# A SURVEY OF ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING AMONG SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Best practice services by school psychologists are characterized by consultation, intervention and assessment, as well as those standards outlined by the profession's codes of conduct. Within each area of school psychologist's practice, there exist specific ethical and legal challenges. For example, in the area of assessment because of continued growth of computer technology and ease of test administration, professionals are faced with the need to extend practice beyond their initial boundaries of competence. Knauss (2001) outlines potential areas within assessment where legal and ethical issues can arise, including parent involvement and consent, non-discriminatory assessment, and use of projective instruments. In her article "*School Psychology in the New Millennium: Legal Influences and Ethical Issues"* Jacob-Timm (2000) presents ideas about future federal education policy and how it may impact the profession of school psychology. She bases her article on the belief that "law will continue to shape the practices of school psychologists in the years ahead", and that school psychologists will be involved in new environments challenging them with new ethical and legal dilemmas (p. 39). For example, for students requiring intensive behavioral interventions and who are receiving the education within an alternative education program, school psychologists ensure that

"applied-behavioral-analysis techniques are used in ways that safeguard the rights and well being of children and youth" (p. 45). School psychologists are involved in selecting the behavior goals, and the behavior-change procedures, in an ethically acceptable manner that is consistent with the ethical principles and standards of the profession. They also ensure that there is close and effective monitoring of the treatment plans, and that they are modified when the data indicate a need for a change.

Clearly the role of a school psychologist is complex and ethical decision-making challenges can occur within each facet of the profession. The presence of these ethical considerations is an opportunity for the occurrence of both professional growth and probable dilemmas. Surveys of school psychologists, as well as others in the field support the current existence of ethical dilemmas in everyday practice. A 1992 random sample survey of 1,319 members of The American Psychological Association (APA) asked for descriptions of incidents that they had found ethically troubling (Pope & Vetter, 1992). Responses from 679 members identified 703 incidents, divided into 23 categories. The most often reported area of ethical conflict centered on issues of confidentiality. Items that reflected dilemmas specifically within the practice of school psychology included struggles to act within the best interest of students despite pressure from administrators. In addition, conflictual relationships, training or supervision concerns, research, and conduct by colleagues were some of the delineated categories.

Jacob-Timm (1999) also addressed the question of what types of ethical dilemmas school psychologists encounter with a replication of this same critical incident technique. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) provided a random sample of members, and a structured questionnaire asked respondents to describe an

ethically challenging incident that occurred in the past two years. There was a 22% return rate, with 159 respondents having useable data. Jacob-Timm notes that this is a low return rate in comparison to similar past studies, (i.e. Pope and Vetter) but that it is not unusual to expect a lower return rate when respondents are asked to report on ethical incidents. In fact the respondents did identify 222 ethical incidents. These detailed descriptions were divided into 19 categories similar to those identified by Pope and Vetter (1992): assessment, confidentiality, conflictual relationships, research and publishing, parent conflicts, supervision, administrative pressure to act unethically, unsound educational practices, job competence, job performance, school records, informed consent and self determination, interventions, academic settings, sexual issues, payment, taking credit for others work, confronting, credentials and miscellaneous. Comments by Jacob-Timm suggest that the incidents described difficult situations, not necessarily clear-cut ethics violations as would be outlined by professional codes. She goes on to suggest that because of this, professionals would benefit not just from knowing the content of the codes, but developing ethical problem solving skills as well. Another recommendation was for a "planned, multi-level approach to teaching ethics" (p. 214). Additionally the author points out that the most frequently occurring difficult situation involved pressure to act unethically. Jacob-Timm makes a call for further research on organizational pressures on school psychologists, and how they might successfully resist pressures to act unethically.

