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A Collective Case Study that Examines the Decision-Making Experiences and Influential Variables as Identified by Leaders in Higher Education

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A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY THAT EXAMINES THE DECISION-MAKING
EXPERIENCES AND INFLUENTIAL VARIABLES AS IDENTIFIED BY LEADERS
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Dennis D. Frketich, Sr.

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

December 2014

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Title: A Collective Case Study that Examines the Decision-Making Experiences and Influential Variables as Identified by Leaders in Higher Education

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When faced with ethical dilemmas during the decision-making process, leaders in higher education may find it difficult to make ethical decisions. The decision-making process can be complex due to all of the different factors that influence decisions. These issues include, but are not limited to, organizational pressures, pressures from others within the institutions, conflict of values and beliefs between others and the institutional policies and practices, and individual and situational variables.

The purpose of this study was to examine the ethical decision-making process of leaders within higher education and the decisions they make when experiencing ethical dilemmas. The study examined how leaders reasoned or how they processed their thoughts during the decision-making process. The study also examined the individual and situational factors that leaders identified as having an impact on making ethical decisions during the decision-making process while experiencing ethical dilemmas

This research is a qualitative design which examines the decision-making experiences of leaders in higher education and the variables identified as having an influence on making ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas.

This qualitative study utilized a multi-case study approach. The study consisted of ten participants, or ten separate cases, of leaders within higher education. Additionally, four of the original ten case studies were studied in more depth and four of their direct reports also participated in the research.

The study produced ten themes related to the research questions of this study. There were three themes that were reiterated while responding to all of the research questions. The consistent themes within this research established that during the decision-making process during ethical dilemmas, everyone placed a high value on their personal values and beliefs, the impact their decisions have on stakeholders, and following policies, procedures and laws that coincide with their personal value systems. Each of these three themes promotes ethical decision-making, which supports ethical behavior when experiencing ethical dilemmas.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1	INTRODUCTION1
	Statement of Problem.....5
	Purpose of Study.....6
	Research Questions.....6
	Definitions.....7
	Theoretical Framework.....10
	Significance of the Study14
	Research Design.....15
	Limitations of Study17
	Chapter Summary18
2	REVIEW OF LITERATURE19
	Introduction.....19
	Ethical Decision-Making20
	Ethical Dilemmas.....23
	Moral Disengagement.....24
	Moral Awareness and Moral Reasoning.....25
	Theoretical Foundations.....25
	Kohlberg’s Cognitive Moral Development26
	Trevino’s Person-Situation Interactionist29
	Individual Moderators as Variables30
	Ego Strength.....31
	Field Dependence.....31
	Locus of Control32
	Situational Moderators as Variables33
	Organizational Culture.....33
	Characteristics of the Work35
	Immediate Job Context36
	Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs.....37
	Christianity.....38
	Leadership Styles40
	Transformational Leadership41
	Full Range Leadership Model.....44
	Authentic Leadership.....46
	Laissez Faire Leadership.....47
	Chapter Summary47
3	METHODOLOGY49

Chapter	Page
Restatement of the Problem	50
Research Design.....	51
Research Questions.....	52
Setting of the Study.....	52
Sample Size and Selection	53
Procedure	55
Validity and Reliability.....	58
Data Analysis	59
Chapter Summary	59
 4 FINDINGS	 61
Data Analysis	61
Summary of the Ten Case Studies (First Round Interviews)	62
Tracy	62
Tom.....	65
Sandy.....	66
Sam	68
Paul	69
Rick.....	71
Sally	72
Jane	74
Jason.....	76
Mary.....	79
Summary of the Four Case Studies (Second Round Interviews).....	81
Sally	82
Jane	84
Jason.....	86
Mary.....	87
Summary of Direct Reports' Findings.....	90
Research Questions and Common Themes.....	92
Research Question One	92
Theme one: personal values and beliefs	92
Research Question Two	94
Theme one: personal values and beliefs along with self-reflection	94
Theme two: decisions impacting stakeholders	95
Theme three: external information guiding the reasoning processes.....	96
Theme four: Christian beliefs	96
Research Question Three	97
Theme one: responsibilities of the position	97

Chapter	Page
Theme two: the culture	98
Research Question Four	99
Theme one: considering the needs of others.....	99
Research Question Five	100
Theme one: concern for Stakeholders.....	100
Theme two: personal values and beliefs	101
Theme three: utilizing rules and standards	101
Chapter Summary	102
5 DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	103
Summary of the Study	103
Findings.....	104
Research Question One.....	105
Theme one: personal values and beliefs	105
Research Question Two	108
Theme one: personal values and beliefs along with self-reflection	108
Theme two: decisions impacting stakeholders	110
Theme three: external information guiding the reasoning Process	110
Theme four: Christian belief.....	112
Research Question Three	112
Theme one: responsibilities of the position	113
Theme two: the culture	114
Research Question Four	115
Theme one: considering the needs of others.....	116
Research Question Five	117
Theme one: concern for Stakeholders.....	118
Theme two: personal values and beliefs	118
Theme three: utilizing rules and standards	119
Discussion	120
Recommendations for Professional Practices.....	121
Current Literature and Future Leaders.....	121
Leadership, Ethics, and Corporate Training Curriculum.....	122
Recommendations for Further Studies.....	123
Limitations	124
Personal Reflections.....	124
REFERENCES	126

APPENDICES

A: Informed Consent Form.....	133
B: Qualifying Questionnaires	136
C: Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Leader Form (MLQ).....	137
D: First Round Interview Questionnaire (Ten Participants).....	138
E: Second Round Interview Questionnaire (Four Participants).....	139
F: Matrix for Research Questions and Round One Interview Questions.....	141
G: Matrix for Research Questions and Round Two Interview Questions	142
H: Interview Questions for Direct Reports of the Four Participants	144
I: Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Permission Letter	145
J: MLQ Results Chart	146

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Levels and stages of Kohlberg's cognitive moral development model	27
2	Maslow's hierarchy of needs	38
3	Full range leadership.....	45

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Due to notorious scandals experienced in the past couple of decades, organizations today should be more concerned about the decisions their leaders make and the influence the decisions have on the ethical behaviors of their employees. Poor decision-making by leaders within organizations like Enron and organizations after them have produced devastating results or outcomes for their organizations and its employees (Selart & Johansen, 2011). For example, because of the poor decisions made by the leaders of Enron, thousands of employees lost their entire retirement funds, as well as their jobs (Gibney, 2007). Another example is the damage that can be done to specific individuals, communities, and institutions due to the unethical decisions made by the leadership. The damage can come from leadership disregarding criminal acts or unethical behaviors of an individual and other individuals connected with a scandal. Literature suggests that there are many contributing factors that determine the outcomes of the decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas. Many of the unethical decisions made by the leadership of these organizations were influenced by top executives, greed, and power which they experienced during their successful years (Gibney, 2007).

Not all people exhibit unethical behavior or make unethical decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas. Some people make a choice to take the ethical route or “the high road” and are determined to make ethical decisions regardless of the consequences. Through an extensive review of literature, Pimentel, Kuntz, and Elenkov (2010) established common themes which support the premise that making an ethical decision or

taking “the high road” may be recognized by applying a model that includes these four principles: “Recognizing and identifying the ethical dilemma; identifying relevant stakeholders and the impact of decisions on these stakeholders; identifying organizational values and norms relevant to the ethical issue; and, identifying legal regulations relevant to the ethical issue” (p. 371). It could be said that individuals who take “the high road” are more likely to ignore the variables which would persuade them to make unethical decisions (Trevino & Nelson, 2006)

Contrary to disastrous decisions made by some leaders, there have been those individuals who were compelled to make ethical decisions and exhibit ethical behaviors at any cost. One leader was Sherron Watkins, the former Vice President for Corporate Development of the Enron Corporation. Sherron Watkins decided to take what she believed was the ethical route or “the high road” in regards to Enron’s behavior. According to Koerwer and Lucas (2004), during an interview Sherron Watkins stated, “that individual actions matter and that you have to take ownership for your actions when you're in a leadership position” (p. 38). Sherron Watkins demonstrated ownership of her actions when she made the decision to expose the unethical practices of the Enron Corporation. Sherron Watkins expressed in an interview that she wanted to do “the right thing.” She is an example of an individual who was faced with an ethical dilemma and did not allow the culture or leadership of an organization to influence her decision. She based her decisions on her personal values and beliefs (Koerwer & Lucas, 2004).

A personal experience in the area of making an ethical decision in the face of an ethical dilemma was the inspiration for this researcher to conduct this study. Higher education institutions can create environments that are toxic and persuasive in nature.

Having been employed by a higher education institution and holding an administrator's position of responsibility and authority, there were situations that required ethical decision-making during ethical dilemmas. There was a constant pressure by executives or superiors to meet what many people within the institution believed were unrealistic metrics in many areas of the division's business operation. Due to economic decline, it became impossible to meet the predetermined institutional metrics unless one was willing to cheat, lie, or act in an unethical manner.

On numerous occasions, individuals were told to "do whatever it takes" to meet these metrics; the implication being that in order to keep one's job, it might have been necessary to act unethically. Following the unethical request would have created unnecessary mandated cost for the students. Additionally, it could be destructive in other areas of students' lives, not to mention the trouble it could cause the organization and its members. Based on personal values and beliefs, the decision was made to do what was believed to be the ethical act, "Take the high road." Not wanting to jeopardize personal integrity, the students or the institution was the reasoning process for refusing to comply with any unethical request.

During the decision-making process, consideration was given to these questions: "Who could possibly get hurt? How does this correspond with the lessons learned in regards to acting ethically in all circumstances? A strong spiritual faith and a formal education in the area of ethics and leadership were great influences during the decision-making process and many of the proclamations of mentors, who were exemplary ethical leaders, repeatedly influenced the reasoning process. For example, a mentor once shared these powerful words of wisdom: "Stay true to yourself and never compromise your

integrity.” Remembering the teachings and ethical behaviors of mentors or leaders will assist in the decision-making process during the thought process. To react in similar ways during comparable circumstances is advantageous during the reasoning process during ethical dilemmas. The goal was to emulate the same behavior, but not taking into account any behavior that could be considered unethical.

According to Palazzo, Krings, and Hoffrage (2012), many of the accepted models of moral development portrayed in literature has improved the understanding of how, why, and under what circumstances individuals make ethical or unethical decisions. Palazzo, Krings, and Hoffrage (2012) also stated, “These models suggest that (un)ethical decisions are the result of an interplay between personal traits of the decision maker and characteristics of the situation” (p. 323). Some of these models could include Kohlberg’s Cognitive morale development model, Trevino’s Person-situation Interactionist Model, and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs. This study examined each model and how they supported the theoretical foundation of this study.

This study examined several theoretical foundations that support the premise that an individual’s human needs, cognitive moral development, personal and situational variables, and leadership styles can influence the decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas. This multi-case study also looked at the experiences of several leaders in higher education in regards to making ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas and the variables they identified as having an influence on their reasoning during the decision-making process.

Statement of Problem

When faced with ethical dilemmas during the decision-making process, leaders in higher education may find it difficult to make proper decisions. Or, they may question their ability and confidence in making decisions (Moreno, 2011). The decision-making process can be complex due to all of the different factors that influence decisions. Many individuals may struggle with questions, such as: Do my decisions only reflect on how it will impact me or do the decisions include the interest of others? How will it have an effect on my institution? Am I in a position to make these decisions? Will everyone else approve of my decisions?

In addition to leaders' self-reflecting questions, other factors may also contribute to the complexity of making decisions. These issues include, but are not limited to, pressures from others within the institutions, conflict of values and beliefs between others and the institutional policies and practices, and individual and situational variables. Individuals have certain beliefs and practices prior to joining organizations. When faced with decisions or new practices, they may find that their personal values, beliefs, and preferred practices may conflict with the values and beliefs of others, as well as the policies and practices of institutions (Pimentel, Kuntz, & Elenkov, 2010; Trevino, 1986).

Individuals often begin with the intentions of making ethical decisions; but, when confronted with other variables, they might be willing to change their minds and formulate decisions that require them to compromise their personal values and beliefs (Gardner, 2006). The modified thinking or reasoning process may have been changed from the originally anticipated thoughts due to the influences of different variables.

Some individuals may even be pressured to consider unethical decisions, which could lead to unethical behaviors (Pimentel, Kuntz, & Elenkov, 2010; Trevino, 2004).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the ethical decision-making process of leaders in higher education and the decisions they make when experiencing ethical dilemmas. The study examined how leaders reason or how they process their thoughts during the decision-making process. The study also examined the individual and situational factors that leaders identified as having an impact on making ethical decisions in the face of an ethical dilemma during the decision-making process.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this study focused on the ethical decision-making experiences of leaders in higher education and the variables identified as having an influence on making ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas:

1. How do leaders in higher education perceive that their personal ethical beliefs and perceived institutional pressures affect their decisions?
2. What individual variables might leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?
3. What situational variables might leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?

4. What leadership characteristics do these leaders in higher education have and does it have an impact on making ethical decisions during the decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas?
5. How do leaders in higher education describe their reasoning process in regards to their ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?

Definitions

Authentic leadership - Walumbwa et al. (2008) suggested, “a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information” (p. 94)

Christian belief - Based on a biblical standpoint, a Christian belief is defined as someone who professes belief in Jesus Christ and follows doctrine based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Direct report - According to the Business English Dictionary, a direct report is defined as “an employee whose position at work is directly below that of another person, and who is managed by that person.”

(<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/business-english/direct-report>).

Ego strength - Ego strength is defined as individuals who are uncompromising concerning personal values and beliefs. Individuals that demonstrate high measures of ego strength rely on their own personal convictions and self-regulation to assist in the decision-making process (Trevino, 1986).

Ethical behavior - Trevino and Nelson (2004) stated, “we’re defining ethical behavior in business as behavior that is consistent with the principles, norms, and

standards of business practice that have been agreed upon by society” (p. 15). Trevino and Nelson (2004) also believed that “moral awareness plus moral judgment equaled ethical behavior” (p. 15).

Ethical dilemma - Pontiff (2007) stated, “that the term ethical dilemma is used to describe the phenomenon of two conflicting values (Gortner, 1991). The conflicting values can be individual, societal, organizational, or a combination of these” (p. 26).

Field of control - Trevino (2004) stated, “field dependent individuals make greater use of external social referents to guide their behavior” (p. 610). Field dependent individuals look to the social norms of an organization, leadership, or other outside sources to guide their decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas.

Individual variables - According to Trevino (1986), individual variables would consist of an individual’s ego strength, field of control, and locus of control. Trevino (1986) states, “Individual and situational variables influence the relationship between cognition and action in ethical decision-making in organizations” (p. 609).

Laissez faire leadership - Bass and Riggio (2010) stated, “laissez faire leadership is the avoidance or absence of leadership and is by definition, most inactive, as well as most ineffective according to almost all research on the style” (p. 79). Fitch (2009) stated, “Laissez faire is a French term that means hands off; it is a theory of economics that encourages the market to be driven by self-interest and governed by self-control” (p. 28).

Leaders - Moreno (2011) stated, “*Leader*: an individual who acts on his or her own initiative, leads others, and “engages in leadership” (Norhouse, 2004, p. 3). The leadership role may include establishing direction, aligning people, and motivating and

inspiring others (Kotter, 1990). Additionally, an individual may also have managerial responsibilities that may include planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, and controlling and problem solving (Kotter, 1990)” (p. 32). For the purposes of this study, the participants of this study are considered to be leaders based upon Moreno’s definition.

Locus of control - According to Trevino (1986) locus of control is a personality characteristic that contributes to the explanation of ethical behaviors of individuals during the decision-making process. Detert, Trevino, and Sweitzer (2008) stated, “Locus of control orientations relate to how individuals think about the event in their lives” (p. 377).

Organizational pressures - Influences originating from cultures, individuals, or the policies and practices of organizations. These influences can create pressures for individuals during the decision-making process while facing ethical dilemmas (Moreno, 2011).

Personal ethical beliefs - Personal ethical beliefs are personal values that guide the lives of people. Personal values are concepts and beliefs that influence the decision-making process and the behavior of individuals. Personal ethical beliefs provide a framework that helps in understanding the decision-making process (Steenhaunt & Kenhove, 2006).

Situational variables - According to Trevino (1986), situation variables would include immediate job context, organizational culture, and characteristics of the work. Trevino (1986) stated, “moral action takes place in social context and can be influenced heavily by situational variables (p. 610).

Transformational leadership - Bass and Riggio (2006) suggested that Transformational leaders,

are those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity.

Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization (p. 3).

Theoretical Framework

The decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas can become all-encompassing and challenging for many individuals in higher education. When facing ethical dilemmas during the decision-making process, a number of individuals may have built their reasoning process around their past experiences or viewpoints. Some of these past experiences and viewpoints include their personal value and belief systems that have developed throughout their entire lifetimes and through the organizational pressures and cultural practices they have experienced during their careers (Palazzo, Krings, & Hoffrage, 2012).

As thoroughly established in the literature, the reasoning process of individuals, consciously or unconsciously, is influenced by many different factors during the decision-making process (Palazzo, Krings, & Hoffrage, 2012). During the decision-making process, leaders may start the path of reasoning with individual variables such as their own personal values and beliefs or with situational variables such as the normative structure within the culture of the institutions (Trevino, 1986).

Linda Trevino, a professor with Pennsylvania State University, developed the Person-Situation Interactionist Model which identifies various individual and situation

variables that can influence ethical decision-making within organizations. Trevino's model builds on the premise of Kohlberg's Model of Cognition Moral Development. Trevino proposes that decision-making goes beyond how people think about the ethical dilemmas or the moral judgments of people. Trevino suggested that there is a relationship between moral judgments and moral actions and that the behavior of individuals can be influenced by individual and situational variables while facing ethical dilemmas during the decision-making process (Trevino, 1986).

According to Kohlberg's Model of Cognition Moral Development and its six stages, the thought process of individuals, in regards to a moral issue, is based upon what stages individuals have developed or progressed in the area of moral development. The six stages of Kohlberg's Model of Cognition Moral Development are as follows: Stage One - Obedience and punishment orientation, Stage Two – Instrumental purpose and exchange, Stage Three – Interpersonal accord, conformity, or mutual expectations, Stage Four – Social accord and system rights, Stage Five – Social contract and individual rights, and Stage Six – Universal ethical principles (Trevino 1986). Kohlberg suggested that moral development is a hierarchical progression and people advance and developed to a specific level of moral development. The level individuals have advanced to may be determined by how they would reason in regards to decisions made during ethical dilemmas (Rest, 1973).

Just as Trevino built on Kohlberg's model, James Rest an established and renowned researcher in the field of moral development, built upon the work of Kohlberg. (Krishnakumar & Rymph, 2012; Rest, 1986). Rest (1973,) stated,

Therefore, to claim that any set of stages comprise a hierarchical order, more evidence is necessary than observing a natural sequence in changes over time.

The sequence of stages observed in natural development has to be shown to be an order of increasing difficulty, and it must be shown that subjects prefer to produce or use the highest stage of which they are capable. (p. 8)

Individuals may reach specific stages in regard to Kohlberg's six stages of moral development and may have the capability to make decisions based on the stage they have attained. According to Rest (1973) and Trevino (1986) people's cognitive ability may be at a certain levels, but that does not ensure that individuals will endorse or support the principles Kohlberg depicts within his six stages. Actions or behavior of individuals may not demonstrate the levels or capabilities of their determined stages of cognitive moral development (Rest, 1973; Trevino, 1986)

An example of stage six could be a situation where a law or act is implemented by the government and this new law or act challenges the personal values and beliefs of leaders or the business owners. Individuals (employers or decision makers of organizations) who are at level six and their self-chosen ethical principles are to oppose and not to follow this law or act and will do so no matter what the consequences. These same individuals may concede to the law or act because they do not want to be punished by the government. Pressures from employees could be a variable that influence opposing leaders' decisions to accept and adhere to the law, as well. It could be said that the decisions and actions of these individuals did not match the stage six model and their decisions were not based solely on the full capacity of their own moral development, but by situation variables.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory contributes to the same idea that "humans needs" as a motivator could cause individuals to make decisions based on outcomes, which can alter the actions or behaviors of people in an ethical or unethical manner. Maslow's theory supports the hypothesis that it is not always because of the stage of people's cognitive moral development that determines the decisions of individuals. Maslow suggested that the decisions and actions of people are motivated by the following, in a hierarchal order; Physiological Needs, Security Needs, Social Needs, Esteem Needs, and Self-Actualization Needs (Ebert & Griffin, 2011). Based on the theory of Abraham Maslow, people's decisions may be based on individual and situational variables and the stages people have reached in regards to their moral development may not be relevant during the decision-making process (Ebert & Griffin, 2011). People who wish to be leaders within organizations may choose to adopt or reject certain leadership styles in order to make decisions that would allow them to progress up the ladder of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid.

Fitch (2009) indicated that there is a link between certain leadership styles and ethical decision-making. Fitch (2009) stated, "leaders who have a higher stage of cognitive moral development, who have strong personal values, and practice normative ethics are believed to make better ethical decisions" (p. 38). Understanding leadership styles, such as Transformational Leadership, Authentic Leadership, and Laissez Faire Leadership will assist in recognizing leadership behaviors that would support ethical or unethical decisions. The leadership style of leaders could explain how individuals process or reason in the face of ethical dilemmas during the decision-making process. For example, leaders that embrace leadership styles that support thoughts such as

“thinking of others first” or “one should always act ethically in any situation” would persuade leaders to base their decisions on demonstrating ethical behavior and considering the interest of others. Many leadership styles embrace the concept that leaders should display ethical behavior in all situations which would require leaders to make ethical decisions during the decision-making process (Fitch, 2009).

