly influence you in making an ethical decision. Use the following key:

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
U = Undecided
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

- | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|----|---|
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 1. I would alter my decision if I was offered bribery money for the school. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 2. I would alter my decision if I felt hatred toward a person involved in the situation. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 3. I would alter my decision if I felt pity toward a person involved. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 4. I would alter my decision if it could affect a possible job promotion for myself. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 5. I would alter my decision if I felt compassion for a person involved. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 6. I would alter my decision if I was offered bribery money for myself. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 7. I would alter my decision if a person involved was a good friend. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 8. I would alter my decision if a person involved was extremely poor. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 9. I would alter my decision if a person involved was lazy. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 10. I would alter my decision if bad publicity could be a consequence suffered. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | 11. I would alter my decision if a person involved had cheated other people or the school system. |

SA A U D SD 12. I would alter my decision if a person involved
offered to do me a favor.

SA A U D SD 13. I would alter my decision if a person involved
had his/her career at stake.

SA A U D SD 14. I would alter my decision if I felt scared or
threatened by a person involved.

Please check one of the following statements:

☐ I am willing to answer a few specific questions in a short 15-minute interview.

My name is _____

and I may be reached at this phone number_____.

☐ I am not willing to answer a few specific questions in a short 15-minute interview.

* This form will be kept separate from your questionnaire responses in order to maintain confidentiality. It will only be used to contact you to set up an interview time and to refer to you by name during the interview. Your identity will not be noted on any other forms, and no recording devices will be used during the interview. The researcher, Michelle Lakin, will take notes during the interview, referring to each participant by a letter only (e. g. subject A). This form will be kept in a locked drawer at The University of Tennessee and will be destroyed after the project has been completed.

APPENDIX E

Interview Guide

- 1) Describe an ethical situation you have faced recently.
- 2) Describe in your own words your ethical philosophy.
- 3) Do you rely on rules and principles, do you consider the possible consequences, or do you determine what to do according to the individual circumstances in an ethical situation? Explain.
- 4) Do you feel that school administrators are faced with many ethical dilemmas? Explain.
- 5) Have you ever made an ethical decision that later you regretted?

APPENDIX F

Follow-Up Memo

Dear [School Administrator's Name]:

The following questionnaire was presented at the principals' and supervisors' meeting in April. Some of you may not have received a copy or perhaps you have not had time to complete the survey yet. If you would please take just a few minutes of your time to help me out, I would greatly appreciate it. Your response is important to the success of this research study. I have enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope for you to return the questionnaire and signed consent form back to me. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Michelle Lakin
Doctoral Candidate

VITA

Tracy Michelle Stidham Lakin was born and raised in Knoxville, Tennessee. She attended Brickey Elementary, Halls Middle, and Halls High Schools. After graduating from Halls High School in 1983, she attended The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, receiving her Bachelor of Science in Music Education in August, 1987.

In January, 1988, she began her teaching career as a music educator at her alma mater, Brickey Elementary School, where she is currently employed. She continued her education during summers and completed the requirements for a Master of Science in Elementary Education in August, 1990 at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

In the summer of 1990, she began working on certification courses in school administration and decided to enter the doctoral program of Educational Leadership. During her program, she served as an administrative intern at Adrian Burnett Elementary School, in Knox County, under the guidance of Thomas L. Duff. She received her Doctor of Education in December, 1995.

Her professional affiliations and honors include Phi Delta Kappa, Golden Key National Honor Society, Tennessee Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and Ann Graf Scholarship for Educational

Leadership. She is also an active member of Central Baptist Church of Fountain City in Knoxville.

She is married to Douglas Gene Lakin and has a son named Chandler Patton Lakin.