## Professional Codes

Currently there are numerous ethical standards created to assist the professional to practice ethically. Codes and laws that school psychologists must consider include: American Psychological Association (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Principles for Professional Ethics and Standards for the Provision of School Psychological Services. Previous reviews of the codes have suggested that they provide very few absolutes and are too flexible (Smith, McGuire, Abbott, & Blau, 1991). Indeed the codes are broad, in an attempt to provide for all professional disciplines in psychology. Beginning in the 1980's, with APA and NASP's requirements of a more formal method of ethics education there began an onset of variations of training in ethics. Among the different modes and methods developed for ethics training, there was a consensus on competencies that should be included. These include goals for a competent professional to have a sound working knowledge of the content of the ethical codes, standards and other relevant laws. They also included having a proactive rather then reactive stance in ethical thinking and conduct (Jacob-Timm, 1994).

## Decision-Making Models

Reviewers of the codes have indicated that simple knowledge of the codes does not demonstrate the ability to function in an ethical manner and that ethical decision-making models and training may advance ethical thinking and behavior (Hansen & Goldberg, 1999; Welfel, 1992). National surveys addressing this issue indicate that when

left to individual problem solving strategies, professionals often relate back to a personal value system for a decision, which in fact decreases judgment abilities (Bernard, 1986). In an attempt to provide a framework for ethical decision-making, independent researchers created models or guidelines for ethical decision-making. Keith-Spiegel and Koocher (1985) presented an eight-step problem-solving model to assist professionals in making a well informed, and well-reasoned ethical choice in the practice. Tymchuk (1986) developed an approach that had seven steps and stressed that the goal of ethical decision-making should be one of justice. His ideas on decision-making are reflected in the Canadian Psychological Associations (CPA) model of problem solving. In fact, unlike the APA, the CPA includes a problem-solving model for its member professionals (CPA, 1991). Rest (1984), Kitchener (1984) and Hare (1991) presented models that incorporated moral thinking in ethical decision-making. Kitchener's model was based on the work of Beauchamp and Childress (1994) and suggested ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice. These principles are outlined in Principles of Biomedical Ethics (4th Edition, 1994) and reflect the prima facie duties: beneficence (do good), nonmaleficence (do no harm), autonomy (respect for the individual's free choice and action), fidelity (being faithful, and honest) and justice (being fair). This book is often cited in literature that discusses ethical issues as it provides an in-depth look at the guiding principles of ethical decision-making. The text does not provide a model for ethical decision-making or its process, but reflects philosophies and principles as a framework for ethical decision-making. Kitchener (1984), in turn suggested that professionals must consider fundamental ethical principles

in the decision-making. The five principles for which she describes are: benefit others, do no harm, respect others autonomy, be just or fair and be faithful.

Surveys of Professional Practice in Decision-Making

Contrary to the intentions of these models, the literature concerning school psychologists and a variety of other psychology professions in ethical decision-making, has been consistent in the conclusion that there is a lack of consistency among the respondents (Chevalier & Lyon, 1993; Haas, Malouf and Mayerson, 1988; Schatzberg, 1998). Chevalier and Lyon (1993) surveyed practicing school psychologists to investigate resolutions to ethical dilemmas. Utilizing the NASP membership directory, 250 members were randomly selected and mailed questionnaires. Of the returned questionnaires, 76 (31% response rate) were useable for data collection. The majority of respondents were women (64.5) and between the ages of 36-50 (61.8%). Demographic data provided indicate a fairly stratified sample was obtained. In regard to ethics training 64.5% of respondents reported that they received less then 20 hours of formal training in ethics. The authors note that "very few" respondents reported having a course that was devoted exclusively to ethics within the school psychology training programs (p. 329). They also state that the respondents' information on ethics must have been "gleaned from discussions with colleagues, occasional presentations in graduate classes, and independent reading of the ethics literature" (p. 329). Each respondent completed a questionnaire made up of three sections. The first section consisted of 7 vignettes each describing an ethical dilemma. Respondents were asked to choose among a list of potential decisions concerning the dilemma or provide a personal choice not listed.

Respondents were then asked to select from six possible reasons what the primary reason was for choosing the decisions. The reasons included upholding the law, upholding the ethics code, protecting society's interests, protecting client's rights, upholding personal standard, and other. Last, respondents were asked to rate each vignette on the perceived level of seriousness of the problem, the frequency with which each had encountered a similar problem, and level of confidence in the decision chosen. All responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale.