The theoretical framework of this study included the following leadership styles described by Fitch (2009): Transformational Leadership, Authentic Leadership, and Laissez Faire. Understanding the leadership styles of the participants within this study will assist in understanding how certain leadership characteristics impact decision-making processes.

Significance of the Study

The experiences and perceptions of the study’s participants pertaining to the decision-making process during ethical dilemmas will add to the current literatures available in the area of ethical decision-making. Celuch and Dill (2011) reported that literature should focus on people’s level of ethical decision-making and its relationship to behavior and they also stated that there is a, “...need for theory driven, programmatic research (p. 201). Celuch and Dill (2011) also stated there is a “need for developing an understanding that moves beyond mere knowledge of rules or facts to a more nuanced perspective of how individuals weigh and combine various elements of experience related to ethical reasoning” (p. 201).

Developing an understanding of experiences and the reasoning processes of individuals during ethical decision-making process while faced with ethical dilemmas will establish or demonstrate that individual and situation variables may influence the

decision-making process. Having a better understanding of the reasoning processes will validate that decision-making goes beyond the Model of Cognitive Moral Development depicted by Kohlberg (Trevino, 2004).

Celuch and Dill (2011) stated, “it is important for business educators and corporate trainers to understand the nature of ethical decisions so that enhanced curriculum and training can be developed to improve ethical decision-making” (p. 201). This statement by Celuch and Dill (2011) contributes to the validity and substantiates the need for additional information relating to the decision-making process for the use of educating future leaders.

Research Design

This research is a qualitative design which examines the decision-making experiences of leaders in higher education and the variables identified as having an influence on making ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas. This qualitative study utilized a multi-case study approach (Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2008). The study consisted of ten participants, or ten separate cases of leaders in higher education, which met the criteria of a participant later described in chapter three of this study. Additionally, four of the original ten case studies were studied in more depth and four of their direct reports participated in the study, as well.

The following describe the steps that were utilized during the collection of data for this research:

1. A pilot study was conducted with four individuals who met the same qualifications of participants of the study. The recommendations of the pilot

study participants were considered and adjustments were made to interview questions.

2. First, each potential participant received an Informed Consent Form to be signed and was returned to the investigator prior to data collection. (Please see Appendix A.)
3. After receiving the consent form from the participants, a qualifying questionnaire was distributed to the participants who were willing to take part in the study. The qualifying questionnaire made sure that all participants met specific requirements needed to take part in this study. (Please see Appendix B.)
4. The next step was scheduling interviews with each of the ten participants.
5. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was completed by all ten participants prior to the start of the first round of interviews. (Please see Appendix C.)
6. Once the MLQ was completed, in-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted in order to collect data that assisted in answering the research questions of the study. (Please see Appendix D.)
7. Following the one-on-one interviews, the researcher made use of member checking. Each of the ten participants was provided with a synopsis of the one-on-one interviews, assuring accuracy in regards to the data collected.
8. After all the data were collected and analyzed from the one-on-one interviews, as well as the MLQ of the ten participants, four of the ten cases were singled out by uniqueness of the case and the willingness of participants to participate further

with the study. The four cases were examined in more depth by means of additional interviews. (Please see Appendix E.)

9. Following the second round of in-depth interviews, the researcher made use of member checking. Each of the four participants was provided with a synopsis of the one-on-one interviews, assuring accuracy in regards to the data collected.
10. A one-on-one interview was conducted with a direct report of each of the four cases who participated further with the study.
11. The data collected during the study were analyzed for common themes by manually constructing a journal and coding by color in relation to the research questions of this study.

More detailed information on the research design is found in Chapter III entitled, “Methodology.”

Limitations of Study

This study examined the experiences of leaders in higher education in regards to the decision-making process while facing ethical dilemmas. Each participant had varying job titles and worked for different institutions which made it difficult to make a relationship between behaviors in detailed positions and within specific institutions. What is true for some positions and specific for certain institutions may not be so for others.

Because this study was based on the perceptions and experiences of people relative to ethical decision-making processes, it could be considered subjective in nature. The variables participants experienced during the decision-making process were different, as well as the intensity of the ethical dilemmas in which they faced. Because

this study consisted of a small group of participants, this study expressed the experiences and perceptions of a small fraction of individuals who have experienced this phenomenon (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009).

Chapter Summary

This study examined the decision-making experiences of leaders in the face of ethical dilemmas. There are many different variables that can contribute to the outcomes in regards to the decision-making process of leaders. This study examined several different theories and leadership styles that made an attempt to support the studies research questions. Understanding what variables influence the process of reasoning and decision-making during ethical dilemmas will contribute to current literature and assist in educating future leaders.

Chapter Two begins with discussing issues related to ethical decision-making, which include ethical dilemmas, moral disengagement, moral awareness, and moral reasoning. Then, information will be provided about Kohlberg's, Trevino's, and Maslow's theories which serve as the theoretical foundation for this study. Both individual and situational variables will be further described, and the chapter will conclude with a discussion on various leadership styles that support (un)ethical decision-making and may influence leaders to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine the ethical decision-making process of leaders in higher education and the decisions they make when facing ethical dilemmas. The study examined how leaders reason or how they process their thoughts during the decision-making process. The study also examined the individual and situational factors that leaders identified as having an impact on making ethical decisions in the face of an ethical dilemma during the decision-making process.

Leaders within higher education are faced with ethical dilemmas on a daily basis and are sometimes faced with making choices among personal values and beliefs, the values and beliefs of others, and the policies and practices of organizations when engaging in the decision-making process (Trevino & Nelson, 2004). Understanding the process of ethical decision-making within a higher education institution is unlike the routine practiced during the decision-making process at home regarding family and other personal issues. Many leaders in higher education experience pressures during the decisions-making process, which can result in unethical behaviors or compromising personal values and beliefs (Ferrell, Fraedrich, & Ferrell, 2006).

Ethics is a complicated issue and has numerous definitions. According to Ferrell, Fraedrich, and Ferrell (2006) ethics, in general, can be defined as a philosophy of human behavior relating to “right and wrong” and an examination of moral judgment and rules of conduct. There are decisions made that require people to consider morality which forces decision makers to either accept other individual’s input and follow policies and practices of organizations or rely on their own values and beliefs. No matter which

direction individuals decide to go, they are faced with the decision of deciding which one they think is the right or wrong practice to follow (Ferrell, Fraedrich, & Ferrell, 2006).

The following literature review will examine the decision-making process and why individuals demonstrate ethical or unethical behaviors when faced with ethical dilemmas. The literature review will look at theoretical frameworks that will support this study and the leadership styles that are linked with ethical and unethical behavior.

Ethical Decision-Making

When faced with making decisions involving personal values and beliefs, the values and beliefs of others, as well as the policies and practices of organizations might create a very stressful situation. It is difficult to determine the outcomes of decisions when personal and organizational values clash and when both solutions could be considered correct. Individuals faced with these types of choices can feel pressured to compromise their personal values and beliefs in order to remain in the good graces of their employers. These types of actions or conducts could result in behaviors that would not be acceptable to individuals or institutions of higher education, which could result in unethical or damaging behaviors. For example, decisions made by leaders of an institution to give an individual a degree without completing all the required course-work could lead to devastating results for an institution. It could be said that university officials who would allow or support such an action would be exhibiting seriously flawed judgment in granting an unearned degree (Shulman, 2008). The end result for the organization could be destructive for the leaders who made the decision, as well as the students and institution. This situation could bring about negative results, such as faculty resolution of no confidence in the leaders, the possibility of alumni withdrawing millions

of dollars in gifts, and students fearing that their degrees have been devalued (Shulman, 2008). Because of one poor decision, people could lose their jobs, the reputation of the institution could be jeopardized, and students may lack confidence in an institution that they once trusted with their academic careers.

According to Trevino and Nelson (2004), the decision makers must recognize and understand ethical dilemmas in order to think and respond to situations with sound ethical conclusions. Moral awareness and moral reasoning of people play a key role in understanding the decision-making process. Individuals can rationalize decisions made to alleviate the accountability of their actions. According to a study by Ardichvili and Jondle (2009), it was identified and concluded that a lack of understanding in areas of moral awareness and moral reasoning can contribute to a higher chance of unethical behavior.

The “bottom line” is not always the determining factor in the decision-making process. As reported by Ardichvili, Mitchell, and Jondle (2009), “the decision-making processes in an ethical culture are designed to consider the ethical ramifications of business decisions instead of cost-benefit analysis alone” (p. 446). Institutions can focus too much in one distinct area; higher education institutions might consider how decisions will impact the stake-holders without relating it to just the “bottom line.” The health, safety, and welfare of others connected to the decision-making process can suffer great consequences because of one individual’s poor decision or unethical behavior. The decisions of one individual can impact others and produce environments that are harmful to all that are associated with the institution (Trevino, 1986).

One person's behavior and the poor decision-making by a group of leaders can create a destructive situation. The decision of a few leaders to ignore the deplorable behavior of one individual could impact the future of the institution, as well as cause distress for many people who are connected to the institution. This heartbreaking conclusion might be avoided if the leadership would take the "high road" and make ethical decisions that would be in the best interest of the institution and its stakeholders instead of their own best interest.

Trevino (2004) lists eight steps in sound ethical decision-making. Each step requires individuals to examine their situation and determine the decision that would be most acceptable. The eight steps are (pp. 94-100):

1. Gather the facts.
2. Define the ethical issues.
3. Identify the affected parties.
4. Identify the consequences.
5. Identify the obligations.
6. Consider your integrity and character.
7. Think creatively about potential actions.
8. Check your gut.

This approach may assist individuals while dealing with the values and beliefs of others and the external pressures of organizational policies and practices that challenge people's personal values and beliefs. Each step would establish a foundation on which people could make decisions that they would consider acceptable and not jeopardize their own personal values and beliefs.

According to Cranston, Ehrich, and Kimber (2004), if leaders are going to attempt to proceed in a way that is acceptable concerning “doing the right thing,” then there needs to be a structure outlining ethical and moral behaviors. If ethical frameworks regarding the decision-making process within higher education institutions are not clear and concise, then leaders and others will find it difficult to understand the expectations or parameters of the ethical decision-making process within the organization. The first phase of understanding the ethical framework of ethical decision-making may require individuals to understand the concept of ethical dilemmas.

Ethical Dilemmas

Trevino (1986) noted, “Ethical issues are ever present in uncertain conditions where multiple stakeholders, interests, and values are in conflict and laws are unclear” (p.601). Moreno (2001) defined an *ethical dilemma* as: “a situation that requires a judgment call when there is more than one right answer and there is no win-win solution in which everybody gets everything they want” (p. 31). Additionally, an *ethical dilemma* is recognized as “a situation in which two or more values are in conflict and whose resolution requires the negation of at least one of those values” (Moreno, 2001, p. 31). This researcher accepts Moreno’s definition of an ethical dilemma and applies it to this study as the definition of an ethical dilemma. The perplexity of ethical dilemmas is evident when faced with right verses right, but not everyone is going to be satisfied with the final decision. Ethical dilemmas are not discriminative in nature; most will experience an ethical dilemma during their professional careers, if not on a daily basis.

Based on a study done by Minnis (2011), school leaders who were directed by school district policies and practices experienced a conflict in relation to their personal

values and beliefs. The study determined that the school leader's main objective was to act in the best interest of the children. It was established by Minnis's (2011) study that professional development can play a key role in preparing school leaders in the area of moral awareness and in dealing with ethical dilemmas during a decision-making process. Leaders in higher education who have developed a moral awareness are less likely to avoid ethical dilemmas and are more likely to deal with ethical dilemmas directly.

Moral Disengagement

According to a study completed by Detert, Trevino, and Sweitzer (2008), people engage in unethical behavior because they are morally disengaged. Detert, Trevino, and Sweitzer (2008) suggested that people can justify unethical decisions or undesirable actions by several identified disengagement mechanisms. These researchers reported eight distinct mechanisms that assist individuals in justifying their unethical behavior. The moral deactivating mechanisms are: "Moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, disregarding or distorting the consequences, dehumanization, and attribution of blame" (p. 375).

Detert, Trevino, and Sweitzer (2008) stated that individuals who experience moral disengagement during a decision-making process possess low empathy for others, a high trait of cynicism, an external locus of control, and a low moral identity. The study also stated that unethical decision-making is positively linked to moral disengagement. It is possible that individuals find a way, during the reasoning process, to avoid or disengage morally so they may justify their behavior or decisions.

Moral Awareness and Moral Reasoning

Trevino and Nelson (2004) believed that moral awareness plus moral judgment equaled ethical behavior. The type of ethical behavior a person may exhibit could depend on whether a person possesses a high or low level of moral awareness and moral judgment. Rest (1973) noted that studies of moral development, such as Kohlberg's theory of moral development, suggested, "In studies of moral judgment, it is usually assumed that a subject's moral judgments are produced at the highest stage he is capable of." (p. 87). Studies done by James R. Rest concluded that people may not exhibit moral judgments at the highest stage they are able and that external and internal factors could obscure the moral judgments of individuals. It can be said that avoidance or ignorance of moral awareness and moral judgment could prevent individuals from making decisions at the highest level they are capable (Krishnakumar & Rymph, 2012).

Palazzo, Krings, and Hoffrage (2012) expressed, "Many models of (un)ethical decision-making assume that people decide rationally and are in principle able to evaluate their decisions from a moral point of view. However, people might behave unethically without being aware of it" (p. 323). When considering moral awareness and moral reasoning based on Palazzo, Krings, and Hoffrage (2012), it can be assumed that not all people are capable of reasoning or have any moral awareness in the face of ethical dilemmas. Some people might experience ethical dilemmas and not even be aware of the circumstances.

Theoretical Foundations

Theoretical applications assist in understanding a process or how individuals think or perceive the process in specific situations. Kohlberg's Cognitive Moral Development,

Trevino's Person-Situation Interactionist model, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs support the theoretical framework of this study. The phenomena of moral development and motivation will assist in explaining the process of decision-making in the face of ethical dilemmas which many people can face on a daily bases within organizations.

Kohlberg's Cognitive Moral Development

Kohlberg was a psychologist who was famous for his work concerning how individuals would morally reason during ethical dilemmas. Through his studies, he developed what is known today as Kohlberg's Cognitive Moral Development Model (Kalat, 2008; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Kohlberg's Cognitive Moral Development model consists of six stages which are divided into three levels. Kohlberg used hypothetical ethical dilemmas in his study to determine how people would articulate their answers through their own moral reasoning, confirming what stages of moral development the participants may have reached or developed (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977).

The "Heinz Dilemma" was a hypothetical moral dilemma used to evaluate moral reasoning through the answers provided by participants in the study. Rest (1973) quoted the Heinz Dilemma utilized in Kohlberg's study, as follows:

In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$ 1,000 which is half of what it cost. He told

the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug-for his wife. Should the husband have done that? (p. 90)

The participants of the study gave reasons for their choices to the solution of the hypothetical dilemma, identifying where the participants were in regards to the different stages of moral development in Kohlberg's model. Kohlberg determined through his studies that as people's moral development progressed they would make decisions for different reasons, validating the different levels and stages of his model (Craig, 2008: Kalat, 2008). The following figure categorizes the different levels and stages in Kohlberg's Cognitive Moral Development Model:

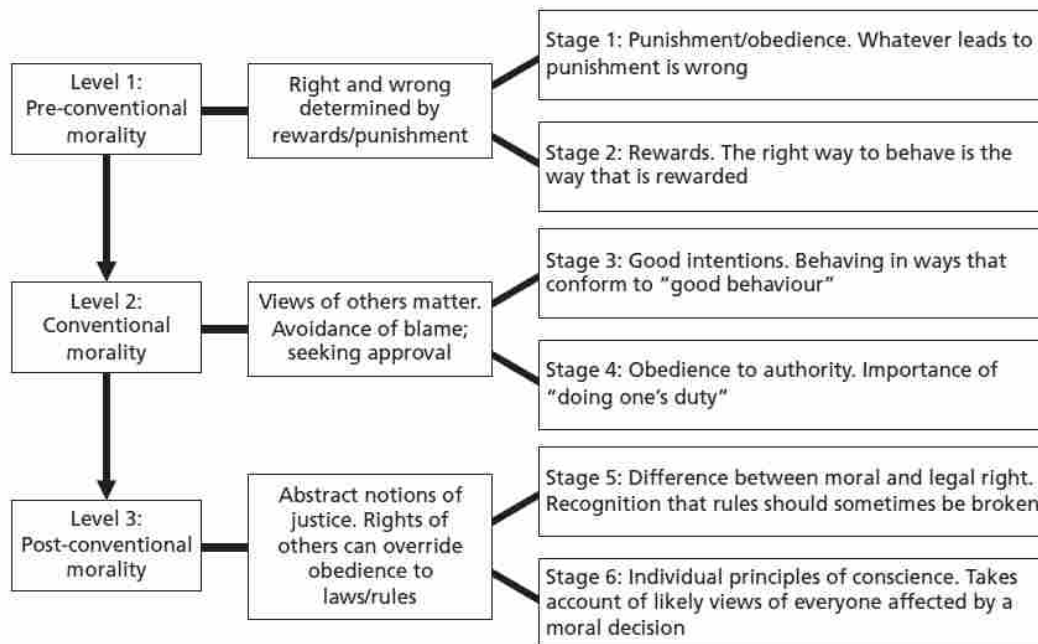


Figure 1. Levels and stages of Kohlberg's cognitive moral development model.

Corporate ethics and corporate social responsibility, 2011

Each level of Kohlberg's model describes different stages of an individual's moral development. The pre-conventional level consists of a punishment and obedience orientation and the instrumental-relativist stage. The punishment and obedience stage includes a more child-like quality; good or bad actions determine the punishment or reward. Individuals who are at this point make choices based on what the reward or punishment is for their actions. If Heinz would have made the decision to allow his wife to die and resist committing larceny because he was afraid of the punishment he would receive, he would be an example of stage one (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Kohlberg and Hersh, 1977 described stage two as the, "Right action consists of that which instrumentally satisfies one's own and occasionally the needs of others. Human relations are viewed in terms like those of a market place" (pp. 54-55). Stage two would describe the actions of individuals who would be concerned with the reward they would receive due to their actions or "you scratch my back and I will scratch yours" (p. 55).

Law and order fall under the conventional level. The two stages at this level include stage three, interpersonal concordances and the fourth stage, orientation. A person at the conventional level would be concerned with personal expectations and social order. Individuals at the interpersonal concordances stage would want to be seen as the good guy or the person who pleases others. The characteristic of people who are at the fourth stage or orientation stage of Kohlberg's moral development model believes that authority is essential and should be respected.

Stages five and six are part of the post-conventional level and demonstrate characteristics in the area of autonomy towards the decision-making process. Individuals at level five and six rely on personal values and principles to come to a solution when

facing an ethical dilemma. At this level, Heinz would not consider the consequences to him and would be willing to do what would be considered the humane thing to do or the most ethical decision a person can make.

According to Trevino and Youngblood (1990), Kohlberg believed that a person's work contributes to his moral development. A person who experiences leaders who demonstrate high ethical behavior, exceptional company ethics training, and foster a culture that permeates a high level of ethical behavior contributes to the moral development of others in a positive manner. As a result of such leaders, these individuals are more likely to react ethically when faced with an ethical dilemma.

Trevino and Youngblood (1990) also stated that the opposite is true. People exposed to unethical environments, toxic leaders, and lack any type of ethics training are more likely to make unethical decisions during an ethical dilemma. As individuals progress to higher levels of moral development, they become less dependent on external influences when making decisions and rely more on their own internal values and beliefs to guide them in making decisions (Trevino, 2004; Trevino & Youngblood, 1990).

In conclusion, Kohlberg's model identifies an individual's moral development stage and how individuals could make decisions based on what stage they have reached. Kohlberg's work does not take into account other variables that might influence decisions. Trevino contributes to the work of Kohlberg and developed a model that explains other variables that might influence the decision-making process of individuals.

Trevino Person-Situation Interactionist Model

Trevino is a professor of organizational behavior in the Smeal College of Business at Pennsylvania State University and has participated in several studies

concerning business ethics (Trevino, Brown, & Wall, 2004). Trevino has contributed many articles and authored several books in the area of business ethics and has built her studies around Kohlberg's Cognitive Moral Development Model, utilizing his theory base and measuring tools. Trevino's work primarily focuses on management of ethics in organizations and she has developed the Trevino Person-Situation Interactionist Model which gives detailed findings that support the reason individuals make ethical or unethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas.

The Person-Situational Interactionist Model proposes that there are two variables which an individual experiences in the face of an ethical dilemma during the decision-making process. Trevino found in her studies that a person's decision-making behavior can be determined by individual and situational variables. Trevino, (1986) also noted, "The individual's cognitive moral development stage determines how an individual thinks about ethical dilemmas, his or her process of deciding what is right or wrong in a situation" (p. 602).