Using the seven different vignettes with a forced choice for resolutions or actions, only one vignette met the 75% agreement criterion. The highest agreement rate within each vignette ranged from 75% – 28.9%. Analyses of important variables such as years of experience and hours of ethics training did not account for significant variance in the respondent's chosen course of action. In addition, the study examined the reasons chosen by the professionals to support the decisions they made. The authors reported considerable variability among respondents. They suggested that the variability of responses might have been indicative of a struggle by professionals to make decisions based on unclear guidelines. They also speculated that attempts to make ethics codes more specific would not provide professionals with the assistance they need to solve ethical dilemmas. Rather, it was indicated that graduate training programs needed to adjust the curriculum to include a more systematic method of ethics training. In fact, the majority of respondents to the study indicated inconsistent training or a total lack of ethics training within programs. Chevalier and Lyon's study also identified an additional concern in school psychologist's ethical behavior, that of choosing to respond in a manner that is deemed unethical. On two of the vignettes presented, 3.9% of the

respondents chose actions that were in direct contradiction to ethical guidelines. The authors also discussed a second issue of a "sizable percentage" of respondents who indicated that they would not take an action, in several of the described vignettes (Chevalier & Lyon, 1993, p. 335). The authors indicate that each of the vignettes presented included a problem that required a response, and go on further to say that "to do nothing is tantamount to engaging in unprofessional practices at best, and encouraging unethical behavior at worst" (p. 333).

This study did not include any information regarding whether the respondents had knowledge of the ethics codes or an ethical decision-making model. It also did not seek to further understand the process with which respondents made the ethical decisions. The authors do suggest that more research is needed regarding the decisions school psychologist make when faced with ethical dilemmas.

Schatzberg conducted a conceptual replication of Chevalier and Lyon's study in 1998, with 53 school psychologists in Florida. Results from this study also indicated that there was no consistency among subject's responses when faced with decision alternatives, as well as among subjects' responses when faced with decision alternatives and no consistency among subjects' reported reasoning for the decision alternative. Gender, years of experience and hours of ethics training were considered to account for significant variability on 3 out of the 7 vignettes. Generalizability of this study is limited due to its small sample size and unstratified sample.

Another study of school psychologists' decision-making sought to identify ethical conflicts encountered, and also identify how decisions were made in resolving these situations (Humphreys, 2000). Semistructured interviews were completed with only 36

Ohio school psychologists. Analyses were done through interview transcripts and independent raters using the Tymchuk Rating Scale to evaluate participants' decision-making ability. The most frequently reported issue involved balancing the interest of multiple parties who were invested in the outcomes of the decisions being made. Other variables that played a role in decision-making included factors inherent to the individual school psychologist such as belief systems or approach to decision-making, and aspects unique to each situation such as perceived threats to professional relationships or the ability to continue to do ones' job effectively in the future. Variables such as training and problem solving style were not consistently identified as factors that promoted decision-making ability when confronted with ethical dilemmas. Again, limitations of this study include the unstratified sample.

In an earlier study Haas, Malouf and Mayerson (1988) addressed ethical decision-making with psychologists who were members of the Division of Psychotherapy. Participants answered questions regarding vignettes that posed professional dilemmas. Years of experience was identified as a significant variable that affected responses to the dilemmas. Decision-making in three out of the ten vignettes was significantly impacted by years of experience. Findings also indicated that the amount of formal ethics training did not have an effect on choice of actions or reasons given. The authors do caution readers against interpreting this finding however, as it may reveal a possible floor effect due to the low mean number of hours in ethics training. In fact, the mean was less than one hour per year (SD = 32.42). Since the median age of respondents in this study was 45.7 and the mean years of experience was 15.17, it is important to consider that formalized ethics training might not have been a requirement at the time some

respondents were in graduate training. In relation to these findings, the authors recommend assessment of a sample of professionals that have been more recently trained in ethics.