Individual Moderators as Variables

According to Trevino (2004), ego strength, field dependence, and locus of control are individual variables that play a significant role in how individuals will behave while experiencing an ethical dilemma during the decision-making process. Trevino (2004) also stated that there are situational variables that are recognized as part of the decision-making process. Immediate job context, organizational culture, and characteristics of work are situational moderators that can influence the decision of individuals during an ethical dilemma.

Ego Strength

Ego strength is defined as individuals who are uncompromising concerning personal values and beliefs. Individuals who demonstrate high measures of ego strength rely on their own personal convictions and self-regulation abilities in the decision-making process (Trevino, 1986). Individuals who make decisions based on high ego strength could be considered to be in the fifth stage of Kohlberg's model of moral development, the difference between legal and right. An example of someone who presents a high level of ego strength would be someone willing to break the rules and unwilling to compromise their own personal values or beliefs when facing an ethical dilemma.

Regarding Kohlberg's Heinz dilemma, individuals who would decide to steal the medicine in order to save a life would know the difference between moral and legal right. The reasoning behind such a decision could be that a human life is more important than breaking a law. Participants in this study who felt that stealing the drug was against the law and that Heinz should be punished for his action would be exhibiting low ego strength according to Trevino's model and probably be at stage one or two of Kohlberg's model, a specific action deserves reward or punishment (Trevino, 1986).

Field Dependence

Trevino (2004) suggested, "field dependent individuals make greater use of external social referents to guide their behavior" (p. 610). Field dependent individuals look to the social norms of an organization, leadership, or other outside sources to guide their decisions when faced with an ethical dilemma. In a situation of field dependence a referent from the outside removes the ambiguity from the ethical dilemma by providing an answer or solution for individuals. According to Trevino (2004) people of high field

dependence would probably be undependable when it comes to moral judgments and moral actions.

Field independent people operate with greater independence and when faced with ethical dilemmas are more likely to be more reliable pertaining to moral judgments and moral actions. Individuals of field independent would rely on personal values and beliefs to direct their decision-making process. Field independent people would not be willing to compromise their values and beliefs when faced with an ethical dilemma during the decision-making process (Trevino, 2004)

Locus of Control

Locus of control is one of three individual variable components in Trevino's Person-situational Interactionist model. As suggested by Trevino (1986), locus of control is a personality characteristic that contributes to an explanation in regards to the ethical behavior of people during the decision-making process. Detert, Trevino, and Sweitzer (2008) stated, "Locus of control orientations relate to how individuals think about the event in their lives" (p. 377).

As expressed by Detert, Trevino, and Sweitzer (2008), individuals who depict an internal locus of control will feel they have control of their behavior and will make sound and ethical decisions. People who have a high internal locus of control are not influenced by external directives or power. Individuals who practice a high level of internal locus of control take responsibility for their actions and individuals with a high internal locus of control have been found to be more ethical during the decision-making process (Detert, Trevino, & Sweitzer, 2008).

Individuals who believe that external factors, such as luck or destiny and the “powers-to-be” call the shots, would exhibit a low level of internal locus of control. People who think external factors decide what should be done during an ethical dilemma are more susceptible to compromise their personal values and beliefs and would be willing to act in a manner that would be considered unethical behavior (Trevino, 1986).

Situational Moderators as Variables

Situational variables such as immediate job context, organizational culture, and characteristics of work contribute to how individuals will arrive at a decision when faced with an ethical dilemma during the decision-making process (Trevino, 1986). Situational variables are not considered detrimental to the decision-making process if all the external elements are exhibiting acceptable ethical behavior. If the leadership and culture of organizations supports a high level of ethics and encourages all to conform to the same high level, the situation variables become an asset to the organization. The situational variables can be a detriment to organizations, as well, if the leadership is toxic and the culture of companies is one that disregards any type of ethical standards. Then, it would be safe to say that these environments would be ethically toxic in nature. People who experience this environment would most likely experience a high level of pressure and act in unethical manners and would compromise their values and beliefs (Trevino, 1986).

Organizational Culture

Ardichvili and Jondle (2009) reported, “Corporate culture is often described as one of the main determinants of ethical or unethical behavior in business organizations” (p. 226). Institutions of higher education have cultures that are complex and consist of formal and informal systems, practices, and relationships that may be considered

elements of the main determinants (Ardichvili & Jondle, 2009; Ardichvili, Mitchell, & Jondle, 2009; Pontiff, 2007)

In 2009, Ardichvili, Mitchell, and Jondle studied 67 individuals, including 54 business executives from several industries and 13 individuals on behalf of academics, establishing five clusters that articulated the characteristics of an ethical business culture. The five characteristics identified by the study were the following: mission and values driven, stake-holder balance, leadership effectiveness, process integrity, and long term perspective.

Ardichvili, Mitchell, and Jondle (2009) reported that one of the five characteristics, mission and values driven, entails a culture that permeates “clarity of mission and values, reflected in the ethical guidelines and behavior” (p. 448) of organizations. They also stated that building relationships of trust, institutionalized ethical values, and a climate that removes individuals who do not share similar values is a significant element of Mission and value driven organizations.

According to Ardichvili, Mitchell, and Jondle (2009), stake-holder balanced cultures consistently treat all stakeholders fairly and ethically during the decision-making process. The stakeholders of stake-holder balanced cultures include the customers, employees, owners, and the community. The third characteristic, leadership effectiveness, represents an ethical culture that believes that leaders lead by example and that leaderships of organizations should demand ethical behavior at all levels. The characteristic of process integrity also describes organizations that are dedicated to “fairness in its people, processes, and products” and that they “Invest in ongoing ethics training and communication throughout the organization” (Ardichvili, Mitchell, &

Jondle, 2009, p. 448). The final characteristic, long term perspective, depicts organizations that “place mission above profit and long term over short term” (p. 448) and acting in the best interest of stakeholders is a characteristic of ethical organizations.

The decision-making process, leadership, policies, and socialization mechanisms are but a few components of a formal organization culture (Ardichvili & Jondle, 2009). According to Trevino and Nelson (2004), leaders are key mechanisms of organizational cultures because leaders have an enormous influence on the social environments of the work place. The influence leaders have on the social environments of a work place may sustain ethical behavior or leaders might encourage unethical behavior within organizations.

Tacit behavioral norms, communication/language, values, role models, and organizational beliefs are elements of an informal organizational culture (Ardichvili & Jondle, 2009). Many employees within organizations will give close attention to their surroundings, recognizing the informal cultural norms of the organization. The behavioral norms of organizations such as, “This is the way we do things around here” convinces employees that this is the right thing to do because it is socially accepted in the culture of organizations (Trevino & Nelson, 2004). Celuch and Dill (2011) stated, “we believe the behavioral norm concept may be particularly relevant to understanding ethical decision-making, as individuals are likely to look to the behavior of relevant others in their environment for input regarding appropriate conduct” (p. 203).

Characteristics of the Work

The responsibility of making ethical decisions during an ethical dilemma is a characteristic of the work. Jobs that require the managers to make frequent decisions

during an ethical dilemma will be encouraged to pursue a higher level of moral development. Doctors are a great example of people who make numerous decisions during their careers and are expected to show evidence of high moral behavior. When organizations require a high degree of accountability for the decisions people make, it persuades individuals to practice morality and strive to expand in the area of moral development (Trevino 1986).

Kriewaldt (2007) found in his study that accountability and decision-making was connected to the behavior of the highly-recognized superintendents that were considered professional and exhibited ethical behavior. The characteristic of work for the superintendents influenced their behavior and at the same time permeated the culture, encouraging others to act in the same manner. Likewise, Hall (2009) reported in her study that school principals who are able to balance accountability and ethics were capable of cultivating a culture of mutual respect, meeting the needs of teachers, and an environment conducive to ethical behavior.

Immediate Job Context

An organization can control the behavior of individuals through rewards and punishments. The problem exists when organizations begin to reward people for unethical behaviors. An example of this action may occur when salesmen are rewarded for making a sale even if they lie about the product in order to make the sale. The study done by Pontiff (2007) found a common theme that individuals in sales experienced significant pressure from their organizations and that the pressures were identified as situational variables in the decision-making process. When this unethical behavior is

rewarded, it encourages individuals to continue the unacceptable behavior in order to receive rewards (Trevino, 1986).

Trevino (1986) expressed that a reward system with the purpose of only rewarding ethical behavior creates environments that promotes ethical behavior. Individuals who are part of these environments are more likely to act ethically during the decision-making process, so as to receive the reward. Job pressures and reinforcement contingencies can impact the decision-making process and be used for heartening people to act ethically and unethically. People have desires or needs that can sometimes control their reasoning process which can reinforce the system of rewarding ethical behaviors or giving into the job pressures and reinforcement contingencies individuals may face.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs Model articulates that people are motivated by many different human needs, but the motivation transpires in a progressive manner. The motivation of individuals may occur or be experienced during their personal and professional lives. Maslow's pyramid-shaped model consists of five levels of human needs. Maslow believed that one progressed up the pyramid as each need was met. The experiences of the individuals during the progression up the pyramid would determine if the individuals would be motivated to act in a moral or unmoral manner. The needs are organized in the following progression (from the bottom of the pyramid towards the top of the pyramid, and they are further explained and illustrated in figure 2).

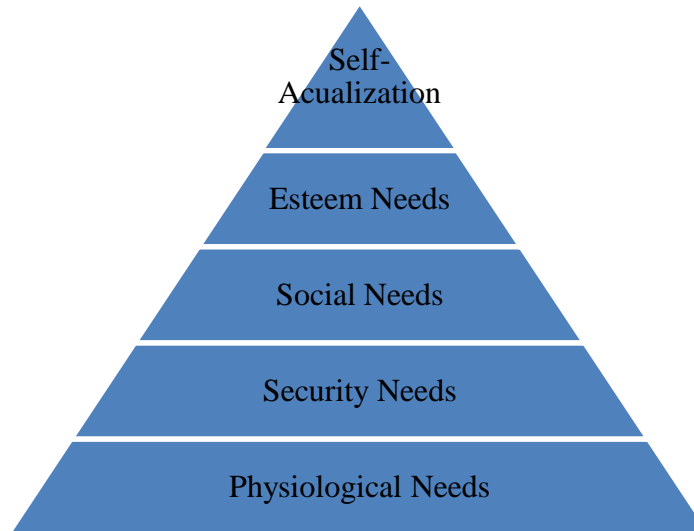


Figure 2. Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Based on Maslow's theory, people can make poor decisions based on motivation. For example, individuals may be motivated if they thought their physiological needs were in jeopardy because they did not meet certain predetermined or required employment metrics. The individual may believe they would lose their job since they were not able to meet certain predetermined or required employment metrics. Because of fear of losing security, individuals may make poor decisions to make institutional mandated metrics at any cost. These decisions could motivate unethical behaviors (Ebert & Griffin, 2011). Esteem needs and self-actualization might include one's need to respect others or to be moral when making decisions. Individuals might follow or embrace Christianity in order to fulfill this need, motivating behavior that supports the teachings of Christianity.

Christianity

Motivation to respect the needs of others and to be moral or make ethical decisions can be attributed to the teachings and practices one has been exposed to during their lifetimes. Christian beliefs are based on a biblical standpoint, a Christian belief is depicted by the bible as someone who professes belief in Jesus Christ and follows

doctrine based on the life and teachings of Jesus. The bible communicates the idea that followers of Jesus Christ rely on His teachings and life examples to determine what behavior is acceptable. The research findings of McNichols and Zimmerer (1985) reported, "There is a pattern suggesting that strength of religious belief affects individual opinions of what is acceptable" (p. 180). Christians might base their opinions of what is acceptable on what they observed through the teachings of the bible or Jesus. According to Weaver and Agle (2002), multiple studies support the premise that religiosity is related to the moral development of individuals which influences the decision-making of people. For example, the owner of Chick-fil-A is unwilling to operate business on Sundays because of his personal beliefs and Christian convictions to observe the Sabbath as a day of rest. This mindset reveals that the owner of Chick-fil-A is willing to make a personal financial sacrifice to satisfy his personal convictions and not conduct business on Sundays.

Jesus taught in Matthew 19:19 that people should "love your neighbor as yourself," suggesting that one should consider the needs of others in all matters. Jesus taught throughout the bible that people should be concerned with how their behavior or decisions impacted others. The Ten Commandments provide a foundation for Christians to treat people with respect and to be honest in all matters. The Ten Commandments, given by God, are a significant standard by which most Christians base their behavior. The Ten Commandments provide Christians with direction and a method by which to determine the best ethical behavior that would be pleasing to others as well as God.

Christians faced with ethical dilemmas might reflect on the teachings of Jesus and his life example to assist them during the decision-making process. The Christian belief

is that Jesus sacrificed His own needs and put others first by becoming the sacrifice for mankind's sins. Jesus also encouraged His followers to live a life that would promote ethical behavior at all times. The findings of Longenecker, McKinney, and Moore (2004), "indicate that more devoutly religious individuals exhibit a superior ethical judgment-one that is less accepting of questionable ethical decisions. This, then, is supportive of the idea that religious commitment contributes to higher ethical judgment" (p. 379).

There are leadership styles that support the Christian agenda and promote ethical behavior in all matters. Just as many Christians follow the teachings of Jesus to determine what is right and wrong behavior to exhibit, many leaders look to leadership styles to assist in the decision-making process. Depending on the leadership style a leader emulates could determine whether the motivation is of an (un)ethical manner (Fitch, 2008; Pontiff, 2007).

Leadership Styles

According to Daft (2005), leaders impact the ethical climate of an organization through their actions. Ethical leaders openly share their personal and professional value systems through their behavior which many followers observe and by design emulate the same conduct. When followers imitate the behavior of leaders, it can create a desirable or undesirable culture. The effect of followers imitating leaders and whether it is a desirable or undesirable culture depends upon what type of behaviors the leaders are exhibiting, ethical or unethical. Leaders can make or break an organization's culture and support environments that are ethical or unethical in nature. In the face of an ethical dilemma during the decision-making process, individuals may reflect on how they have

observed a previous leaders reaction to a similar situation. This reflection could be considered part of the reasoning process and influence the decision of a person in a positive or negative manner.

According to Blumen (2010), leaders can be appealing to followers because of their charismatic characteristics; but, later, use their alluring power to manipulate and abuse the followers, leaving them injured or ruined. Each follower is affected in some manner by the leadership styles of leaders. An example of a leadership style that may affect others negatively is the autocratic leadership style. This leadership manner refuses to consider a follower's input, thereby, hindering the relationship between the leader and follower. Further, an autocratic leadership style discourages the growth and/or development of followers (Kelly, 2010).

There are, however, leadership styles that integrate ideology and methodology that supports ethical decision-making. The transformational leadership model produces ethical leaders and engages followers in a positive manner. Transformational leaders are considered to be high on the ethical scale concerning their behaviors. The transformational leadership model encourages leaders to develop followers in areas of leadership and ethical behavior (Daft 2005).

Transformational Leadership

The transformational leadership model was first introduced and constructed by James M. Burns who arrived at a notion that leadership is transactional and later transformational (Bass & Riggio, 2010; Burns, 2003). Bass and Riggio expanded on the work of James Macgregor Burns, adding to the literature in regards to transformational leadership. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), leaders who lead through social

exchange, “exchange one thing for another,” are considered transactional leaders while leaders who stimulate and inspire followers through inclusion and leadership development are transformational leaders.

The Transformational Leadership Model encourages ethical behavior and persuades followers to emulate the positive attributes of the leadership model. Transformational Leadership consists of four main components which describe the behavior and actions of leaders who are measured as an ethical leader. Idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration are the four components of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Transformational leaders who demonstrate the characteristics of idealized influence are leaders who serve as role models for their followers. Leaders who possess a vast sum of idealized influence are leaders that can be depended upon to make an ethical decision when facing an ethical dilemma and exhibit high levels of moral behavior (Bass & Riggio, 2010; Fitch, 2009).

According to Bass and Riggio (2010), leaders who present inspirational motivation characteristics will inspire individuals to be “committed to goals and shared visions” (p. 78). People who are influenced by leaders to commit to a goal and a shared vision will most likely have the organizations, as well as other people, best interest in mind during the decision-making process. It can be said that when individuals have an emotional attachment or care about their relationships in regards to others or the organization, it can influence the reasoning process during the decision-making process (Greenfield, 2007).

Bass and Riggio (2010) stated the following in regards to intellectual stimulation; “transformational leaders stimulate their followers’ efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, approaching old situations in new ways” (p. 78). This approach could discourage individuals from processing or making decisions based on the status quo of a culture or organization. This philosophy could encourage critical thinking which can assist in processing information in a way that could advance an ethical decision-making process in the right direction. Trevino (1986) suggested that individuals who are capable of making ethical decisions on their own and who are allowed autonomy during the decision-making processes will most likely make ethical decisions in the face of an ethical dilemma.

Genuine Transformational Leaders practices are expected to incorporate “individualized consideration,” which proposes special attention be given to the needs of individual followers in areas of success and development. Transformational leaders who embrace or practice deeds such as mentoring and coaching represent the characteristics of individualized consideration. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leaders are highly ethical and take into account the welfare of others during the decision-making process. This prior statement implies that transformation leaders would consider the influence their decision would have on others and the organization throughout the reasoning process. This principle also suggests that Transformational leaders who mentor or coach other employees would pass on this same trait and individuals who are mentored or coached by transformational leaders would emulate the same behavior while processing decisions.

The transformational leadership style depicts leaders as someone who displays a high level of internal and external beliefs related to ethical behavior, which is practiced at all times. Fitch (2009) stated,

Transformational leadership is the style of leadership most closely linked with ethics. Individuals who exhibit transformational leadership characteristics often have a strong set of internal values and beliefs, and they are effective at motivating followers to act in ways that support the greater good rather than their own self interests. (pp. 30-31)

This review of literature has revealed that individuals who show evidence of strong internal values and beliefs are more likely to make ethical decisions during an ethical dilemma. This idea support Fitch's statement that transformational leaders may be strongly connected to positive ethical behavior (Fitch, 2009).

Full Range Leadership

The Full Range Leadership model (FRL) includes the four components of transformational leadership (4 I's), idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The FRL model also includes transactional components. One transactional component is contingent reward (CR), rewarding individuals for completing assignments that meet the expectations or goals of leaders. Management by exception (MBE) is another transactional component which Bass and Riggio (2006) reported, "The leader directs attention toward failures to meet standards" (active) and "The leader takes no action until complaints are received" (Passive) (p. 8) Laissez-faire (LF), avoidance or an absence of leadership is also a segment of the full range leadership model (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Bass and Riggio (2006) stated that, “The most widely accepted instrument to measure transformational leadership is the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Bass & Avolio, 2000), which actually assesses the Full Range of Leadership (FRL) model” (p. 19). According to Bass and Riggio (2006), the FRL model is divided into four quadrants: effective and active, active and ineffective, ineffective and passive, and passive and effective. The FRL conveyed that transformational leadership components, (4 I’s) idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration and contingent reward (CR) represent leaders who are active and effective leaders or leaders that would be identified as transformational leaders. The following figure represents the Full Range Leadership Model (Perryman, 2014):

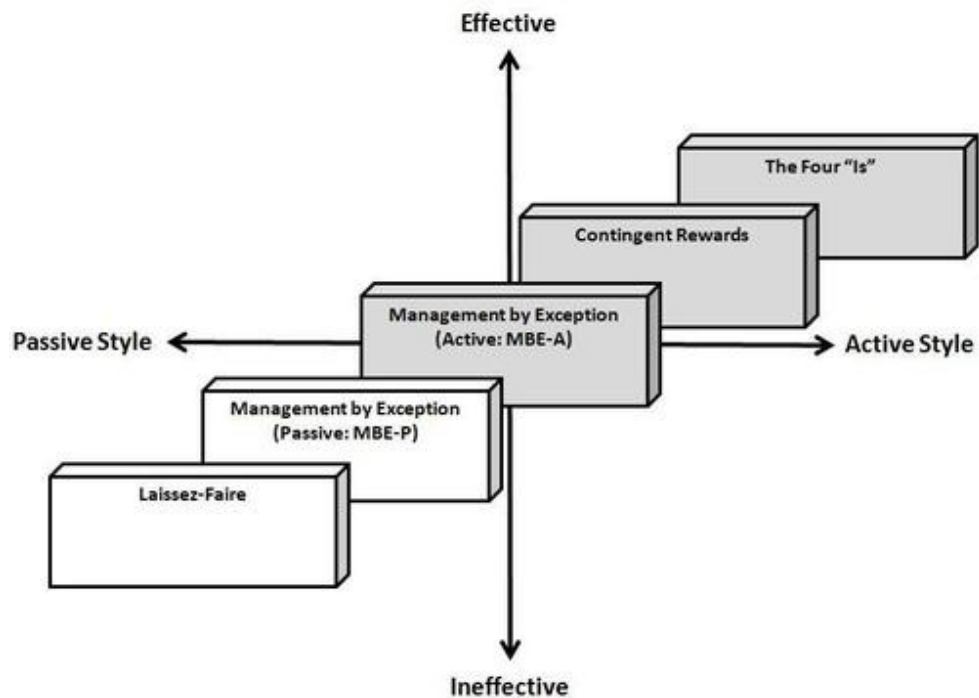


Figure 3. Full range leadership (FRL) model, (Perryman, 2014).

Authentic Leadership

According to Fitch (2009), authentic leadership then involves self-knowledge because an authentic leader should be true to his character or personal values and beliefs. According to Ardichvili and Jondle (2009), authentic leadership is closely related to the transformational leadership style and that ethical leadership materializes from the authentic character of leaders and their behaviors.

Ardichvili and Jondle (2009) stated, “authenticity is determined by choices we make in our everyday activities and that practicing authentic behavior leads to the formation of moral character. Finally, strong moral character forms the foundation for ethical behavior both on individual and on organizational levels” (p. 233). Individuals that are genuinely practicing the characteristics of an authentic leader are more likely to make ethical decisions during a decision-making process.

Hsiung’s (2012) study suggested that authentic leadership creates an environment that supports a practical and fair climate within an organization. Hsiung (2012) reported, “Since authentic leaders are more willing to share information, express their internal feelings and thoughts, and endeavor to build transparent decision mechanisms, they can obtain more trust, loyalty, and identification from their employees” (p. 352). Trevino (2004) advocated that leaders can be the situational factor that can pressure employees to make unethical decisions. Hsiung’s (2012) study would support the argument that authentic leaders would be less likely to pressure an employee and the employee would most likely not be hindered by authentic leaders during the reasoning process.

Laissez Faire Leadership

Bass and Riggio (2010) stated, “laissez faire leadership is the avoidance or absence of leadership and is by definition, most inactive, as well as most ineffective according to almost all research on the style” (p. 79). Fitch (2009) stated, “Laissez faire is a French term that means hands off” (p. 28). If leadership is an important component of an organization’s culture and a situational issue in the decision-making process, it can be determined that a strong and influential leader is necessary. Laissez faire leadership when in a weak ethical environment could create a chaotic and toxic situation in reference to the decision-making process (Fitch, 2009; Bass & Riggo, 2006).

Laissez faire leadership is not a leadership style which facilitates an environment of embracing others and encouraging any type of moral development. Individuals under the leadership of laissez faire would be left to their own. People who rely on situation variables to make a decision and possess a low moral awareness and lacked in the area of personal values and beliefs, they would be more likely to make poor decisions when faced with an ethical dilemma during the decision-making process. This atmosphere may be harmful to the institution and the people associated with the group.

Chapter Summary

In conclusion, there are many different factors to be considered in relationship to the decision-making process. Individuals will reason when making a decision during the decision-making process and how that decision is derived at is determined by where individuals are in regards to their stage of moral development (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977).

People can also experience individual and situational pressures during the decision-making process which can influence their decisions or behaviors. Individuals

can make decisions based on personal values and beliefs, ignoring institutional policies and practices or compromising their values and beliefs and following the institution's policies and practices. Both are acceptable as long as the foundation of the individual's decision is to make the best ethical decision possible. Ethical decision-making can only happen if the influences, whether individual or situational, is of the highest ethical level (Trevino & Nelson, 2004).

This review of literature described ethical decision-making and how moral disengagement, moral awareness, and moral reasoning influence the ethical decision-making of individuals. Kohlberg's Cognitive Moral Development model, Trevino's Personal-Situational Interactionist model, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs are the theoretical foundations that provided an understanding of how people progress morally, what variables may influence the decision-making process, and what may motivate people to make certain decisions. This chapter also included and summarized leadership styles and Christian beliefs that support ethical behavior and the idea that leaders are an important component that influences the decision-making process.

Chapter three will include the methodology and design that was utilized to complete this study. It will also give a detailed description of the qualitative research design and the research questions that guided the study. The setting of the study and the methods the researcher used for data collection will be outlined, as well. The interview process, the questions asked during the interviews, validity and reliability of the study, and how the researcher will analysis the data collected during the study are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the design and methodology of this study with the purpose of examining the experiences of leaders in higher education during the decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas. The study also examined individual and situational variables which leaders identified as having an influence on making ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas. A qualitative, multi-case study was the design utilized in an attempt to answer the research questions of this study. This chapter also identifies the settings of the study, the participants, details in relation to validity and reliability, and the methods of collecting and analyzing the study's data.

The study encompassed ten participants or case studies in all, which included five different higher education institutions. The study includes an in-depth review of four of the ten original participants who were willing to participate in a second round of interviews. The in-depth look at the four case studies incorporated the experiences of the four leaders and how they processed their thoughts and made ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. The in-depth analysis of the four case studies also included interviews with direct reports of each participant. The goal of this study was to examine separate case studies and to identify the common themes in regards to the ethical decision-making process of leaders in higher education. The methods of data collection included one-on-one interviews with the ten participants, completion of a Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), and an in-depth review of four of the ten cases through additional interviews. Additional perceptions pertaining to participants' decision-making processes were provided by individual interviews with the direct reports of the four cases. The data

was also authenticated through member checking. This additional data provided validity for the study and was a method of triangulating data.

Restatement of the Problem

When faced with an ethical dilemma during the decision-making process, leaders within higher education may find it difficult to make proper decisions. Or, they may question their ability and confidence in making decisions (Moreno, 2011). The decision-making process can be complex due to all of the different factors that influence decisions. Many individuals may struggle with questions they may ask themselves during the decision-making process. Do their decisions only reflect on how it will impact them? Do their decisions include the interest of others? And how it will have an effect on their institutions?

Other factors also contribute to the complexity of making decisions, such as pressures from others within organizations, conflict of values and beliefs between others and the organization's policies and practices, in addition to individual and situational variables. Individuals have certain beliefs and practices prior to joining organizations. When faced with decisions or new practices, they may find that their personal values, beliefs, and preferred practices may conflict with the values and beliefs of others, as well as the policies and practices of organizations (Trevino, 1986).

Individuals can start with the intentions of making ethical decisions; but, when confronted with other variables, they might be willing to change their minds and formulate decisions that require them to compromise their personal values and beliefs (Gardner, 2006). The modified thinking or reasoning process may have been changed

due to the influence of different variables. Some individuals may even be pressured to consider unethical decisions which could lead to unethical behaviors (Trevino, 2004).

Research Design

A qualitative approach was the preferred choice to expand on viewpoints relating to how leaders in higher education make ethical decisions during the decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas and what individual and situational variables leaders identify as having an influence on their decisions. Merriam (1998) stated, “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 6). Merriam (1998) and Stake (1994) support the basis for employing a qualitative approach; this study wishes to make sense of the experiences of leaders and have a better understanding of how they process their thoughts while dealing with ethical dilemmas during the decision-making process. Although, it is important to select the right type of case study research to collect data that best supports the study.

Creswell (2008) suggested that case studies can be a comprehensive examination of a process and is based on extensive data gathering. Creswell (2008) described various types of case studies from which researchers are able to choose, so that the method fits the study. For this reason, this study utilized a multi-case study method because it meets the objective of this study. The objective of this study was to have a better understanding of the reasoning process of leaders in higher education in regards to making ethical decisions and what individual and situational variables they identify as having an influence on their decision-making process. According to Stake (1994), collective case studies “...are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better

understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases” (p. 237). A multi-case study allows researchers to study several cases in order to examine and provide insights in relation to specific themes.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study, and this study made an effort to explore and establish clarity to answer them:

1. How do leaders in higher education perceive that their personal ethical beliefs and perceived institutional pressures affect their decisions?
2. What individual variables might leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?
3. What situational variables might leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?
4. What leadership characteristics might leaders in higher education recognize as having an impact on making ethical decisions during the decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas?
5. How do leaders in higher education describe their reasoning process in regards to their ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?

Setting of the Study

This study consisted of ten separate cases which transpired within five different universities on the east coast. All of the institutions represented in this study were schools that were accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education

(MSCHE) and have been established institutions for at least 50 years. The institutions consisted of two public institutions and three private universities. Two of the five universities had a religious affiliation and supported a Christian mission. Multiple sites and participants in a multiple case study decrease the possibility of replicating collected data and allows for more utilizable data (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) recommended that the use of multiple cases for case studies creates an advantage over using one significant case. Data from multiple cases are considered to be more convincing and influential than data from one distinct study.

Sample Size and Selection

This qualitative, multi-case study is making use of the purposeful sampling method. Merriam (1998) stated, “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumptions that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61). The group of participants was put together to serve a very explicit purpose, to be able to examine the experiences of leaders in higher education and how they processed their thoughts during the decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas. The study also examined what individual and situational variables leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas during the decision-making process. For these reasons, the participants were chosen for this study and provided data for this study that was valuable and informative.

Several of the participants were acquaintances of the researcher and other selected participants were identified through a “snowballing process.” Networks of individuals connected to the researcher identified and suggested individuals that would be ideal

leaders for the study. All participants were invited to participate in this study and willingly offered their services voluntarily. All participants and institutions remained confidential. The participants of this study held leadership positions within higher education institutions and met the following criteria:

1. Have held a leadership position within higher education institution(s) for a minimum of five years.
2. Have experienced an ethical dilemma during the decision-making process and made a choice to make an ethical decision in place of an unethical decision during an ethical dilemma as defined by Moreno (2001).
3. Have or had an administrator's position within a higher education institution(s) and is considered one of authority in any of the following areas: operations, academics, admissions, or finance. (i.e. Department Head, Dean, Director of a department, Vice President, or President)
4. Have represented the definition of leader described within this study: Leaders - Moreno (2011) states, "*Leader*: an individual who acts on his or her own initiative, leads others, and "engages in leadership" (Norhouse, 2004, p. 3). The leadership role may include establishing direction, aligning people, and motivating and inspiring others (Kotter, 1990). Additionally, an individual may also have managerial responsibilities that may include planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, and controlling and problem solving (Kotter, 1990)..." (p. 32).

Participants were given a questionnaire outlining the criteria for participating in order to determine their ability to participate in the study (see appendix B). The qualifying

questionnaire was presented prior to any interviews to make sure the participants were eligible to participate in the study. After the researcher identified ten participants who met the criteria, scheduling of the interviews for the ten cases was the next task. In order to maintain confidentiality, each participant was assigned a fictitious name and each institution was assigned a number in place of their real identities. The assigned names and numbers were used throughout the entire study and within this document.

The process for selecting the four participants for the second round of interviews was based on two conditions. The first stipulation was the willingness of participants to participate in the second round of interviews. The second criterion for participating in the second round of interviews was the judgment of the researcher. The researcher accomplished this task by comparing the rapport between researcher and the participant, considering the level of participation by each participant, as well as the intensity of cooperation and passion of the participant.

Procedure

According to Yin (2009), it is crucial during a multi-case study to replicate the procedures from one case to another in order to maintain consistency. The process of collecting data for this study was accomplished by structured interviewing of the participants.

Yin (2009) stated, “The pilot case is more formative, assisting you to develop relevant lines of questions-possibly even providing some conceptual clarification for the research design as well” (p. 92). A pilot study with individuals, who shared the same qualifying criterion as the participating members of this research, was completed for validation and reliability reasons. The pilot study included the interview questions used

throughout the entire study. The interview questions were constructed by the researcher and pilot study participants assisted in identifying needed changes to the interview questions and proved other questions to be valid and reliable.

The interview questions were designed to answer or correlate with the research questions of this study (Creswell, 2009). A series of structured and open-ended questions were utilized during the interviews (see appendix D & E). The questions were asked with the intention that there may be follow-up questions in order to have participants expand on their answers or to clarify the answers given. Prior to the start of the interview sessions, the definitions of ethical dilemma, individual and situational variables, and any other definitions that the participants may not have understand or desired were available for clarity.

One-on-one interviews with the ten participants were conducted and lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interviews took place on the particular sites of the participants' institutions in areas appropriate for this type of atmosphere. The areas provided confidentiality for the participants (Creswell, 2007). The researcher used an electronic recorder during the interview process and took detailed field notes. Following the interviews, the researcher listened to the recordings and read the field notes several times. The researcher then constructed an interview log (or journal) manually for coding purposes.

An interview log was constructed from the data collected. In reference to utilizing an interview log, Merriam (1998) stated, "The interviewer-researcher then plays the tape and takes notes on important statements or ideas expressed by the informant. Words or phrases or entire sentences are quoted exactly" (p. 87). The interview logs

provided important statements, phrases, words, and direct quotes for all of the interview questions.

After analyzing the data from the interview logs, a synopsis was constructed for each interview session. Upon completion of the synopsis, each of the participants were provided with a copy of the document in relation to their specific case. They were e-mailed copies in order to member check the synopsis to assure the accuracy of the data. According to Creswell (2008), member checking is a process that researchers utilize to validate accuracy of data by allowing participants to examine the recorded data collected during data collection processes. The same process utilized with the ten participants was also emulated in the second round of interviews with the four participants.

The interview logs of all cases were then analyzed and coded for common themes in correlation to each research question. Coding was completed manually by going through each interview log and categorizing common themes related to specific research questions. Highlighting the themes with a color assigned to each research question was the method for identifying the common themes within the interview logs. All of the common themes for each research question were compiled and the findings are reported in chapter 4 of this study.

All ten participants completed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) leader form during the first interview meeting. The MLQ was developed by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio in 1997. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), one of the tools commonly accepted by researchers in assessing the full range of leadership is the MLQ. The MLQ is the method the researcher of this study chose to utilize within this study. The MLQ contains 45 questions that evaluate three different leadership styles:

Transformational, Transactional, and Passive-Avoidant. It permits individuals to determine how they perceive themselves with reference to specific leadership behaviors. The MLQ assisted the researcher in identifying how the participants of this study perceived themselves in regards to their leadership behaviors.

The direct reports of the four case studies completed a MLQ rater form. The MLQ rater form asks questions that describe the leadership style of the leader. The MLQ rater form results assisted in validating the results from the leader's MLQ. The MLQ provided data that helped validate answers about leadership characteristics given during the interview process and also helped with understanding the leadership style of each participant (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Validity and Reliability

Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) stated, "The use of multiple case studies in educational research is common strategy for improving the external validity or generalizability of the research" (p. 430). This study consisted of ten participants and multiple sites and is in agreement with the suggestion of Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009), that multiple cases improve the external validity and generalizability for this research.

Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) also stated, "Multisite case studies allow the researcher to make claims that the events described at one site are not necessarily idiosyncratic to that site and thus contribute to the researcher's understanding about contextual variations or lack thereof, across sites" (p. 430). The participants and organizations that engaged in this study were not aware of the identities of other organizations or individuals participating in this research. Confidentiality assured that

there was not any collaborating between institutions and the participants of this study, creating a higher possibility of validity and reliability of the research.

Yin (2009) stated, “a major strength of case study collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence” (p. 114). Triangulation was established by the three following methods: conducting in-depth interviews of the study’s ten participants, a more in-depth study by means of additional interviews with participants from four of the cases chosen, and interviewing direct reports of the four participants. Reviewing the results of the MLQ, taken by the four participants and the MLQ results from the direct reports in regards to their perceptions of their leader assisted in establishing validity of the data collected.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2008) suggested, “A typical case study procedure for multiple cases is to first analyze each case separately and then conduct a cross-case analysis (Stake, 1995) to identify common and different themes among all the cases” (p. 490). The researcher gathered the data necessary to respond to the research questions of this study. The researcher analyzed the data by reading the information of each case separately, several times, identifying broad themes, and documenting the findings in an interview log. After analyzing all cases, the researcher compared the findings from each case and identified the common themes in relationship to the research questions by manual color coding.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the research design that was utilized to address the questions presented in this study. This chapter provided details of the settings of the study, the participants, details in relation to validity and reliability, and the methods of collecting

and analyzing the study's data. A comprehensive description of the research questions, interview questions, and the pilot study of the study were expressed within this chapter.

Chapter Four will examine the data collected and provide a detailed analysis of the common themes found within the data. The data allowed for a better understanding in regards to the problem statement and the research questions of this study. This following chapter will add to the existing literature in regards to ethical decision-making in the face of ethical dilemmas and how individual and situational variables influence the decisions of administrators in higher education.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Data for this study were collected using a qualitative method and consisted of ten individual case studies. This chapter provides a synopsis of all the interviews conducted during this study and the data that generated the common themes relating to the study's research questions. Data were collected from participants of this study through individual interviews and an MLQ questionnaire. Additional data were provided through a second round of interviews, with four of the original ten participants, in order to gain a better understanding of a leader's methods of reasoning throughout the decision-making process during an ethical dilemma. Furthermore, supplementary data from direct reports of the four second round participants were collected and reported in this chapter. The direct reports' data were collected through individual interviews. The direct reports were included in the study so as to have a better understanding of the leader's decision-making process during an ethical dilemma. This chapter will also identify and describe the common themes associated with each research question.

This research did not focus on the demographics of the participants. The focal point of this study was on the experiences and the decision-making processes of the participants during an ethical dilemma. Because this researcher focused on the experience and the decision-making process during an ethical dilemma, he believed it was important to include a brief summation of all ten of the interviews within this chapter. A narrative of the case studies provides others with a better understanding of the details or process of each individual case. Telling the participants' stories also gives

insight on how each leader processed their thoughts and shows some of the variables that influenced their decision-making process during an ethical dilemma.

Each interview was recorded. Additionally, the researcher kept detailed field notes. An interview log was developed which included all the data collected from the interview recordings and field notes. Analyses of the data were completed by identifying common phrases and words within the interview log (Merriam, 1998). The phrases and words within the interview log were acknowledged and colored coded manually in correlation with research questions. The common phrases or words developed common themes which answered the research questions of the study.

Summary of the Ten Case Studies (First Round Interviews)

This section will provide a synopsis of the interviews that were conducted with the participants of the ten case studies. A description of the participant's ethical dilemma will be provided, as well as his/her thought process during their ethical dilemma. Also included in this section will be a description of the leadership characteristics of the participants. The researcher rated each ethical dilemma as a low, medium, or a high level of ethical dilemma. The rating was determined by the researcher's perceived level of danger or corruption the participant faced during the ethical dilemmas described.

Pseudonyms were used for each participant of the study in order to protect their identity.

Tracy

Tracy's position as president of an institution is of the highest echelon within a university. She is in a position of power and is able to make decisions that impact the entire institution and its affiliates. Tracy expressed that her open door policy invites the members of the institution to share or talk about their concerns or thoughts. Tracy said,

“My expectations are that an open door policy will allow me to hear the voice of the people within the institution.”

Tracy described a time when she was faced with an ethical dilemma. A faculty member approached her and requested that she overturn another individual’s decision which impacted the faculty member. The other individual’s decision was founded on an institutional policy. The faculty member expressed to Tracy that because she was the president, she would be able to overturn the decision, even if the decision was determined by a policy of the institution. Tracy stated, “This was an ethical dilemma because it is my responsibility to maintain and uphold all the institutions policies or there would be overall chaos within the institution.” She also said, “I believe it is important to make every attempt to satisfy the requests of faculty without compromising the policies of the institution.”

In regards to the ethical dilemma described, Tracy summarized her thought progression during the decision-making process. Tracy held that it is necessary to collect data that would assist in the decision-making process. She began to collect data by listening to the faculty member and understanding the faculty member’s interpretation of the policy and the situation. She stated, “Things are not clear all the time and there is a lot of grey in making decisions and when searching within the grey, where is the highest ethical ground.” Tracy articulated that she does not make decisions alone and that she needs to be transparent in every decision she makes. Her thought process took into consideration the policies of the institution, as well as the value of the individual making the request. Tracy purported that it is essential and obligatory to collaborate with others who would have an understanding of the policies and present possible solutions to the

situation. She also asked questions, where needed, so she could come to terms with a suitable solution that would not compromise the institution's policies, but also satisfying all concerned.

Tracy expressed that she has experienced organization pressures that challenged her personal values and beliefs during the decision-making process. During situations where behavior or decisions are questionable, individuals have attempted to exert their power over Tracy, based on position or affiliation with the institution, in order to get their own way. She gave an example of a politician who wanted to change curriculum within a program. Tracy stated, "He attempted to use his political power to push his agenda, but I stood my ground and denied his request to change the curriculum." She based her decision on the opinion of the faculty experts within the school. She also used data that supported the value of the curriculum in question. She did not believe the politician possessed the expertise in the area of the curriculum to warrant a change in the curriculum.

One of Tracy's viewpoints expressed during the interview on the decision-making process is to take into consideration three factors: data related to the institution, the policies and procedures of an institution, and caring about each other or the value of people. Her viewpoint correlates with her own description of her leadership characteristics: collaborative, transparent, goal and data driven. Tracy's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) scores support the notion that Tracy is a transformational leader and is focused on outcomes that are in the best interest of the stakeholders and the institution (please see appendix J). The researcher rated Tracy's dilemma as a medium level ethical dilemma because she was not in any danger or faced

with a decision that would cause any significant harm to her or other stakeholders. But she would have committed what she perceived as an unethical act, going against the policies of the institution.

Tom

Serving as an Associate Vice President within a higher education institution, Tom was given a significant amount of power in regards to the decision-making process. Tom described some of his leadership characteristics as being a high delegator, engaged people to move forward, problem solver, mentor, and peacemaker. Tom stated, "It is my responsibly to make sure that all actions or behaviors linked to my department is fair and of a high-ethical standard." According to Tom, rules and policies are in place to make sure there is a sense of fair play and to make sure others will not get hurt.

Tom faced an ethical dilemma when the President of the University asked Tom to do something that would be considered unethical, as well as illegal. The act was against the law. Tom stated, "I don't want to be part of breaking the law." The president was requesting an action that would have given a specific party an advantage over all the other parties involved. The president's request would not have allowed equal opportunity or inclusion for all participants and would have created an unlawful state of affair for the institution. This act could have caused an embarrassing or a scandalous moment for the institution or even the possibility for prosecution for anyone involved.