Attempts at ethics education have improved since its initial requirement by APA and that it is no longer being taught through "osmosis" p. 371 (Handleman, 1986). In the most recent published survey containing data on an ethics curriculum, Vanek (1990) surveyed 209 APA-approved clinical and counseling psychology programs about the ethics training required by the students. All of the programs reported that ethics education was included in the graduate curriculum. The majority, 69% had a separate required course, in addition to integrating ethics across the curriculum. Vanek found that lecture, discussion, and case studies were the dominant methods of instruction. Participants also stated that they utilized tests, term paper and class discussions to assess course outcomes. However, this does not necessarily indicate the quality or effectiveness of the instruction being offered to graduate students. There are currently numerous texts addressing ethics for an individual profession that could be utilized as a training text. However, in terms of a curriculum, very few programs or supervisors have offered evidence of what is contained within an ethics curriculum.

## Summary

Within the specific area of ethical decision-making by school psychologists, there exists a limited amount of research. Surveys addressing ethical decisions made by school psychologists have not been replicated and published for ten years. The literature does include findings that demonstrate there are inconsistencies in ethical decision-making by

school psychologists, as well as examples of the unethical actions in the face of a dilemma. As a result, there exist strong recommendations for a change in how school psychologists are trained in ethical decision-making. Unfortunately this training has not evolved and there is a need for a greater understanding of the training needs in order for change to take place.

It is difficult to determine what needs to be included to train school psychologists in ethical decision-making. There is limited research on the actual ethics training of professionals and the relevant variables that may influence participation in ethical decision-making training. In addition, the variables of years of experience and level of education are identified as determinants in other aspects of professional practice but remain unclear as to the impact on future ethical decision-making training. Overall there is a need to determine the characteristics of those professionals most likely to participate in future ethical decision-making training, in order to make best practices recommendations for future training in ethical decision-making.

One goal of this study is to examine variables that are related to the likelihood of participation in certain methods of ethical decision-making training. In addition, this study will seek to further the understanding of ethical decision-making by school psychologists, and to aid in conceptualizing those variables that influence the process. Specifically, common themes and characteristics related to decision-making may assist in explaining the differences that exist among school psychologists and the decision-making skills.

The results from this study may prove to be useful to school psychologists in several ways. First, the study might add a useful contribution to the narrow body of

knowledge that exists regarding ethical decision-making by school psychologists. In addition, it might offer some explanation and interpretation as to what factors influence the decision to participate in training on ethical decision-making. This study will provide more information regarding the current degree of training within the broad concept of ethics and assist with identifying crucial deficits. In addition, this study will provide decisive information regarding how the future of ethical decision-making training should look, and which professionals are most likely to participate in training. The study will provide greater guidance in implementing a specific method of ethical decision-making training and allowing for the recommendation of more training, but in a different manner, to take place.

# CHAPTER II

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Today's school psychologists are facing ethical issues in growing numbers and have to routinely make ethical decisions routinely (Jacob-Timm, 1999; Knauss 2001). Currently in place are numerous ethical standards to assist with that decision-making process. Codes and laws that school psychologists must consider include: American Psychological Association (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Principles for Professional Ethics and Standards for the Provision of School Psychological Services. In a recent random survey, NASP members identified 222 ethically challenging incidents that could be divided into nineteen separate categories (Jacob-Timm, 1999). Of those incidents, 82% concerned complex situations that were not a clear and specific violation of APA or NASP ethic's codes. These complex situations present professionals with a need to be able to balance ethical, legal and professional standards, and necessitate the utilization of a model or framework to ensure a comprehensive process in decision-making.

The capacity to make critical decisions is a mainstay of providing psychological services. Within the critical decision-making process there often exist ethical dilemmas that professionals are required to address. Unfortunately it is unclear as to what extent

professionals are receiving training in ethical decision-making. Many pre-service training programs do not include an ethics decision-making model in the ethics instruction. Often during the course of training the laws, codes and ethics are reviewed and considered as the only framework for solving dilemmas. National surveys addressing this issue indicate that when left to individual problem solving strategies, professionals often relate back to a personal value system for a decision, which in fact decreases judgment abilities (Bernard, 1986).

## Ethics Defined

Several definitions of ethics have been referred to in the literature. All contain an underlying theme that represents the essence of what is to be discussed in this paper, and one is not all encompassing. For that purpose, a few of the definitions will be outlined and considered as a reference for the remainder of the discussion. Ross (1930) wrote of ethics as the "study of what is right or what ought to be, so far as this depends upon the voluntary action of individuals" (p.29). In addition, Beauchamp & Childress (1994) added, "ethics is a generic term for various ways of understanding and examining the moral life"(p. 45). Simply put by Jacob-Timm and Hartshorne (1994), "ethics generally refers to a system of principles of conduct that guide the behavior of an individual" (p. 18). In fact the word *ethics* means "character" or "custom" in the Greek form, *ethos*.

In addition to defining ethics, it is important to identify the definition and/or purpose of a code of ethics. APA (2002) has stated that the APA code was established "to reflect(s) the values of the profession, that it's educative for psychologists and consumers of psychological services..." (p. 2). In addition, the codes are "designed to cover the

principles and decisions necessary for proper ethical conduct across a variety of situations" (Meara, Schmidt, and Day, 1996, p. 2). Newman et al. (1996) described the 1992 APA Ethical Standards in that it "consists of enforceable rules that exemplify mandatory ethics" (p. 4). And lastly, written about the development of the codes as it relates to a profession, Chalk et al. (1980) described "a code of ethics is seen as an indicator of the profession's willingness to accept responsibility for defining appropriate conduct, and as a commitment to self-regulation of members by the profession" (p. 62).

The terms ethics and morality are often times used interchangeably in the research. However, there has also been an effort to separate out the two and to ascertain the place of each in making ethical decisions. As Bersoff (1999) stated "ideally, a code of ethics should serve as a guide to resolving moral dilemmas that confront the members of the profession . . . it should be a grand statement of overarching principles that earns the respect of the public by reflecting the profession's moral integrity" (p. 57). Clearly there is an interaction between ethics and morality in decision-making. Some would state that the ethics codes provide a set of minimum requirements for which all professionals are accountable, and morality is more of an individual's responsibility and based on individual development. In effect, "moral rules are thought to differ from other aspects of ethics in that they are more important, fundamental, universal, rational and objective" (Solomon, 1984, p. 12). Both ethics and morality hold the professional responsible for making a decision that considers the well-being of the person being helped.

Bersoff (1996), who has written extensively about ethics, described the 1992 APA Code of Ethics as "inevitably anachronistic, conservative, protective of its members, the product of political compromise, restricted in its scope, and too often unable to provide

clear-cut solutions to ambiguous professional predicaments" (p. 2). Additional criticisms of the codes state that the codes are too technical and do not adequately challenge the professional to pursue the highest level of moral action. From these arguments, varying perspectives have emerged that seek to meet the need for an additional guiding morality. Principle and virtue ethics are among the theoretical constructs currently being argued as the best for use in decision-making. Principle ethics was first introduced into counseling psychology by Kitchenener (1984). It typically focuses on acts and choices, with five prima facie duties as its guide. The prima facie duties include: beneficence (do good), nonmaleficence (do no harm), autonomy (respect for the individual's free choice and action), fidelity (being faithful, and honest) and justice (being fair) (Beauchamp & Childress, 1994; Ross, 1937). When considering a decision, not one of the principles or prima facie duties is considered more critical, rather they are considered in light of each other and the situation.

Proponents of virtue ethics acknowledge the prima facie duties at the core of principle ethics, but argue that virtue ethics sets forth a greater set of ideals for professionals to aspire. Virtue ethics asks professionals to aspire toward ideals and develop virtues or traits of character that enable them to achieve these ideals (Meara et al., 1996). A major distinction between principle ethics and virtue ethics is that principle ethics speak of obligations, whereas virtue reflects an ideal. Bersoff (1996) argues that virtue ethics is "irrelevant" in application to decisions of ethics violations (p. 3). While he acknowledges the theoretical support of virtue ethics, he is not confident in the ability of virtues to assist a professional in the actual act of decision-making. Kitchener (1996) poses the idea that even professionals thought to have virtuous character sometimes "fail