Tom believed it was an ethical dilemma because "I knew if I did not comply with the president's request, I would destroy all future opportunities for advancement." He also understood his responsibility to do the right thing and make an attempt to bring clarity to the matter. Tom believed the request from the president was an organizational

pressure that challenged his personal values and beliefs. In spite of the pressures, he believed the rules and policies of the institution were fair and he had confidence that the system and rules would side with him.

Tom gave details of his thought process and the actions he took during the ethical dilemma he experienced. Tom expressed that he needed all of the facts in order to create alternatives to the president's request. Tom also gave thought to how he could survive and how he could protect the president and the institution from getting into trouble with the law. Tom collected data and facts by consulting professionals in order to make sure he had clarity in regard to the institutional policies and the laws in question. The next step was to educate the president about the situation and the reason he could not do what the president was planning. Then, Tom said, "I offered him alternatives with the hopes of changing his mind." Tom did not comply with the president's request even though there was a personal cost to pay. It was conveyed by Tom that he relied on his personal convictions and values, as well as the law and policies of the institution, to direct his decision-making process. Tom's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) scores support the notion that Tom is a transformational leader and is focused on outcomes that are in the best interest of the stakeholders and the institution. (Please see Appendix J.) The researcher rated Tom's dilemma as a high level dilemma because his decisions could pose a threat or risk for all stakeholders and there was a possibility that a crime could have been committed.

Sandy

As a Director, Sandy holds a position of power and has the responsibility of managing several programs within a higher education institution. She manages and

provides services to faculty members in addition to the student body. Sally's position requires her to make decisions frequently concerning the needs of the faculty and students.

Sandy described an ethical dilemma that involved Sandy, a non-traditional student, and a faculty member. She stated that she was contacted by a student who believed he should have received an A- instead of the B+ given by the faculty member. Sandy stated, "Because I am the director of the program, I think the student was seeking affirmation from me concerning his viewpoint on the grade he received in his class." Due to the minute difference between the grades, some may not see this specific situation as a serious problem or a very big deal, but Sandy said that the outcome would impact the student's academic career. According to Sandy, the student was on academic probation and the miniscule difference between the grades could be the determining factor on whether he was able to continue with the program.

Sandy's thought process in regards to the ethical dilemma was based on her concern for the student and meeting institutional policy. She stated, "I wanted to hear the issue in order to validate whether there was a true concern." She also expressed the need to consult university policy concerning the grade appeal process. According to Sandy, "it is my responsibility and part of who I am to genuinely care about the student's accomplishments, but only while operating within the policies of the institution." She wanted to make sure the student understood all of the options available to him in regards to challenging the grade he received.

She stated that the Christian mission of the university plays a significant role when she is faced with an ethical dilemma. The mission of the institution is to assist

students so that they have every opportunity to succeed. She described her leadership characteristics as being accessible, leading by example, and inspiring people. She believes these leadership characteristics influence her decision-making process by allowing her to put herself into the problem or situation. Sandy's MLQ scores support the leadership characteristics she described. The scores also indicate that Sandy embraces and implements the philosophies of a transformational leadership style. The researcher rated Sandy's dilemma as a low level dilemma. Sandy's decision did not put stakeholders in any type of risk or threat of danger.

Sam

Sam's extensive time as a Dean within a higher education institution has required him to make many decisions which impact the institutional programs he supervises. Sam satisfied the required qualifications to participate in this study, but during the interview he was unwilling to share a specific ethical dilemma because he was not comfortable doing so. Sam did not discuss one specific case or dilemma, but he expressed, "I deal with sensitive information all of the time." He said, "I make every effort to meet the needs of everyone when dealing with sensitive issues." When discussing the thought process during any ethical issues of a big nature, Sam focuses on policies, the governance of the institution, and the input of others connected to the issue. Sam stated, "...policies are the guiding factors when considering what to do" and also that "higher education is policy-driven and one should not deviate from policy." He did say, "There are exceptions for deviating from policies, but that is not done independently." Sam stated, "This process is done collectively by several individuals coming together and having a dialogue about what actions or changes would be best."

Sam's Christian values and beliefs, or Christian roots, have a significant influence on his decision-making process when making ethical decisions. He also added that the culture of his institution has the same Christian values and beliefs and have an influence on his decision-making process. Sam described his own leadership characteristics during the interview as: leading by example, demonstrating consistency, and being fair. He said that being consistent in his decision-making and following policy creates transparency for others to know where he stands on issues. Sam's MLQ scores are consistent with his description of his own leadership characteristics. He scored high in the areas that express a transformational leadership style. The researcher was unable to rate Sam's dilemma because Sam did not provide a specific dilemma during his interview.

Paul

Paul is Vice President of Student Development within a higher education institution and has an enormous amount of responsibility for leading departments that are or associated with student success. He makes decisions that impact both the students and the organization, as a whole. Paul has the power to make decisions that determine whether a student may or may not continue with their academic careers within his institution.

Because of a student's intolerable behavior, which breached the code of conduct of the institution, Paul dismissed the student from school. Paul was approached by the family of the dismissed student with a significant donation for the school. The parents asked Paul if they could give a donation to the school and also asked him if he would be willing to work with the student who was dismissed. Paul asked himself several questions, "I said to myself, what is right for the student and what is right for the

institution. I also had to consider, what is right for the learning community.” Paul’s ethical framework and guidance from institutional policies and procedures compelled Paul to do what he believed was the right thing do in regards to this specific situation.

When Paul was asked why he believed this was an ethical dilemma, he replied, “I believe it is an ethical dilemma because the solution made by the family may have benefitted the institution monetarily and made the family of the dismissed student happy, but it did not address the root cause or issue.” Paul also stated, “The solution did not create a learning moment for the student or encourage a position of fair play.” According to Paul, the proposed solution might have been seen as acceptable by the family, but it was not acceptable for the institution because the proposed solution deviated from the institutional policies and procedures.

According to Paul, his thought process during an ethical dilemma is framework-based. He has an understanding of his role and recognizes the obligation he has to the institution and its stakeholders. He said, “I think of actionable activities that provide healing for the stakeholders without violating the institutional policies and procedures.” Internal institutional cultures, individual biases, traditions, and personal or staff members can be organizational pressures that can challenge Paul’s personal values and beliefs. Paul believes that organizational pressures that scrutinize or challenge interpretation of an individual can be beneficial and will inform the process and provide a different lens which can protect oneself during the decision-making process.

Paul’s MLQ scores support his description of his own leadership characteristics and categorize Paul as a transformational leader (please see appendix J). Some of these characteristics are collaborative leader, plan/scripted but amendable, relational, and

adaptable. Paul described these leadership traits as those which influence his decision-making process. According to Paul, these attributes help his ethical decision-making to web together, lead people to a goal, create consistency, and consider other people during the decision-making process. The researcher rated Paul's dilemma as a high level dilemma because of the risk and danger his decision would have on the stakeholders connected to the circumstances.

Rick

Rick's position as Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs involves numerous occasions that require ethical decision-making. Rick has had several positions of authority within several higher education institutions which have required him to make ethical decisions when faced with an ethical dilemma.

Rick was faced with the decision of terminating an employee. Rick believed it was an ethical dilemma because the circumstances could have been considered from different perspectives. According to Rick, the decision-making process could depend on the value system utilized to determine the direction of the decision in regard to the circumstances. Rick believed there was a different route he could have taken, not confront the issue, allowing the individual to remain with the institution. Rick also expressed, "...in order to resolve a problem, one should face the problem head on."

Rick described his thought process during the decision-making process. He said, "I first look at the structure of the institution to determine if it is a problem, and then I observe to see if the problem has increased, decreased, or remained the same." Rick also considers whether there is a need for him to intervene or if it should be handled by someone else, with his support. Other factors Rick considered during the decision-

making process entails: playing out the scenario, reflecting on what is the best for all linked to the issue, and identifying the best ethical outcome to the problem. One of the organizational pressures that challenge Rick's personal values and beliefs is "when an organization focuses on the ends so that they may justify the means or do whatever it takes to reach a preferred end to a situation."

One influential factor on the decision-making process Rick stressed most during the interview was his own value system. He stated, "All decisions I make must line up with my personal value system, which is based on my Christian beliefs." In regards to the ethical dilemma described, Rick said that the culture of the institution matched his personal value system, supporting his decision.

Rick described his leadership traits as being: a servant leader or focusing on others first, relational, a problem solver, and able to work with diverse people. He also considers those leadership attributes to be an influence on his decision-making process because it facilitates a mind-set to focus on other people and how decisions affect other people. Rick's MLQ scores support his personal description of his leadership characteristics. His MLQ scores suggest that Rick's leadership model concurs with the transformational style outlined by Bass and Riggio (2006) (please see appendix J). The researcher rated Rick's ethical dilemma as a low level dilemma because there was not enough information about the dilemma to determine how his decision would have put stakeholders at risk or danger.

Sally

Sally is the supervisor of a department that is responsible for establishing the legitimacy of academic progression of all students, as well as the conferring of degrees.

Students are not able to graduate until Sally's department approves that all requirements for graduation have been met. Sally expressed that she has the authority and responsibility to question or reject the conferring of a degree if there are issues or when students do not meet all graduation requirements.

Sally said, "I have been approached several times by higher-ups to confer degrees even though students did not meet all the requirements for graduation." She declared that the pressures from the administrators are great and challenge her personal values and beliefs, but she and her staff continue to embrace the rules and the need to retain their integrity. According to Sally, she and her staff refuse to cave to the organizational pressures. Rather, they find it necessary to follow the policies of the institution, government agencies, and accrediting bodies governing the organization. She believes this situation is a dilemma because the request from the executives "is inconsistent with all the requirements of graduating." Sally also added that it is a dilemma "because I know I need to do the right thing and follow the rules and regulations." However, because of the negative culture of the institution, she fears that there could be a great risk of her losing her job if she does not comply with the unethical request. But, she stated, "I have to be able to sleep at night" and "I refuse to jeopardize my reputation by doing something that is wrong."

The thought process for Sally during the ethical dilemma was: "I thought first, am I wrong, these are people from the highest levels within this university and they have years of experience, how can they be wrong." After considering that thought, she did a self-check and realized that she was not wrong in refusing to comply with an unethical request. Sally also considered the ramifications for all if she were to do as requested by

the executives. Sally also expressed, “I am willing to be flexible. But, because of my position and the department I represent, there is very little room for deviating from the policies and rules without jeopardizing the institution and my people.” Making sure she was consistent, being honest so as to maintain her integrity, and being fair are some of the personal values and beliefs that influenced her decision-making process during the ethical dilemma described.

“Having good business sense,” “helping staff by being a positive influence,” as well as “mentoring and teaching staff” were some of the leadership characteristics Sally described during the interview. She believes these characteristics influence her decision-making process. She said, “I include my staff in all important discussions and I value their input when we are trying to solve a problem.” She acknowledged that the discussions she and her staff have in regards to solving problems is a group effort. According to Sally, the group discussions include dialogues that raise questions such as, “What is the ethical or the right thing to do in such a case?” Sally’s style of leadership coincides with her MLQ scores which suggest that Sally emulates characteristics related to the transformational leadership style (please see appendix J). The researcher rated Sally’s dilemma as a high level dilemma because her job was in jeopardy and she was asked to perform an act that could be perceived as unethical or even illegal.

Jane

Jane has held several different positions of authority within a higher education institution which has required her to make decisions that impact the institution and all of its stakeholders. Currently, Jane serves as an Associate Vice President and manages

several departments within the institution. Each of these departments provides services and programs that support the student body and the infrastructure of the institution.

Jane described a situation she had encountered. Jane believed it was not much of an ethical dilemma because she did not hesitate in regards to the decision she needed to make. Rather, she saw it as making a choice of doing what she considered to be right, as opposed to what she believed as being wrong. She said, "I knew immediately, what was the right action to pursue." Jane was informed that a program within her department was in need of reconciliation or restructuring to meet required standards of an accrediting agency.

This program had been managed by the same individual for many years. Jane instructed the individual to reconcile the program and it seemed that he had done as she instructed. However, after he had retired, it was found by the new staff member, who took over his role, that he did not really reconcile the program appropriately. His actions seriously affected students who had already graduated and were no longer connected to the institution. Jane was faced with reconciling the program, as well as making the decision of whether or not to correct the problem with past graduates or to consider the program reconciled and move forward from that point. Jane stated, "Even though it would be easier to forget and move forward, I felt there was no other alternative except to make it right with the students."

Loyalty, reputation, integrity, culture of the institution, responsibility, and how it would be perceived by outside agencies were internal and external factors that influenced Jane's thought process in regards to correcting the problem. She said, "Even though it was not my error, it was my responsibility to make it right because it happened under my

watch.” Jane’s upbringing plays a significant role during the decision-making process. Her parents’ and Christian influence encouraged her to always reflect on the right thing to do. She stated, “I was never worried about getting in trouble as a child, but I worried about disappointing my parents.”

Jane believes she has never experienced organizational pressures with her current institution that would challenge her personal values and beliefs. According to Jane, the leadership of the institution would never ask her to do anything unethical. Her opinion is that they know her well enough to know she would never consider doing something that would be considered unethical. Her experience with the leadership of the institution in regards to ethical decision-making has been one of support and encouragement.

Jane’s MLQ scores, which illustrated a high correlation with the transformational leadership style, were consistent with her description of her personal leadership characteristics (please see appendix J). Inclusive, supportive of her staff, loyal, integrity, recognition of people’s accomplishments are some of the leadership characteristics revealed during the interview. She believes these leadership characteristics influence her decision-making in that she would not do anything that would endanger her leadership characteristics. The researcher rated Jane’s dilemma as a medium level dilemma. If Jane was unwilling to make it right with the students, it would have created an unsatisfactory condition for the students impacted by the situation.

Jason

Jason has a very special historical connection with his institution and has been currently employed with this institution for twelve years. He is an alumnus of this university and is to a great extent immersed and compassionate about the culture,

mission, and purpose of his department and organization. Jason stated, “The mission and values of this institution and the nature of what we do influence my decision-making when dealing with issues.” A few years after graduation, Jason had an opportunity to work for this institution and has since then made a career within the very department he served as a student leader. Currently, he is in a leadership position associated with student life and many of the institution’s functions involving the entire student body and student-oriented organizations.

Jason described an ethical dilemma that transpired between Jason and his supervisor, as well as Jason’s direct reports. He explained the situation as one where his supervisor was “lacking in communication and he was committed to an autocratic leadership style.” Jason reported that the supervisor was treating Jason and his direct reports in a manner that could be considered harassing or even hostile which affected the effectiveness of the department. Jason believed, “He did not communicate expectations well and bullied or forced staff to do things his way because of his position of power.” Using one’s position to get his own way is an organizational pressure that challenges Jason’s personal values and beliefs. According to Jason, “I have benefited from organizational pressures because the experience has taught me that people are the organization’s most important resource.” The experience has influenced his decision-making process in that he recognizes and respects the input of others.

Concerning the situation between him and his boss, Jason said, “I believe it was an ethical dilemma because I was raised by my parents to respect authority and to do as my supervisors instructed me.” He also stated, “It was customary in the past for me to comply or respect all the requests of my supervisors without vocalizing concerns or

thoughts.” He conveyed that during the thought process he struggled with this concept and that as a leader he had an obligation to intervene and advocate for the people he was entrusted to serve, supervise, and lead. Jason’s thought process was “It is difficult to confront your supervisor, but I would want someone to do this for me in a similar situation.” Jason expressed, “I value people and I have respect for others and their dignity.” According to Jason, these are a few of the personal values that influenced his decision-making process during this ethical dilemma. Jason stated that “the nature of what we do, teaching leadership and the mission, brand, and values of our institution” were external factors that influenced the decision-making process during this ethical dilemma. Jason gave another example of an external factor that influences and inspires his decision-making process, the vice president’s methods of leadership and style of handling issues.

The MLQ scores of Jason concurred with his own description of his leadership characteristics. Jason’s MLQ scores recognize Jason as a transformational leader (please see appendix J). The following were some of the leadership characteristics Jason presented: “charismatic, connecting with people in a way that one invests themselves in others;” “humility, that one’s accomplishments are due to the influence of others;” “communicator, clear and concise in regards to expectations of others;” “motivator, connecting task to purpose or the larger picture;” and “being able to identify strengths in others for the purpose of growth and confidence.” Jason believed that his leadership characteristics stimulate due diligence in regards to making sure his decision-making process includes clear communication and consideration of outcomes for all concerned. The researcher rated Jason’s dilemma as a high level dilemma. If Jason would not have

reacted and made the decision he did to confront his boss, some of the stakeholders careers could have be jeopardized. The Institution could have faced a difficult situation if his supervisor continued with his behavior.

Mary

Mary has held numerous positions encompassing elementary, secondary, and higher education institutions. Such roles as principal, superintendent, Non-profit CEO, associate vice president of academics, university president, and her current position as head of a graduate division of a university have required her to make ethical decisions often in the face of ethical dilemmas.

Mary described an ethical dilemma she experienced during her time as a superintendent of a public school district. An organizational pressure, using one's position of power or influence to get what they want, challenged Mary's personal values and beliefs during this ethical dilemma. She was faced with a situation where retaining her job was used as leverage by an individual of power and influence within the organization. Mary had led a strategic plan for the school district, which focused on the success for all children which included eliminating honors classes, but with the ability to attain honors designated for a class. The faculty was trained and able to implement different assignments that met the needs of all children, without compromising the quality of the learning process. Mary stated that data collected served as evidence in regards to the success of the program. She confirmed that the evidence proved that students were doing better in a diversified environment in place of a segregated environment.

After a school board meeting, Mary was approached privately by a board member and he expressed his feelings about the strategic plan. Mary said, “he asked me to stop the program because he and the people he represented did not want their children to be in a classroom with those other kids.” Mary said, “He went so far as to say, Quote, we do not even want our children to touch those other kids.” Mary realized this was not a matter of mixing different academic levels of ability but one of socioeconomic status. Mary said the board member stated, “If you do not stop this program, I will make it my goal in life to make sure you lose your job.” Mary believed the request of the board member created an ethical dilemma because her job was being jeopardized and she had an obligation to do what was right, regardless of the outcome for her personally. She knew her responsibility was to consider what was best for the stakeholders. She said, “It is my responsibility to provide each student with the best education possible, as required by law and it’s the moral thing to do.”

According to Mary, her thought process during this ethical dilemma was not lengthy, and she resorted to years of experience. She said, “I relied on the very fabric of who I am.” She said, “I did not even consider what he was proposing, but thought, how can I help him see this situation in a different perspective.” She provided him with an option or solution to his problem. She expressed, “I would be happy to assist you in finding a private institution where you would not have to deal with this matter.”

Mary said, “I have been put on this earth to make a positive difference and to help others, especially others who have a lesser voice amongst those with a larger voice of power, but while maintaining respect for all opinions.” She believes this representation of her personal values and beliefs have influenced her decision-making process. The

strategic plan, the data which provided evidence of success, and her responsibility to follow the law were external factors that influenced her decision-making process during this ethical dilemma.

Mary quoted a famous quote, “Who you are, is how you lead and how you lead is who you are” when describing her leadership characteristics. Mary described her leadership characteristic by categorizing the framework of a strategic leader. Visionary, pay attention to the culture, develop systems of continuous improvement, two way communication, service leader, and authenticity are the characteristics she described as the framework of a strategic leader. She expressed that this framework influences her decision-making process during ethical dilemmas. Her description of her own leadership characteristics and MLQ scores depicted the qualities or traits that support a transformation leadership style. (Please see appendix J). The researcher rated Mary’s dilemma as a high level dilemma because her job and a beneficial program were at risk.

Summary of the Four Case Studies (Second Round Interviews)

This section will provide a synopsis of the second round of interviews with the four participants of the ten original case studies. A description of an additional ethical dilemma will be provided, as well as their thought process during the ethical dilemma. The first round of interview questions identified factors that influenced the decision-making process of leaders. The second round of questions provided an insightful focus on the reasoning processes of the participants during ethical dilemmas. The focal point of the second round of questions was to understand participants’ convictions, self-reflections, and how they rationalized their thoughts in regards to the decision-making process during ethical dilemmas.

The process for selecting the four participants (Sally, Jane, Jason, and Mary) for the second round of interviews was based on two rationales. The first condition was the willingness of participants to participate in the second round of interviews. At the end of the first round of interviews, all of the participants were asked by the researcher, “If asked, would you be willing to participate in a second round of interviews which will provide additional data for the study?” Participants who answered “Yes” were added to the list of possible candidates to participate in the second round of interviews.

The second criterion for participating in the second round of interviews was the judgment of the researcher. Several factors influenced the researcher concerning the selection of participants in the second round. The rapport between the participant and the researcher during the first round of interviews was one of the variables that contributed to the selection process. The researcher believed some of the participants were vaguer in their answers, not as accommodating or enthusiastic about the topic being researched, and as informative as the four participants chosen. The level of the dilemma was a method by which the researcher identified second round participants. The researcher selected participants who were willing to participate, but also provided a depiction of dilemmas that were rated medium or high level dilemmas.