to perceive what they ought to do when faced with a moral crisis" (p. 2). She offers ethical principles as the action evaluator to guide decisions when our moral character is not enough. The challenge to ascertain which approach to ethical decision-making is most prudent will continue to be debated and reviewed in the literature. Kitchener (1996) summarizes a balance between virtues and principles, in that "principles give us a way to evaluate both virtues and the actions committed in the name of virtue so that they remain an important part of the ethical balance, but neither principles nor virtues are absolute guarantees of ethical responses... (p. 3)." In discussing if virtues are in fact character traits, and the notion that character traits cannot be taught, Kitchener goes on to suggest that the future job of training institutions may be to carefully select students who already possess the "right character traits" to be good psychologists, rather then relying on trying to teach new traits to graduate students (p. 3). Meara et al. (1996) also suggest the need for both virtues and principles for a complete account of moral behavior. Training for future professionals, and the development of future models, could contain the ability to understand and integrate both virtues and principles and produce a "more fully developed professional ethical perspective" (p. 4).

Ethics and Codes of the Professional

Current training for professional school psychologists should include the codes and principals of ethics as they are considered a hallmark of any profession (Chevalier & Lyon, 1993) and school psychology is no exception. Ethics codes that represent the standards for school psychologists include the American Psychological Association's (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct and the National

Association of School Psychologist's (NASP) Principles for Professional Ethics and Standards for the Provision of School Psychological Services. In addition, school psychologists incorporate the federal law regarding the educational setting, mandated through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Competence in and a commitment to ethical practice are fundamental in a school psychologist's practice. Ethical standards have been described as "the moral guidelines for self regulation that attempt to ensure appropriate use of skills and techniques" (Keith-Spiegel & Koocher, 1985, p. 78). In fact, the original APA codes were developed based on a survey of membership, and were to be a representation of the actual situations encountered by members based on the day-to-day decisions they faced. The 1977 revision included a summary of outcomes on decided ethical cases, with the purpose of having the code speak directly to the infractions (Canter et al., 1999). Subsequent complaints suggested that the codes included what professionals should not do, but did not provide sufficient guidance of what should be done. All revisions prior to 2002 have involved the use of an ethics committee who presents drafts to its members for comment. Currently on its tenth revision, the 2002 code draft was approved and put into practice beginning June 2003 following solicitation of comments from the public and APA divisions.

The current code consists of an Introduction, Preamble, five General Principles and the Ethical Standards. The Preamble and General Principles "are aspirational goals to guide psychologists toward the highest ideals of psychology " (APA Ethics Code, August 2002, p. 18). In effect, these principles attempt to provide a moral guideline that reflects certain traits adherent to the professional practice of a psychologist. The intent of these

principles is to reflect the five prima facie duties of beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy, fidelity and justice (Beauchamp & Childress, 1994; Ross, 1937).

The first set of principles adopted by NASP Principles for Professional Ethics, was based upon input from its committee members, university trainers, public and private practitioners, administrators, and students (NASP, 1984). The revision of 1992 was based on the same process, and in addition included comments from a random sample of school psychologists. These principles include provisions for public school and private practice. A central focus of these principles is on protecting the well being of the student, as well as the teachers, parents, and other recipients of school psychological services. Also a publication of NASP is the Standards for the Provision of School Psychological Services (Jacob-Timm, 1994). These standards represent the roles and duties of school psychologists, conditions for delivery of services, and the general nature of being a competent professional. For both members of APA and NASP there is an additional set of standards that provide guidelines for use in evaluating test and assessment procedures. These standards are outlined under the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. In addition to these codes and standards, school psychologists are required to follow federal law as described by IDEA. This statute mandates specific guidelines for assessment, identification of children for special education and delivery of services.