Sally

Sally described an incident that involved her supervisor who exhibited unprofessional behavior toward his subordinates. According to Sally, “The supervisor would talk inappropriately about others to me and this created a strain on our relationship.” She also said, “He would make inappropriate references about someone’s intelligence and he called people inappropriate names.” Sally described the relationship

between her and the supervisor as having tension, mistrust, and confusion which affected her health and well-being. She struggled with what to do because “you are damned if you do or damned if you don’t.” But, in the end, she determined that she could not continue to allow it to affect her health or the work environment. She expressed that even though she might be afraid of losing her job and creating a financial hardship, she had to take the high road and report the supervisor to human resources.

Sally said she asks herself questions during the decision-making process when faced with an ethical dilemma. She asks herself questions such as, “What are the consequences of my decision? How will my decisions affect others? How will my decision impact my career?” She believes that some of her decisions to act ethically have hurt her career. She believes that standing her ground or making an ethical decision has impacted her ability to be promoted within the institution. She has experienced situations where others have progressed or have been rewarded for pursuing the unethical route.

Her family, mentors, experiences, and maturity have been influential in regards to her moral development. She gave examples of leaders and their characteristics which have been an influence on her as a leader and during the decision-making process. She expressed, “I feel that one of my past bosses was one of the leaders I think influenced me most. He was someone who dealt with problems with the utmost integrity and was a team player. He had high expectations, and appreciated and listened to all his staff.” Sally also said, “I have experienced a lot of sleazy bosses and I learned that it was best to distance myself from them and not deal with those types of people.”

Throughout the entire interview, Sally commented on how self-reflection played a big part in her decision-making process. During self-reflection, Sally considers all of the

options and consequences to her actions. She said, “I understand myself and I know when I reach a point when I need to stop and say, I cannot do this.” She stated, “If something is really bad, it is better to lose the job than to face humiliation,” or better to take the high road than to compromise personal values and beliefs.

Jane

Jane was one of several participants who served on a search committee which was on a quest to find the best person for a specific position. She found herself in a situation where she had to choose between the popular votes of favoritism or follow her convictions in regards to the candidates being considered for the position. The popular candidate of the search committee participants was a candidate that had a relationship with committee members. Jane disagreed with the popular vote of the other committee members. She believed that the other candidate was better-suited and more-qualified for the position.

Jane knew her vote for the other candidate would not be popular among the other committee members. Jane said, “Even though I experienced pressures from the others and I was faced with the possibility that I could come out looking bad, I knew I had to follow my gut feeling and support the candidate I believed was a better fit for the position.” Jane continued to make it known to other committee members that the decision should be based on the candidate’s ability and not on the relationship between the candidate and the committee members.

Jane referred to some of the fundamentals that have influenced her value or belief system, which impact her decision-making processes. She acknowledged that her parents and her Catholic upbringing were influential factors in regards to her moral development,

knowing right from wrong. According to Jane, because of her upbringing, she feels you know in your stomach whether you are right or wrong. Jane's personal convictions and self-regulating skills are the basis of her not wanting people to question her motives, playing a key role in her decision-making process. She said, "I always want to be in a position that I am able to defend my decisions without compromising my values and beliefs" and "I want my values and beliefs to be the foundation of who I am." Jane based her decisions on what she believes is right and rejecting what she believes is wrong. Although she is willing to consider outside information, she said, "I am not willing to compromise or allow someone to talk me out of what I believe is right."

Jane spoke of good and bad leaders that have influenced her over the years in regards to making ethical decisions. She has worked for many mentors who have influenced her and they possessed quality leadership characteristics such as honesty, trust, intelligence, hard working, and the ability to do the right thing during ethical dilemmas. These leadership characteristics complement her personal value system and have been part of her leadership style throughout her career. The culture and many of the leaders within the institution are external factors that encourage and support her personal values and beliefs in regards to making ethical decisions. Jane said, "I am proud of my institution because of the ethical culture and ethical leadership."

She also expressed, "I have experienced bad leaders who have influenced me by giving me an example of what not to do." Early in her career she experienced leaders that lied, cheated, and remained secretive about issues. She said that she identified and learned from their unethical behaviors and determined that she would not follow any behaviors that supported unethical actions.

Jason

Jason's second example of an ethical dilemma was one that was of a professional and personal nature. The president of the university gave Jason the task of restoring or introducing the Greek life back into the university's culture. The Greek life had deteriorated morally and was not living up to the values, principles, and standards of the institution. Jason began to work on this difficult assignment and found that the fraternity to which he had belonged as a student was not modifying their behavior or activities in order to comply with the goals of the institution. According to Jason, "The unethical behavior included hazing, alcohol, and drug abuse and it reached a point that was unavoidable and it required me to take immediate action." He said, "I was faced with the decision of whether to turn my head and ignore the behavior or report the behavior. It was hard because of my relationship with the fraternity." Jason stated, "I did what was right and reported the fraternity to the leadership of the fraternal organization as well as my superiors." Jason believed the only alternative he had was to report the fraternity, ending the relationship between the institution and fraternal organization.

Faith, family, the culture of the institution and his concern for the welfare of others are some of the fundamentals that have influenced his moral development, as well as his decision-making skills. Jason believes self-regulation and relying on your personal convictions are imperative when faced with ethical dilemmas. He explained that sometimes he gets angry or frustrated during the decision-making process, but realizes, one has to step back and analyze the circumstances or not take things personally when attempting to make an ethical decision.

Jason revealed some of the questions he asks himself during ethical dilemmas. The questions were “Who is involved and how will this affect others? Why would someone say or do something like that? Who do I communicate with concerning this matter? and What is fair? He also considers different scenarios concerning possible outcomes of the dilemma.

Jason described how the culture of the institution, the people connected to the university, and the strategic plans of the organization were external factors that influence his decision-making in a positive matter. He believes the external factors described aligned with his personal values and beliefs. Jason stated, “I examine the external information I receive and determine whether it is threatening or trustworthy” Jason considers external information before he determines how or if he utilizes the information during the decision-making process.

According to Jason, leaders who have influenced his decision-making skills were leaders that were “proactive or took action,” “self-restraining,” “courageous,” and “defended their positions very well.” He said that these leaders possessed traits that “encouraged communication,” “inclusiveness and transparency,” “concern for others,” and “decisiveness.” Jason said, “I think a leader should focus on two factors. I think they should focus on how they see themselves as a leader and how others see them as a leader.” The second factor he expressed was “A leader should focus on what kind of legacy they want to leave behind.”

Mary

Mary described an experience that consisted of several ethical dilemmas. She had been chosen to replace a CEO who was retiring and who had been at the helm of the non-

profit organization for some time. The organization had experienced productive and beneficial times under the CEO's supervision. The board decided to overlap their time together for the purpose of exchanging information. Technically, she was in charge on paper; but, his personality, influence, and presence continued to allow him to control the situation. Mary believed she had every right to reveal his deficiencies to the board because of his behavior, but because of his history with the organization she decided to ignore it and allow him to leave on a good note.

After his departure, an audit was completed and it was determined that the organization was in debt to a government agency for several million dollars due to the actions of the CFO. The past CEO, prior to his leaving, told Mary she should be happy to have this CFO on her team and that he was an asset. Whether intentional or unintentional, many of the expenses the CFO charged against a government grant were not eligible to be charged against the grant monies. After releasing the CFO of his duties, Mary had the task or chore of making all the adjustments needed in order to make good on the debt. She cut expenses in every area she was able to without injuring the organization.

The last task she had to perform was to reduce the labor force. An early retirement incentive was provided to employees who were eligible, but not all were able to take advantage of this incentive. Three of the individuals who were not eligible for the incentive and would have a difficult time getting another job became a concern for Mary. After some thought she expressed, "I came to the conclusion that I would be willing to give up my position in order to save their jobs." She said, "it was scary, but I believed it was the right thing to do in this situation." In the end, Mary recommended and convinced

the board to promote a person she felt could fill her position, freeing up her salary to save the three other positions.

Mary identified various fundamentals she believed influenced her moral development including her family and religious background, personal moral lessons she experienced as a young person, and a variety of professional experiences strengthened and influenced her values and belief system. Her decision-making process was influenced by leaders with whom she worked during her career. She expressed that one individual, a school district superintendent, mentored and influenced her decision-making skills through his leadership example. “Strong decision-making traits,” “fearlessness,” “walking the walk,” “friendly,” “respectful,” and “his interest in people” were the leadership qualities he possessed that influenced her decision-making process.

Ability to speak against wrongs and inequities, doing the right thing for the greater good or standard, and to remain in control of her decisions are some of the personal convictions and self regulating skills that Mary identified as having an influence on her decision-making process. Mary asks herself questions when faced with ethical dilemmas. She asks questions like, “Do I have enough data to make a decision?” “How is this going to impact others?” “What are the potential outcomes?” “How will this impact my life?” and “Can I deal with the outcome?” Mary believes that external information has to be clear and true; and, if not, she will expose it and seek different data. Mary said, “A culture can make someone toxic during an ethical dilemma, but one must decide whether to adapt to the culture, get the culture to adapt to the situation, or simply leave the organization.”

Summary of Direct Reports' Findings

In order to maintain confidentiality of each direct report, it was necessary for the researcher to do an overall synopsis of the findings concerning the direct reports interviews. The following describes the common themes, through color coding the interview logs, from the interviews with the four direct reports. Each direct report described their perceptions of their supervisors' decision-making processes, moral characters, and leadership characteristics.

All four direct reports described a time when they participated with their supervisors in making ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. Two of the direct reports described the same ethical dilemma, as described by their supervisors, and the other two direct reports described a similar event as their supervisors shared.

Two common themes surfaced from the direct report interviews concerning the perceptions of their supervisors' decision-making processes. One theme was that each supervisor searched for a resolution or solution to the situation that would best serve all who were concerned. A direct report stated, "She/he looks at the whole picture and then she/he decides what's the correct solution to the problem." The direct report also said, "she/he is not reactive, but she/he looks at regulations to make sure she is doing what is right." The participants direct reports confirmed through their testimonies that their leaders took precautions to make sure they did what was best for all involved. According to a direct report, "she/he remained cool, acting in a way that was good for the school, but she/he acted within her/his own values."

The second theme expressed was the unwillingness of supervisors to compromise their personal values and beliefs, regardless of internal or external pressures experienced

during their decision-making processes. One report said, “she/he made the right decision and even though the person pressuring her to do something wrong was in a higher position, he/she still did not cave.” What stood out most for each direct report was how their supervisors reacted and dealt with the decision-making process during the ethical dilemmas described. According to one direct report, “she/he was confident and her demeanor was calm and she never strayed from the issue.” All of the direct reports expressed how their supervisors exhibited self-control at all times and represented themselves and the institutions ethically throughout the duration of the dilemmas. Integrity, trustworthiness, self-control, loyalty, and concern for others were several common moral characteristics expressed by the direct reports pertaining to their supervisors. Some the statements made by the direct reports consisted of “she/he kept control of herself/himself and the situation,” “she/he is loyal to the student and the school,” and “is trustworthy.” The direct reports made it clear that their supervisor always tried to do the right thing in all situations and were never willing to compromise their personal values or beliefs.

Supportive, fair, knowledgeable and prepared, confident, and passionate were the common themes expressed by the direct reports regarding their supervisors’ leadership characteristics. A direct report said “she/he is really good at what he/she does and he/she knows what she is doing and is very supportive and she does not micromanage us.” All of the direct reports stated that their supervisors had been an influence on them in a positive manner and that they were better leaders themselves because of their supervisors. The direct report stated that, “she/he brings out the best in me and keeps me in check.” And “she/he also pulls me back into perspective when I need it.”

Each direct report completed a MLQ rater form of their supervisor which described the leadership characteristics of the leader. The scores of the rater form correlated with the MLQ scores of the leaders, which validates the premise that the four participants would be considered transformational leaders. (Please see appendix J).

Research Questions and Common Themes

The following sections will describe the common themes found within the data collected during this research. A description of these themes will be provided in correlation with each research question of this study. Data from each case study were integrated and coding was completed by keeping an interview log of specific words, statements, and phrases determining commonalities among participants' experiences. The themes portrayed in each research question are not necessarily described in order of importance, but arranged in a random order.

Research Question One

Research question one is, how do leaders in higher education perceive that their personal ethical beliefs and perceived institutional pressures affect their decisions? The following describes the findings or themes related to research question one.

Theme one: Personal values and beliefs. The theme relating to this research question was consistent among all of the participants of this study. The overall theme for research question one was that participants believed that ethical values and beliefs affect their decision-making process, regardless of the organizational pressures they may experience.

The participants of this study perceived that their ethical values and beliefs affected their decision-making processes and assisted them in making ethical decisions in

lieu of making unethical decisions. The dilemmas described by the participants involved circumstances that included institutional pressures that challenged participants' personal values and beliefs. Threats of losing their jobs or a fear that if they did not submit to the pressures of the institution or its leaders they would not have the ability to progress within the company were experienced by three of the four participants. According to all four of the participants, they were unwilling to compromise their personal values and beliefs even if they were being pressured by the institutions or its leaders to carry out unethical behaviors. Nine of ten of the participants remarked or implied that they wanted a clear conscience in regards to their decisions. Some of the statements of the participants were "I want to be able to sleep at night," "I want to be able to look in the mirror," and "I want to be able to live with myself."

In regards to the data collected, all of the participants utilized their personal values and beliefs to measure the institutional culture, policies and procedures, and any other factors that influenced the decision-making process. When second round participants were asked about self-reflection, all four believed it was necessary to self-reflect during the decision-making process. They also believed it was necessary to have a complete understanding of all of the facts in order to make sure their decisions correlated with their own personal values and belief system, no matter what the situation. Eight of ten of the participants made it very clear that their personal values and beliefs were the first item they considered when being pressured by the institutions or its leaders to engage in what they perceived to be unethical behaviors.

Trevino's Personal-Situational Interactionist Model provides a point of view in regards to leaders that are unwilling to compromise their personal values and beliefs

when experiencing organizational pressures. According to Trevino (1986) locus of control is a personality characteristic that contributes to the explanation of ethical behaviors of individuals during the decision-making process. Detert, Trevino, and Sweitzer (2008) stated, “Locus of control orientations relate to how individuals think about the event in their lives” (p. 377). Unwillingness to compromise personal values and beliefs when experiencing organizational pressures represents individuals with an internal locus of control. Trevino (1986) stated, “An internal is more likely to take responsibility for consequences and rely on his or her internal determination of right and wrong to guide behavior” (p. 610).

Research Question Two

Research question is as follows; what individual variables might leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas? Three common themes that pertain to research question two were identified during this study and were associated with making ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. Each of these themes played a significant role during the decision-making process of each participant’s ethical dilemma experience. The three themes identified include how personal values and beliefs, along with self-reflection, influences decisions, the concern of how decisions will impact stakeholders, how external information guided reasoning processes, and how their Christian affiliation contributed to their decision-making process.

Theme one: Personal values and beliefs along with self-reflection. Personal values and beliefs, along with self-reflection, were a common theme identified by each participant as influencing their reasoning processes. All of the participants referred to

their backgrounds which include parents, mentors, professional experiences, and religious practices as fundamentals that developed their personal value and belief systems. Their backgrounds also provided foundations for self-reflection.

Participants believed that regardless of the situation or outcome, self-reflection revealed that the solution or decision would have to correspond with their personal values and beliefs. Ego strength is defined as individuals who are uncompromising concerning personal values and beliefs. Individuals who demonstrate high measures of ego strength rely on their own personal convictions and self-regulation to assist in the decision-making process (Trevino, 1986). All of the dilemmas described in chapter four illustrated how each participant relied on their personal values and beliefs to guide their reasoning processes during ethical dilemmas, regardless of the outcome.

Theme two: Decisions impacting stakeholders. The second theme was apparent in that each participant was concerned with how their decisions would impact stakeholders such as other individuals, the institution, as well as themselves. Trevino reported eight steps that lead to sound ethical decision-making. Trevino's eight steps in sound ethical decision-making include identifying the affected parties and identifying the consequences of your decisions.

During the decision-making process, all of the leaders considered how their decisions would impact others and the institution. Jason said, "I think of who is involved and then ask, what is fair and just for all?" and Sally asks, "Who else would this affect?" A decision that would benefit the institution, but bring harm to others, would be rejected and other options to a solution would be explored. The outcome and how it impacted the institution and themselves was a consideration during the decision-making process.

Theme three: External information guiding the reasoning processes. The third theme concerning individual variables that emerged during the study was how external information influenced their decisions. Nine of ten of the participants relied upon data, institutional policies and procedures, standards and laws to guide decisions throughout the decision-making process during ethical dilemmas. Trevino (2004) suggested, “field dependent individuals make greater use of external social referents to guide their behavior” (p. 610). Field dependent individuals look to external resources to guide their decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas. In a situation of field dependence, a recommendation or guidance from the outside removes the ambiguity from the ethical dilemma by providing an answer or solution for individuals.

Tracy said, “I collect data to help define concerns and this helps me with logical reasoning and making ethical decisions.” Sam stated, “The policies are a guide book; when dealing with issues the policies provide guidance on what to do next.” External information became a guide by which participants determined the outcome in many of the ethical dilemmas described. Another important factor, the external information, would be a guide as long as the external information coincided with their personal values and beliefs.

Theme four: Christian belief. The fourth theme consisted of how a Christian background contributed to their personal value systems and influenced their decision-making processes during ethical dilemmas. The participants believed that their Christian background is the foundation of how they process thoughts, which supports ethical behavior or actions. Trevino (1986) stated, “Individual and situational variables

influence the relationship between cognition and action in ethical decision-making in organizations” (p. 609).

Seven of the ten participants made reference to how their Christian roots influenced their decision-making process. Four of the seven are associated with Christian affiliated institutions and three of the seven are connected to public or private universities not Christian affiliated. Jane stated, “My value system stems from my parents and my catholic upbringing” and Jason said “One of the fundamentals that influences my values and beliefs is my faith.” Rick stated that, “all my decisions and other systems must align with my Christian values and be honoring to God.” All seven participants contribute their moral attributes to their Christian background.

Research Question Three

The common strands associated with research question three (What situational variables might leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?) included two universal themes. The first theme was in regards to the positions the participants held. Participants believed it was their responsibility, because of their positions, to make ethical decisions that characterize ethical behavior. Also, as leaders or because of their positions, the participants believed it was essential to be sensitive to the welfare of stakeholders and the institution. Secondly, the culture influenced decisions and guided behaviors.

Theme one: Responsibilities of the position. Because of their positions as leaders, the participants believed it was their responsibility or job to make ethical decisions or do the right thing during an ethical dilemma. Additionally, they also

believed they had a responsibility to consider how their decisions would affect stakeholders and the institution. Trevino's Person-Situation Interactionist Model describes characteristics of work as "responsible for the resolution of moral dilemmas. (p. 611). The participants made it very clear that because of the expectations and accountability of their positions, they had an obligation to make ethical decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas. Participants believed it is necessary to be compliant at all times with institutional policies and procedures, as well as the standards and laws of outside governing agencies. Several participants accomplished this task through communication. They learned through data or dialogue with others the needs of the stakeholders or the institution and utilized this information to influence their reasoning processes.

Theme two: The culture. Cultural influence played a significant role in guiding the reasoning process of the participants. All but one participant expressed how the normative structure or framework of the culture within the institution influenced their reasoning processes and assisted them in making ethical decisions during the ethical dilemmas they experienced. The participants expressed how the culture of their institutions corresponded with their own personal values and beliefs and supported the ethical decisions made during the ethical dilemmas.

Although many of the participants were approached by individuals within the organization to act in a way which they believed to be unethical, the behavior of certain unethical individuals was not the overall attitude of the culture of their institutions or its leaders. According to several participants, in addition to cultural frameworks, leaders

within their organizations supported environments conducive to an ethical culture and played significant roles concerning their reasoning process during the ethical dilemmas.

Research Question Four

It has been a prevalent theme of responses to other research questions that all of the participants embrace the thought of considering the needs of others and how their decisions impact stakeholders. Research question four (What leadership characteristics do these leaders in higher education have and does it have an impact on making ethical decisions during the decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas?) continues to follow that same pattern. There was one overwhelming common theme for question four; it was considering the needs of others during the decision-making process during ethical dilemmas.

Theme one: Considering the needs of others. All of the participants described their own leadership characteristics as focusing on the needs of others and how their decisions impacted others and to include or engage followers in a two-way positive relationship. Nearly all of the characteristics described by all of the participants included inspiring people, focusing on others needs, consideration of others, engaging people, leading by example, relational, collaborative, inclusive, supportive, mentoring, communicator, and servant leader.

Bass and Riggio (2006) stated, “The most widely accepted instrument to measure transformational leadership is the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Bass & Avolio, 2000), which actually assesses the Full Range of Leadership Model” (p. 19). Each participant completed an MLQ Leader Form during the study. There were very minimal differences in regards to the MLQ scores for all participants. The four direct

reports also completed the MLQ rater form, which confirmed and matched the results of the four leaders. According to the FLR model, all ten participants' profiles were within the effective and active leader's quadrant which includes the components of Transformational Leadership Model (please see appendix J)

As reported by Fitch (2009), individuals who are linked to transformation style, which is considered the closest leadership model to ethics, would be most likely to make ethical decisions. The leadership characteristics described by all of the participants would emulate the leadership characteristics of the transformational leadership model. All of the participants expressed that their leadership characteristics did influence their decision-making process to make ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas.

Research Question Five

Three main themes were identified in relation to research question five (How do leaders in higher education describe their reasoning process in regards to their ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?), concern for how their decisions would impact stakeholders and the institutions, making sure their decisions corresponded with their personal values and beliefs, and utilizing policies, procedures, standards, and governing agencies during the decision-making process during ethical dilemmas

Theme one: Concern for stakeholders. The findings revealed that participants had a concern for how their decisions would impact stakeholders and the institutions. As discovered in all of the cases, the participants' reasoning processes included the welfare of others and their institutions. This specific theme has permeated throughout the entire research and has answered other research questions within this study. Research question two, theme two also outlines the same findings as this particular theme. Every case study

provided data that expresses examples of leaders considering the welfare of stakeholders, as well as their institutions. Mary made the decision to resign her position so others may maintain their jobs and the organization was able to meet its obligations. It was evident throughout the study that each participant's reasoning or thought process considered how his/her decision would impact the stakeholders or the institution. Nine of the ten cases made it known that regardless the outcome for them; they would not make an unethical decision that would harm others or their institutions.

Theme two: Personal values and beliefs. Making sure their decisions corresponded with their personal values and beliefs was theme two concerning research question five. During the decision-making process, all ten participants explained how their personal values and beliefs influenced them to make ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. All of the participants made use of self-reflection relating to their family value system, religious roots, and mentors to make sure their decisions corresponded with their personal values and beliefs.

Theme three: Utilizing rules and standards. Theme three identified that all the participants utilized policies, procedures, standards, and governing agencies during the decision-making process during ethical dilemmas. Statements were made by some of the participants that support the idea that leaders take policies, procedures, standards, and governing agencies into consideration when making decisions during ethical dilemmas. Sam stated, "...policies are the guiding factors when considering what to do" and also that "higher education is policy-driven and one should not deviate from policy." According to Tom, rules and policies are in place to make sure there is a sense of fair play and to make sure others will not get hurt. Tracy stated, "This was an ethical

dilemma because it is my responsibility to maintain and uphold all the institutions policies or there would be overall chaos within the institution.” This concept has been a theme that has been recognized within other parts of this study.

Chapter Summary

Chapter four gave a description of the findings in regards to the decision-making experiences and influential variables as identified by leaders in higher education. Several common themes developed from the data collected thereby answering the research questions of this study. The findings from this study will assist leaders with their understanding of the decision-making process during an ethical dilemma. Chapter five will include a comprehensive discussion in regards to the findings described in chapter four.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMENDATIONS

This study examined the decision-making processes of leaders or administrators in higher education and the influential factors related to making ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. In particular, the reasoning processes of how these leaders managed their thoughts were examined. The study also examined the individual and situational variables that influenced the decision-making processes, as described by leaders. An additional part included leadership characteristics that participants believed influenced the decision-making process during an ethical dilemma. The conclusions and recommendations in chapter five are significant to future administrators, business curriculum, and future studies. The analysis of chapter four and chapter two provides the foundation for discussion within chapter five and is the basis for answering the research questions of this study.

Summary of the Study

This research included ten case studies of administrators in higher education. Data were collected through one-on-one interviews with all of the participants in this study. Participants also completed a Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Four of the ten participants (Sally, Jane, Jason, and Mary) were further interviewed. The four participants were selected by two conditions, one being their willingness to participate in a second round of interviews and the second was determined at the discretion of the researcher. The researcher based his decision on the experiences from the first round of interviews. Of the four selected, Interviews were conducted with their direct reports.

The findings are reported for each research question. The five research questions of this study were:

1. How do leaders in higher education perceive that their personal ethical beliefs and perceived institutional pressures affect their decisions?
2. What individual variables might leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?
3. What situational variables might leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?
4. What leadership characteristics do these leaders in higher education have and does it have an impact on making ethical decisions during the decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas?
5. How do leaders in higher education describe their reasoning process in regards to their ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?

Findings

The following provides an outline in regards to the discussion and implications related to the research questions and the findings of this study. The portrayal of the perception or the position of the researcher is reported and supported by the findings and literature review presented within this dissertation.

Research Question One

Research question one (How do leaders in higher education perceive that their personal ethical beliefs and perceived institutional pressures affect their decisions?)

identified the perceptions higher education leaders have in regards to institutional pressures and their personal values and beliefs influencing their decision-making processes. Personal ethical beliefs are defined in chapter one as personal values that guide the lives of people. Personal values and beliefs are concepts that influence decision-making processes and behaviors of individuals. Personal ethical beliefs provide a framework that helps in understanding the decision-making process (Steenhaunt & Kenhove, 2006). Organizational pressures are defined as Influences originating from cultures, individuals, or the policies and practices of organizations. These influences can create pressures for individuals during the decision-making process while facing ethical dilemmas (Moreno, 2011). The definitions of personal values and beliefs and organizational pressures provided the framework the researcher utilized for the rendering of research question one. Based on the data collected in chapter four the following conclusions have been observed by the researcher.

Theme one: Personal values and beliefs. In regards to research question one's overall theme, all ten participants were unwilling to compromise their personal values and beliefs regardless of the institutional pressures they experienced. The four direct reports reported and validated the claims of the four participants' unwillingness to compromise their personal values or beliefs when experiencing organizational pressures. According to the direct reports, all four participants remained loyal to their personal values and beliefs when faced with organizational pressures to act unethically.

When faced with an ethical dilemma or experiencing organizational pressures, one looks to defining factors to support ethical decision-making. Individuals will rely on internal factors such as their personal values and beliefs when being pressured by

external factors to act unethically. The researcher observed and agrees that individuals who rely on their personal values and beliefs when being pressured by external variables to act unethically are more likely to make ethical decisions while experiencing these pressures. In regards to the organizational pressures experienced by leaders, many times the pressures are not cultural, but isolated or connected to specific individuals within the culture. These specific pressures become an issue of one person's personal values and beliefs clashing with another individual's personal value system. Leaders dealing with organizational pressures that are from specific individuals within a culture will rely on their personal value system, as well as the pressures from the culture, to make ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. Leaders will eliminate the pressures to act unethically by an individual within the culture by embracing the principles of the entire ethical culture along with their own personal value system.

As conveyed in the definition of organizational pressures, pressures can come from cultures, individuals, or the policies and practices of organizations. Ardichvili and Jondle (2009) reported, "Corporate culture is often described as one of the main determinants of ethical or unethical behavior in business organizations" (p. 226). Sally was the only participant who depicted the culture of the institution as toxic or pressuring individuals to perform unacceptable acts that challenged personal values and beliefs. Even though the culture of Sally's institution was perceived as toxic and she was pressured to do something she considered unethical, she was unwilling to compromise her personal values and beliefs. The remainder of the participants described situations or pressures that were the result of specific individuals, within the culture, who made threats or challenged their personal values and beliefs. The other nine participants believed that

the culture and the policies and practices of their institutions coincided with their personal values and beliefs and supported their ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas.

This researcher believes that when a culture is clear and conveys an ethical environment and the leaders come to a conclusion that their beliefs or practices coincide or are related, the leader will not compromise their personal values. Leaders will not compromise their personal values and beliefs even when experiencing pressures from individuals within an organization to act unethically. According to Cranston, Ehrich, and Kimber (2004), if ethical frameworks regarding the decision-making process within higher education institutions are not clear and concise, then leaders and others will find it difficult to understand the expectations or parameters of the ethical decision-making process within the organization. Sally believed the environment of her institution was toxic because the expectations of many of the executive leaders were not in agreement with the institutions policies and procedures. These dissimilarities created an environment that was confusing in regards to expectations concerning ethical behavior. The other nine participants described their organizational cultures as being clear and concise in regards to behavioral expectations. The nine participants believed their institutions' policies and procedures matched their personal values and beliefs and provided a framework that guided and supported ethical behavior, limiting organizational pressures during ethical dilemmas.

According to Trevino (1986), locus of control is a personality characteristic that contributes to the explanation of ethical behaviors of individuals during the decision-making process. Detert, Trevino, and Sweitzer (2008) stated, "Locus of control orientations relate to how individuals think about the event in their lives" (p. 377).

Unwillingness to compromise personal values and beliefs when experiencing organizational pressures represents individuals with an internal locus of control. Trevino (1986) stated, “An internal is more likely to take responsibility for consequences and rely on his or her internal determination of right and wrong to guide behavior” (p. 610). All of the participants demonstrated internal locus of control by ignoring unethical organizational pressures and allowing their personal values and beliefs to guide their behavior. The researcher and the results of this study embrace the premise of Trevino that individuals that exhibit an internal locus of control are more likely to have consistency between moral judgment and moral action (Trevino, 1986).

Research Question Two

The conclusions to research question two (What individual variables might leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?) is a representation of what individual variables might leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. The four common themes identified were personal values and beliefs, along with self-reflection, influenced the reasoning processes, a concern with how their decisions would impact stakeholders, the external information that influenced decision-making processes during ethical dilemmas, and how their Christian affiliation contributed to their decision-making process.

Theme one: Personal values and beliefs along with self-reflection. Personal values and beliefs, along with self-reflection, were individual variables that influenced the reasoning processes of the participants during ethical dilemmas. The findings are

congruent with the theoretical framework of this study. The following conclusion is based on the data collected and the observation of the researcher. When leaders are experiencing ethical dilemmas and rely on self-reflection and consider their personal value system during the decision-making process, they are more likely to make ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. During times of self-reflection, one identifies specific events or convictions that persuade the decision-making process and encourages leaders to make ethical decisions.

Ego strength is defined as individuals who are uncompromising concerning personal values and beliefs. Individuals who demonstrate high measures of ego strength rely on their own personal convictions and self-regulation to assist in the decision-making process (Trevino, 1986). All of the participants of this study demonstrated high ego strength during the decision-making process by relying on their personal values and beliefs to guide their decisions.

The additional interviews with the four participants provided data that described how leaders utilized personal values and beliefs, along with self-reflection, during the decision-making process. The four participants formulated their decisions based on what they believed was right. All four participants declared that their personal convictions and self-regulating skills influenced their decisions during ethical dilemmas. Trevino (1986) stated, "Individuals high on a measure of ego strength are expected to resist impulses and follow their convictions more than individuals with low ego strength" and "They are more likely to do what they think is right" (p. 609). The findings of this study support the findings Trevino reported in her study and convey that individuals of high ego strength will exhibit consistency between moral judgment and moral action.

Theme two: Decisions impacting stakeholders. All of the participants were concerned with how their decisions would impact stakeholders such as other individuals, the institution, as well as themselves. A concern for others and considering the consequences one's decisions have on others is central in making ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. Leaders who make ethical decisions also take into consideration on how their decisions impact their institutions, as well as their personal circumstances. An awareness or consideration of consequences concerning one's decisions will influence one's behaviors.

All ten participants recognized and identified the ethical dilemma, identified significant stakeholders and the impact of decisions on these stakeholders, recognized organizational values and norms relevant to the ethical issue, and acknowledged legal regulations pertinent to the ethical concern. Pimentel, Kuntz, and Elenkov (2010) did an extensive literature review and found that when applying these four principles one will be influenced to make ethical decisions during an ethical dilemma. Trevino's eight steps in sound ethical decision-making include identifying the affected parties and identifying the consequences of one's decisions. Every one of the participants made it clear that they consider the consequences of how their decisions will impact others during ethical dilemmas. The following conclusion is based on the findings of this study and literature. Individuals who identify how their decisions impact others and consider the consequences of their decisions are more likely to make ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas.

Theme three: External information guiding the reasoning processes. External information influencing the decision-making processes during ethical dilemmas emerged

as a theme during this research. It is the belief of this researcher that when leaders consider outside information during the decision-making process, the leader is more likely to make ethical decisions. Laws, regulations, and institutional policies and procedures provide guidance for leaders and cultivate ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas, provided the laws, regulations, and institutional policies and procedures are ethical.

All of the participants made reference to how data, institutional policies and procedures, standards, and laws guided their decisions throughout the decision-making processes during ethical dilemmas. Tom, Mary, and Tracy exemplified this concept by utilizing policies, laws, data, and the advice of experts to assist them in making ethical decisions during their ethical dilemmas. Jane made it known that standards set by outside agencies and the leadership of her institution influenced her to make ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas.

Trevino (2004) suggested, “field dependent individuals make greater use of external social referents to guide their behavior” (p. 610). Field dependent individuals look to the social norms of an organization, leadership, or other outside sources to guide their decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas. In a situation of field dependence, a referent from the outside removes the uncertainty from the ethical dilemma by providing an answer or solution for individuals. The findings are compatible with the theoretical framework of this study in that it is suggested that people of a high field of dependence are more likely to have stability involving moral judgment and moral action (Trevino, 1986).

Theme four: Christian belief. Seven of the ten participants identified that their Christian background influenced their decision-making processes during ethical dilemmas. The finding of this research correlates with literature that leaders with a connection to religion will be less likely to make unethical decisions. According to Longenecker, McKinney and Moore (2004) “respondents who indicate that religious interest were of a high level of ethical judgment (less accepting of unethical decisions) than others in their evaluation” (p. 373)

Christians follow the teachings and life examples of Jesus Christ. The bible is the guide or recorded life and teachings of Jesus and its content encourages ethical behavior, which requires ethical reasoning. John 8:31 stated, “Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings.” And 1 Peter 2:12-17(NLT), “Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.” Professing Christians are taught by the bible to make sure their actions and decisions are honorable and pleasing to God. The findings of this study support the idea that Christian teachings or Christian beliefs add to the moral development of leaders and is an individual variable that influences the decision-making processes during ethical dilemmas.

Research Question Three

The conclusions for research question three (What situational variables might leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?) reports what situational variables might leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on reasoning processes

to make ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. According to Trevino (1986), situation variables would include immediate job context, organizational culture, and characteristics of the work. Trevino (1986) stated, “moral action takes place in social context and can be influenced heavily by situational variables (p. 610). The two themes identified were participants believed it was their responsibility, because of their positions, to make ethical decisions that distinguishes ethical behavior. Also, as leaders or because of their positions, the participants believed it was essential to be sensitive to the welfare of stakeholders and the institution. The second theme that emerged was that the culture influenced decisions and guided behaviors. According to participants, the culture was a significant factor that influenced decisions during ethical dilemmas. It was suggested that cultures of institutions supported or even pressured leaders to make ethical decisions during decision-making processes.

Theme one: Responsibilities of the position. Participants believed it was their responsibility, because of their positions as leaders, to make ethical decisions that benefited the institutions and all of the stakeholders. The findings are congruent with the theoretical framework of this study in that individuals that are sensitive to the responsibilities of their job position are more likely to make ethical decisions that benefit stakeholders and the institution. When one has a position of authority, a sense of responsibility to stakeholders and the institution is connected to the job.

The responsibility of making ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas is a characteristic of the work. Positions that require or expect leaders to make frequent decisions during ethical dilemmas will be encouraged to pursue a higher level of moral development (Trevino, 1986). It is important to understand that when leaders

demonstrate characteristics of the work during the decision-making process, they are accountable for balancing the needs of the institution with the stakeholders (Trevino & Nelson, 2004).

Tom was an example of someone who believed that because of his position it was his responsibility to protect the institution and the university president from harm. Tom believed his position created an obligation to provide other alternatives to the situation, instead of complying with the unethical decision or request made by the university president. Literature and the findings of this study support the idea that individuals who believe they are accountable for balancing the needs of the institution with stakeholders are more likely to make ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas.

Theme two: The culture. The perception of the participants within this study believed the culture influenced or supported ethical decisions and guided behaviors. It is evident that the findings of this study and literature support the researchers premise that leaders that are associated with a culture that stresses or permeates ethical behavior are more likely to be influenced to make ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. Institutions that apply or enforce organizational pressures that encourage ethical behavior will influence leaders to emulate parallel behavior. It would be difficult for toxic leaders and unethical behaviors to survive in an environment that is clearly or predominantly ethical in nature.

Ardichvili, Mitchell, and Jondle (2009) reported five clusters that articulated the characteristics of an ethical business culture. The five characteristics identified by the study were the following: mission and values driven, stakeholder balance, leadership effectiveness, process integrity, and long term perspective. According to Ardichvili,

Mitchell, and Jondle (2009) one of the five characteristics, mission and values driven, entails a culture that permeates “Clarity of mission and values, reflected in the ethical guidelines and behavior” (p. 448).

Nine of the participants made reference to how the mission and values of the institutions coincided with their own personal values and beliefs and influenced their decision-making processes. Stakeholder balanced cultures consistently treat all stakeholders fairly and ethically during the decision-making process (Ardichvili, Mitchell, & Jondle, 2009). An overall theme for the entire study was how all of the participants considered the welfare of the stakeholders during the decision-making process.

The third characteristic, leadership effectiveness, represents an ethical culture that believes that leaders lead by example and that leaderships of organizations should demand ethical behavior at all levels. All of the participants described leadership characteristics or made statements that suggested that they lead by example. Nine of the ten participants expressed that the culture of their institution supported an ethical climate. As reported by literature and the findings of this study, individuals who embrace the characteristics of an ethical business culture and believe it is their responsibility to make sure their decisions characterize ethical behavior will most likely make ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas.

Research Question Four

The conclusion for research question four (What leadership characteristics do these leaders in higher education have and does it have an impact on making ethical decisions during the decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas?) provides

details concerning leadership characteristics of leaders in higher education and the influence these characteristics have on decision-making during ethical dilemmas. The finding of this study concluded that leadership characteristics have an impact on the leaders' decisions throughout decision-making processes during ethical dilemmas. The Transformational Leadership style, the Full Range Leadership Model (FRL), and results from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) provided insight concerning the leadership characteristics of the participants.

Theme one: Considering the needs of others. Leadership characteristics define who a leader is and one can normally determine the actions or behaviors of leaders by the leadership characteristics exhibited. The findings of this study identified leadership characteristics of the participants and determined that these characteristics influenced their decisions during ethical dilemmas. The data collected and literature lead this researcher to the conclusion that leaders who demonstrate leadership characteristics that focus on the needs of others and display the attributes of a transformation leadership model are more likely to make ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas.

All of the participants described their own leadership characteristics as focusing on the needs of others and how their decisions impacted others. The leaders also expressed the need to include or engage followers in two-way positive relationships in order to maintain an environment that embraces ethical behaviors and ethical viewpoints. Fitch (2009) stated,

Transformational leadership is the style of leadership most closely linked with ethics. Individuals who exhibit transformational leadership characteristics often have a strong set of internal values and beliefs, and they are effective at

motivating followers to act in ways that support the greater good rather than their own self interests. (pp. 30-31)

The leaders in this study declared or emphasized leadership characteristics such as focusing on others needs, consideration of others, engaging people, leading by example, relational, collaborative, inclusive, supportive, mentoring, communicator, and servant leader. Leaders who declare or emphasize these leadership characteristics represent the characteristics of a Transformational Leadership Model.

The participants' characteristics found throughout this research correlates with the leadership characteristics found within the transformational leadership model. The Transformational Leadership Model encourages ethical behavior and persuades followers to emulate the positive attributes of the Transformational Leadership Model.

The MLQ results determined that all participants would be considered transformational leaders. Literature and the results of this study have revealed that individuals who exhibit transformational leadership characteristics are more likely to be linked to ethical behavior.

Research Question Five

Discussion for research Question five (How do leaders in higher education describe their reasoning process in regards to their ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?) discloses how leaders in higher education describe their reasoning processes in regards to their ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. Three themes were identified for research question five. How leaders' decisions impact stakeholders and the institution, that their decisions corresponded with their personal values and beliefs, and

utilizing policies, procedures, standards, and governing agencies during decision-making processes during ethical dilemmas were the three themes discovered.

Question five validates and supports the findings of research questions one through four. The three themes identified for research question five include reoccurring themes from other research questions within this study. It is evident from the research that reasoning processes during ethical dilemmas simultaneously include individual variables, situational variables, leadership characteristics, and a concern for preserving personal values and beliefs.

Theme one: Concern for stakeholders. Leaders that consider the welfare of others and the institutions they are connected with during the reasoning process are more likely to make ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. It is the experience of this researcher that leaders who consider the welfare of followers and the institution in place of their own interests will most likely make ethical decisions in lieu of making unethical decisions. The findings of this study reported that during the reasoning process participants considered how their decisions impacted stakeholders and their institutions. It was obvious that all of the participants exemplified this concept during the ethical dilemmas they reported during the collection of data.

Theme two: Personal values and beliefs. The need to make sure decisions corresponded with personal values and beliefs were portrayed within the findings of this study. All of the participants considered their personal values and beliefs during the reasoning process during ethical dilemmas. Identifying ones' personal values and beliefs and evaluating how other factors compare during any circumstance, increases the possibilities of making sound, ethical decisions. For example, when other factors do not

correlate with an individual's personal value system during the reasoning process, it creates a situation to further investigate a more agreeable solution. When personal values are in opposition with other factors leaders are more likely to reject what is believed to be unacceptable behaviors.

Theme three: Utilizing rules and standards. Leaders within this study utilized policies, procedures, standards, and governing agencies during decision-making processes. Recognizing and accepting outside information that guides ethical behaviors is beneficial for leaders throughout the decision-making process. Leaders that exploit policies, procedures, and standards that conform to ethical behavior are more likely to make sound, ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. The findings of this research support the idea that when considering outside information one will be encouraged to exhibit ethical behaviors during ethical dilemmas.