Previous reviews of the APA codes have suggested that they provide very few absolutes and are too flexible (Smith et al., 1991). In addition, reviewers have indicated that the codes should reflect more closely fundamental moral principles, outside of the aspirations of the General Principles. Indeed, the codes are broad in an attempt to provide for all professional disciplines in psychology. Still others argue about the level of

vagueness of the principles (Hughes, 1986) regardless of its ability to respond in general to all practicing psychologists. It appears that if the codes better reflected the General Principles it would incorporate more of the moral principals as well. It is clear that the codes do not provide specification to the degree that psychologists faced with any ethical dilemma could simply find an answer within the codes themselves. The presentation and context of the codes necessitates the need for a decision-making process that utilizes the codes and reflects moral principals. The many dimensions of an ethical dilemma could not be adequately identified, responded to and evaluated without an affective tool such as an ethical decision-making model.

Ethics Training in Education

The likelihood of being trained on an ethical decision-making model would take place within the context of coursework however prior to the 1980's many applied psychology graduate programs did not require formal coursework in ethics. During this time ethics was addressed within the context of the individual's practicum or internship experience and was unlikely to include a model for ethical decision-making. The range of ethical dilemmas that happened to arise during the student's supervision, and the unsystematic method by the supervisors, were both limitations and obstacles to this approach. Handelsman (1986) articulated his concern for this approach to training by identifying it as "ethics training by osmosis" (p. 371). Haas et al. (1988) surveyed psychotherapists regarding the ethics education and found only a moderate rating of the internship experience as a source for ethics education.

After the 1970's and upon APA and NASP's requirement of a more formal method of ethics education, variations of training in ethics and a developing criticism of the training process emerged. Different methods of training that developed included instruction in ethical problem solving, analysis of case incidents, and role-playing (Jacob-Timm, 1994). Among the different models and methods developed for ethics training, there has been a consensus on competencies that should be included. These include goals for a competent professional to have a sound working knowledge of the content of the ethical codes, standards and other relevant laws and having a proactive rather then reactive stance in ethical thinking and conduct (Jacob-Timm, 1994). Numerous studies suggested that the principles and codes did not offer the specific guidelines required for ethical decision-making (Brewer & Faitak, 1989; Sieber, 1988). They were criticized for being difficult in application, and lacking in clarity "in the face of quite serious ethical dilemmas" (Chevalier & Lyon, 1993, p. 335).

## The Decision-Making Models

In an attempt to provide guidelines that the codes alone could not offer, independent researchers created models or guidelines. A review of various medical and business journals reveals that the need for ethical decision-making models was relevant across fields. In The Principles of Biomedical Ethics (1994) Beauchamp and Childress outline principles related to making decisions within the medical profession. In fact, institutes of higher education are a vehicle for promotion of ethical decision-making, whether it is a PhD, JD, MD, CPA, etc. It appears that communities outside of

psychology are asking similar questions concerning ethical decision-making and adequate training of its students.

Within the accounting profession, the American Accounting Association developed an Ethics Casebook that outlines an ethical decision-making approach (1992). The approach contains seven steps: 1) identify the ethical issue(s), 2) determine the affected parties and identify rights, 3) determine the most important rights, 4) develop alternative courses of action, 5) determine the likely consequences of each proposed course of action, 6) assess the possible consequences, and 7) determine whether the rights framework would cause any course of action to be eliminated. In addition, Rittenberg and Schwieger (1994) propose a hierarchy of rights to assist the accounting professional in decision-making. This hierarchy outlines four orders of rights with the highest order being right to life, autonomy and human dignity. The second order rights are rights granted by the government. The third order rights are social rights, such as the right to higher education. And the last order of rights are rights relating to one's nonessential interests or one's tastes, such as the right to a certain hobby, or to dress a certain way.

Yuthas and Dillard (1999) argue against use of teleological and deontological ethical theories in ethical decision-making training for accounting professionals. They outline Giddens (1979) structuration theory as a model to understand the value structures and for ethical decision-making. (Gidden's theories were first developed within the field of sociology, but have recently been reviewed in the business literature.) The structuration approach focuses on structural antecedents and consequences of ethical dilemmas and decision-making. The authors utilized the structuration approach to develop a four step decision-making process: identify the agents, identify current

structures and structural conflicts, explore actions and interactions that created the current structures, and explore potential consequences of actions.