Just as discussed or established within other research questions, the findings of this study and literature coincide in regards to the reasoning processes during ethical dilemmas. Ardichvili and Jondle (2009) suggested that moral awareness and moral reasoning contribute to a higher chance of making ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. Trevino and Nelson (2004) stated, "Moral awareness + Moral judgment = Ethical behavior" (p. 15).

The reasoning processes of the participants of this study incorporated an attitude about the welfare of others and their institutions, holding fast to their personal values and beliefs, and following the rules. According to literature and the findings of this study, the participants demonstrated moral awareness and applied moral judgments during the

reasoning process. Therefore, individuals who demonstrate moral awareness and moral judgments are more likely to exhibit ethical behavior during ethical dilemmas.

Discussion

The thought process during ethical dilemmas can be frustrating and confusing for leaders. Self-reflection or relying on one's personal convictions to remain devoted to personal values and beliefs and ignoring unethical pressures from outside sources will reinforce ethical decision-making. Individuals are more likely to make ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas when they are unwilling to compromise their personal values and beliefs when experiencing organizational pressures to act unethically.

Kohlberg's model of cognitive moral development categorizes specific levels pertaining to the moral development of leaders, as reported in chapters one and two of this study. According to Kohlberg's model, individuals base their decisions on the level of morality they have developed. Linda Trevino's personal-situational Interactionist model reported that the decision-making is not only based on moral development, but also on individual and situational variables.

According to this researcher and the findings of this study, Trevino's personal-situational Interactionist model is accurate and has merit. Leaders may make ethical decisions based on what level of moral development they have reached, but it is most likely that individual variables, situational variables, and leadership characteristics contributed to the decision-making processes during ethical dilemmas. The data from this research suggested that individual variables, situational variables, and leadership characteristics work or influence leaders simultaneously throughout the decision-making process during ethical dilemmas.

Linda Trevino provided another theoretical framework that is associated with ethical decision-making during ethical dilemmas. Trevino (2004) listed eight steps in sound ethical decision-making that produce moral awareness and moral reasoning. These eight steps support leaders in dealing with ethical dilemmas during the decision-making process. The list reported by Trevino (2004) incorporated: gather the facts, define the ethical issues, identify the affected parties, identify the consequences, identify the obligations, consider your character and integrity, think creatively about potential actions, and check your gut (pp. 94-100). As reported within this research, leaders declared that they had utilized several of the steps as steps taken to make an ethical decision during ethical dilemmas.

Recommendations for Professional and Academic Enrichment

The experiences and perceptions of the study's participants, as well as the findings of this research, provides additional data for current literature, guidance for future leaders, data for leadership and ethics curriculum, as well as corporate training programs. This research provides leaders with examples of applied techniques and models utilized during the reasoning process that leads to ethical decision-making. According to Trevino and Nelson (2004), moral awareness plus moral judgment equals ethical behavior.

Current Literature and Future Leaders

This research will contribute to current literature and provide future leaders with case study examples of leaders that made ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas. The research gives details in regards to the reasoning process of leaders during the decision-making processes during ethical dilemmas. Future leaders will be able to incorporate

certain distinguishing factors that influenced the participants of this study to make ethical decisions while experiencing ethical dilemmas. The individual and situational variables, as well as the leadership characteristics identified within this study, will validate the findings established within current literature.

Leadership, Ethics, and Corporate Training Curriculum

As an educator that teaches ethics and decision-making within higher education, it is evident from the results of this study that students should have a better understanding of the internal and external variables and the leadership characteristics that influence the decision-making process. The findings of this study support the idea that developing curriculum that identifies the variables that contributed to ethical decision-making will assist in the decision-making process during ethical dilemmas. Curriculum that includes these factors will allow students the opportunity to learn from the experiences of leaders who have made ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas.

Corporate training programs could benefit from the information reported within this study. Understanding models that incorporate ethical behaviors will enhance the chances of ethical decision-making within an organization. The case studies provided within this study can be examples of how leaders process their thoughts during ethical dilemmas and factors that influence ethical decision-making.

Celuch and Dill (2011) stated, “it is important for business educators and corporate trainers to understand the nature of ethical decisions so that enhanced curriculum and training can be developed to improve ethical decision-making” (p. 201). Developing an understanding of experiences and the reasoning processes of individuals throughout ethical decision-making processes during ethical dilemmas will establish or

demonstrate that individual and situation variables may influence the decision-making process (Trevino, 2004).

Recommendations for Further Studies

One recommendation for further studies would include replicating this study with leaders within a corporate business setting. Understanding the pressures and the reasoning processes of leaders within a corporate environment would provide data that would be useful for current literature and produce a guide for curriculum within business schools concerning ethical decision-making.

A second recommendation for further studies would consist of a larger population. An additional part of the study would be to have a deeper focus on the specifics of the institutions culture and how the culture impacts the decision-making processes of leaders. The findings would produce data that would assist leaders in identifying factors within the culture that nurture an ethical environment.

Another recommended study would include participants who held the same positions. Including participants who held the same positions would identify factors that influence decision-making processes during ethical dilemmas in regards to specific positions held within higher education. It would provide data concerning consistency of ethical decision-making during ethical dilemmas in relation to specific positions.

A fourth proposal would be to focus on a specific demographic such as gender. Focusing on gender would provide data for current literature and identify how specific genders reason or behave during ethical dilemmas.

Several of the participants expressed how a Christian background influenced their decision-making process. A fifth recommendation would be to do further study on

how Christian values influence ethical decision-making during ethical dilemmas. This would provide data that would identify whether or not a Christian influence would assist leaders in making ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas.

Limitations

Each participant had dissimilar positions and worked for different institutions. The range of different positions made it difficult to make a relationship between behaviors in detailed positions within specific institutions. These diversities were the very reason the researcher did not focus on demographics but experiences. What is accurate for some positions and specific for certain institutions may not be for others. This study could be considered subjective in nature because it is based on the perceptions of individual leaders' personal experiences related to ethical decision-making processes.

The variables participants experienced during the decision-making process were different, as well as the intensity of the ethical dilemmas in which they faced. Because this study consists of a small group of participants, this study expressed the experiences and perceptions of a small fraction of individuals who have experienced this phenomenon (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009).

Personal Reflection

The inspirational reason to conduct this study was the researcher's personal experiences with making decisions during ethical dilemmas, while being pressured to carry out unethical behavior. The researcher identified and connected with the experiences of many of the participants within this study. The results of this study validated and coincided with the actions and thought process the researcher experienced when faced with an ethical dilemma during the decision-making process. Unwillingness

to compromise personal values and beliefs and consideration of how one's decisions will impact stakeholders were part of the researcher's reasoning process during ethical dilemmas.

The study generated eleven themes related to the research questions of this study, but there were three themes that were constant in answering all of the research questions. The findings of this study were consistent for the reason that everyone placed a high value on their personal values and beliefs, the impact their decisions have on stakeholders, and following policies, procedures and laws that coincide with their personal value system. Each of these themes fosters ethical decision-making, which supports ethical behavior when experiencing ethical dilemmas. Understanding and recognizing the individual variables, situational variables, and leadership characteristics identified as having an influence on the decision-making processes of the participants of this study will direct leaders in making ethical decisions during ethical dilemmas.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

**Department of Professional Studies
in Education**
Davis Hall, Room 303
570 S. Eleventh Street
Indiana, Pennsylvania 15705-1087

724-357-2400
Internet: <http://www.iup.edu>

Informed Consent

Title: A Collective Case Study that Examines the Decision-Making Experiences and Influential Variables as Identified by Leaders in Higher Education

You are invited to participate in this research study. My name is Dennis Frketich and I am a doctoral student in the Administrative and Leadership Studies program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. You are eligible to participate because you are an administrator within a higher education institution and are in a leadership position.

The purpose of this study is to examine the ethical decision-making process of leaders in higher education and the decisions they make when facing ethical dilemmas. The study will examine how leaders reason or how they process their thoughts during the decision-making process. The study will also examine the individual and situational factors that leaders identified as having an impact on making ethical decisions in the face of an ethical dilemma during the decision-making process. The experiences and perceptions of the studies participants pertaining to the decision-making process during ethical dilemmas will add to current literature. A better understanding of the ethical decision-making process can also enhance curriculum and training programs in regard to making ethical decisions in the face of an ethical dilemma.

All participants who participate in this study will be asked to complete a qualifying questionnaire, participate in a 30 to 45 minute interview, and take the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). Four unique cases and willing participants of the ten original participants will be asked to take part in a second round of interviews in order to examine their cases deeper.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying the principal investigator. Dennis Frketich at ffyq@iup.edu. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence. Your response will be considered only in combination with those from other participants. The information

obtained in the study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement below and send to the investigator at the following address: Dennis D. Frketich, 216 North Street, Knox, PA 16323. Keep the extra unsigned copy for your records. Also enclosed is a stamped, self-addressed envelope for your convenience.

Principal Investigator:

Dennis D. Frketich Sr. (ffyq@iup.edu)
(kpaquett@iup.edu)
216 North Street
Knox, PA. 16232
Phone: 814-797-0306

Faculty Sponsor:

Kelli Paquette

Davis Hall
Indiana, PA 15705
Phone: 724-357-2400

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).

Appendix A (continued)

Informed Consent Form

Voluntary consent form:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Phone number or location where you can be reached Best days and times to reach you.

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date _____ Investigator's
Signature _____

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).

Appendix B

Qualifying Questionnaire

Definitions:

Ethical dilemma – Pontiff (2007) stated, "...that the term ethical dilemma is used to describe the phenomenon of two conflicting values (Gortner, 1991). The conflicting values can be individual, societal, organizational, or a combination of these" (p. 26).

Leader - Moreno (2011) states, "*Leader*: an individual who acts on his or her own initiative, leads others, and "engages in leadership" (Norhouse, 2004, p. 3). The leadership role may include establishing direction, aligning people, and motivating and inspiring others (Kotter, 1990). Additionally, an individual may also have managerial responsibilities that may include planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, and controlling and problem solving (Kotter, 1990)..." (p. 32).

Please put a check mark beside the appropriate answer to each question.

1. Have you worked a minimum of five years in a leadership position(s) in a higher education institution?

Yes _____ No _____

2. What leadership position(s) have you held while working for a higher education institution(s)?

3. Have you experienced an ethical dilemma during your time as a leader in a higher education institution(s)?

Yes _____ No _____

4. Regarding the ethical dilemma (question 3), do you believe you made an ethical decision (take the high road) in place of an unethical decision?

Yes _____ No _____

5. Do you believe your position as a leader within a higher education institution(s) aligns with the definition of leader above?

Yes _____ No _____ Why?

Appendix C

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 6S

INSTRUCTIONS: This questionnaire provides a description of your leadership style. Twenty-one descriptive statements are listed below. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. The word others may mean your followers, clients, or group members.

KEY

0 - Not at all 1 - Once in a while 2 = Sometimes 3 = Fairly often 4 = Frequently, if not always

1. I make others feel good to be around me.....0 1 2 3 4
2. I express with a few simple words what we could and should do.....0 1 2 3 4
3. I enable others to think about old problems in new ways.....0 1 2 3 4
4. I help others develop themselves.....0 1 2 3 4
5. I tell others what to do if they want to be rewarded for their work.....0 1 2 3 4
6. I am satisfied when others meet agreed-upon standards.....0 1 2 3 4
7. I am content to let others continue working in the same ways always.....0 1 2 3 4
8. Others have complete faith in me.....0 1 2 3 4
9. I provide appealing images about what we can do.....0 1 2 3 4
10. I provide others with new ways of looking at puzzling things.....0 1 2 3 4
11. I let others know how I think they are doing.....0 1 2 3 4
12. I provide recognition/rewards when others reach their goals.....0 1 2 3 4
13. As long as things are working, I do not try to change anything.....0 1 2 3 4
14. Whatever others want to do is OK with me.....0 1 2 3 4
15. Others are proud to be associated with me.....0 1 2 3 4
16. I help others find meaning in their work.....0 1 2 3 4
17. I get others to rethink ideas that they had never questioned before.....0 1 2 3 4
18. I give personal attention to others who seem rejected.....0 1 2 3 4
19. I call attention to what others can get for what they accomplish.....0 1 2 3 4
20. I tell others the standards they have to know to carry out their work.....0 1 2 3 4
21. I ask no more of others than what is absolutely essential.....0 1 2 3 4

SCORING

The MLQ-6S measures your leadership on seven factors related to transformational leadership. Your score for each factor is determined by summing three specified items on the questionnaire. For example, to determine your score for factor 1, Idealized influence, sum your responses for items 1, 8, and 15. Complete this procedure for all seven factors.

	TOTAL
Idealized influence (items 1, 8, and 15)	_____ Factor 1
Inspirational motivation (items 2, 9, and 16)	_____ Factor 2
Intellectual stimulation (items 3, 10, and 17)	_____ Factor 3
Individual consideration (items 4, 11, and 18)	_____ Factor 4
Contingent reward (items 5, 12, and 19)	_____ Factor 5
Management-by-exception (items 6, 13, and 20)	_____ Factor 6
Laissez-faire leadership (items 7, 14, and 21)	_____ Factor 7

Score range: HIGH = 9-12, MODERATE = 5-8, LOW = 0-4

Appendix D

Interview Questionnaire for the First Round of Interviews (Ten Participants)

1. Describe a time when you were faced with an Ethical dilemma and chose to make an ethical decision (“take the high road”) in lieu of an unethical decision.
2. Describe why you felt your experience was an ethical dilemma.
3. Describe in detail your thought process during the ethical dilemma you described.
4. What personal values or beliefs did you identify as having the most influence on your decision-making process during the ethical dilemma you described? Why?
5. What external factors (i.e. culture, other people, or policies...) did you identify as having the most influence on your decision-making process during the ethical dilemma you described? Why?
6. What organizational pressures have you experienced during the decision-making process that challenged your personal values and beliefs?
7. In regards to question six, describe how these organizational pressures influence your decision –making process.
8. How would you describe your leadership characteristics (attributes or traits)?
9. How do the leadership characteristics you described have an influence on your decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas?
10. In regards to the ethical dilemma you described, explain any additional details that you believe had a significant influence upon your decision-making process?

Appendix E

Interview Questions for the Second Round of Interviews (Four Participants)

1. Describe an additional time (other than the one described during the first interview) when you perceived to have made an ethical decision (“take the high road”) in the face of an ethical dilemma in lieu of an unethical decision.
2. What fundamentals do you believe have influenced your moral development (i.e. value or belief system)?
3. How do your personal convictions and self-regulating skills influence your decision-making process?
4. When faced with an ethical dilemma, do you ask yourself questions during the decision-making process?
5. If yes to question 4, what are some of the questions you ask yourself during the decision-making process?
6. In regards to the ethical dilemma, describe the relationship between you, other stakeholders, and the institution during the decision-making process?
7. How does external information influence your decision-making process while facing an ethical dilemma? (Example: an individual redefines an unethical situation to make seem less problematic).
8. Describe how the culture of your institution influences your decision-making process during an ethical dilemma? (i.e. normative structure, referent others, obedience to authority, & responsibility to consequences)
9. Describe the influence other leaders have had on your decision-making process during the course of your career?

10. In regards to Question 9, what traits did the leaders possess that influenced you most?
11. What role does self reflection play during the decision-making process?
12. In regards to the ethical dilemma you described, explain any additional details that you believe had a significant influence upon your decision-making process?

Appendix F: Matrix for Research Questions and Round One Interview Questions

Research Questions	Interview Questions
Research Question # 1 = How do Leaders in higher education perceive that their personal ethical beliefs and perceived institutional pressures affect their decisions?	6. What organizational pressures have you experienced during the decision-making process that challenged your personal values and beliefs? 7. In regards to question six, describe how these organizational pressures influence your decision –making process.
Research Question # 2 = What individual variables do leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?	4. What personal values or beliefs did you identify as having the most influence on your decision-making process during the ethical dilemma you described? Why?
Research Question # 3 = What situational variables do leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?	5. What external factors (i.e. culture, other people, or policies) did you identify as having the most influence on your decision-making process ethical dilemma you described? Why?
Research Question # 4 = What leadership characteristics do these leaders in higher education have and does it have an impact on making ethical decisions during the decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas?	8. How would you describe your leadership characteristics (attributes or traits)? 9. How do the leadership characteristics you described have an influence on your decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas?
Research Question # 5 = How do leaders in higher education describe their reasoning process in regards to their ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?	3. Describe in detail your thought process during the ethical dilemma you described. 10. In regards to the ethical dilemma you described, explain any additional details that you believe had a significant influence upon your decision-making process?

Appendix G: Matrix for Research Questions and Round Two Interview Questions

Research Questions	Interview Questions
Research Question # 1 = How do Leaders in higher education perceive that their personal ethical beliefs and perceived institutional pressures affect their decisions?	9. Explain how the culture of your institution influences your decision-making during an ethical dilemma?
Research Question # 2 = What individual variables do leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?	2. What fundamentals do you believe have influenced your moral development (i.e. value or belief system)? 3. How do your personal convictions and self regulating skills influence your decision-making process?
Research Question # 3 = What situational variables do leaders in higher education identify as having an influence on their reasoning process to make ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?	7. How does external information influence your decision-making process while facing an ethical dilemma? (Example: an individual redefines an unethical situation to make seem less problematic). 8. Describe how the culture of your institution influences your decision-making process during an ethical dilemma?
Research Question # 4 = What leadership characteristics do these leaders in higher education have and does it have an impact on making ethical decisions during the decision-making process in the face of ethical dilemmas?	9. Describe the influence other leaders have had on your decision-making process during the course of your career? 10. In regards to Question 9, what traits did the leader possess that influenced you most?
Research Question # 5 = How do leaders in higher education describe their reasoning process in regards to their ethical decisions in the face of ethical dilemmas?	4. When faced with an ethical dilemma, do you ask yourself questions during the decision-making process? 5. If yes to question 5, what are some of the questions you ask yourself during the decision-making process? 6. In regards to the ethical dilemma, describe the relationship between you, other stakeholders, and the institution during the decision-making process? 11. What role does self reflection play during the decision-making process?

Research Question # 5 Continued	12. In regards to the ethical dilemma you described, explain any additional details that you felt had a significant impact on your decision-making?
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Appendix H

Interview Questions for Direct Reports of the Four Participants (Case Studies)

1. Describe a time when you may have experienced or participated with (name of participant) during an occasion when he/she may have been faced with an ethical dilemma and he/she chose to make an ethical decision (“take the high road”) in lieu of an unethical decision.
2. In regards to the ethical dilemma described, what was your affiliation or role with (name of participant) during the decision-making process?
3. In regards to the ethical dilemma you described, what was your perception of (name of participant) reasoning process during the decision-making process?
4. During the ethical dilemma you described, what stood out most about (name of participant) during the decision-making process?
5. What moral (i.e. values, beliefs...) characteristics do you recognize in (name of participant) that you believe would influence ethical decision-making?
6. What leadership characteristics do recognize in (name of participant)?
7. How does (name of participant) influence you in regards to ethical decision-making?

Appendix I

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Most", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Robert Most

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Appendix J

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Results

	IIA	IIB	IM	IS	IC	CR	MEA	MEP	LFL	EE	E	S
Tracy	2.75	4.0	4.0	3.25	4.0	4.0	1.0	.25	1.0	4.0	3.75	4.0
Tom	1.75	3.0	2.75	3.5	3.0	3.25	.75	1.25	.0	3.0	3.0	2.25
Sandy	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.5	4.0	4.0	1.0	.25	.0	3.66	3.75	4.0
Sam	2.75	3.75	3.5	2.75	3.0	3.25	.75	.5	.25	3.66	3.5	3.25
Paul	3.0	3.25	2.75	3.5	3.0	3.25	2.5	.5	.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Rick	3.5	3.75	3.5	3.25	4.0	3.5	1.0	.25	.0	3.0	3.5	4.0
Sally	3.0	3.25	3.25	3.5	3.0	3.25	2.5	1.25	.75	3.3	3.5	3.5
Jane	3.25	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.75	3.5	3.0	.5	.25	3.3	4.0	4.0
Jason	3.25	3.75	3.75	3.0	4.0	3.25	2.5	1.75	.5	4.0	3.25	4.0
Mary	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	2.0	.25	.25	4.0	4.0	4.0

Multifactor Rater Questionnaire Results

	IIA	IIB	IM	IS	IC	CR	MEA	MEP	LFL	EE	E	S
Sally's Direct Report	3.25	3.5	3.0	3.0	2.75	3.0	3.25	.25	.0	3.3	3.25	4.0
Jane's Direct Report	3.75	3.5	4.0	3.25	3.5	3.25	.25	.0	.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Jason's Direct Report	3.5	4.0	3.5	3.25	2.25	3.25	.5	.5	.75	3.0	3.25	3.0
Mary's Direct Report	3.25	3.5	3.75	3.0	3.75	3.25	1.5	.5	.0	3.66	3.75	3.5

Legend

IIA =	Idealized Influence (Attributed)
IIB =	Idealized Influence (Behavior)
IM =	Inspirational Motivation
IS =	Intellectual Stimulation
IC =	Individualized Consideration
CR =	Contingent Reward
MEA =	Management by Exception (Active)
MEP =	Management by Exception (Passive)
LFL =	Laissez – fair Leadership
EE =	Extra Effort
E =	Effectiveness
S =	Satisfaction