Agarwal and Malloy (2001) present a model for ethical decision-making in business that incorporates the process developed by the psychologist Rest, and discussed previously. This decision-making process is called rational decision-making and includes five stages: problem identification, creating alternatives, selection of the best decision based upon a cost-benefit ration and the implementation and evaluation of the decision. The authors also propose a pedagogical framework for an ethics curriculum in training students. The model includes seven modules and contains five moderators (Appendix A). The purpose of the modules is to move a student through a case analysis that includes not only how they "ought" to act, but exposes them to different "layers of moderators" that might influence the decision-making (Agarwal & Malloy, 2001, p. 257). The authors suggest that in each of the modules students participate in lectures, discussions and debates regarding various aspects of the model. In addition they recommend the use of case studies of ethical dilemmas, to be analyzed and resolved by students. The authors feel strongly that each class build upon and incorporate knowledge from the previous class or module.

Rest (1984), Kitchener (1984) and Hare (1981) developed models that incorporated moral thinking in ethical decision-making. In *The Philosophical Basis of Psychiatric Ethics* (1981) Hare discusses two levels of moral reasoning when dealing with an ethical dilemma: the intuitive and critical levels. Within the intuitive level, is encompassed the prima facie duties and principles. He argues that this should be the main focus with "everyday moral decisions" (p. 35). But in conflict or dilemma there is a need

for some other form of reasoning to guide thinking, and that is the critical (utilitarian) form of thinking.

Rest's work reflects developmental issues related to moral reasoning (Cottone & Claus, 2000). His model reflects the moral actions that are involved in the process and production of moral behavior. Rest does not suggest that the moral actions are to be followed in any particular order but rather, the "components comprise a logical analysis of what it takes to behave morally" (p. 27). One could easily see how with the development of these types of principled models, the line between ethics and morality can easily be grayed and questioned.

Kitchener's model was based on the work of Beauchamp and Childress (1994) and suggested ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice. These principles are outlined in *Principles of Biomedical Ethic*s (4th Edition, 1994), and reflect the prima facie duties discussed earlier. This book is often cited in literature that discusses ethical issues as it provides an in-depth look at the guiding principles of ethical decision-making. The text does not however provide a model for ethical decision-making or its process. So what is reflected in choosing these philosophies as a framework for a model are principles, not steps to decision-making. Kitchener, in turn suggested that professionals must consider fundamental ethical principles in the decision-making. The five principles for which she describes are: benefit others, do no harm, respect others autonomy, be just or fair and be faithful. Kitchener (1984) developed a hierarchy for decisions that is based on three levels: rules (codes, laws, etc), the five principles above, and then ethical theory.

Keith-Spiegel and Koocher (1985) presented an eight-step problem-solving model to assist professionals in making a well-informed, and well reasoned ethical choice in practice. It begins with the professional describing the parameters of the situation. Next, they identify the potential ethical and legal issues that may be involved. After that the professional should consult the ethical and legal guidelines that might apply to the identified issues. Once the issues and parameters are identified, the professional should evaluate the rights, responsibilities, and welfare of all parties effected within the situation. Next, generate a list of possible decisions for each identified issue, followed by enumerating the consequences of making each decision, then present any evidence that the various benefits or consequences for each decision will actually occur. Last, make the decision, consistent with the ethical codes of the profession. In addition to this ethical decision-making model, Keith-Spiegel and Koocher (1985) also developed a four-step plan for preparing for crisis decision-making. First, know the resources available within the setting. This would include other professionals trained in crisis situations within the area. Next, remain knowledgeable of the laws and policies within the area related to crisis situations. Then take advantage of opportunities to learn about crisis management. And last, recognize the boundaries of competence, and do not attempt to handle situations beyond the scope of training.

Tymchuk (1986) developed an approach that had seven steps and stressed that the goal of ethical decision-making should be one of justice. His ideas on decision-making are reflected in the Canadian Psychological Associations (CPA) model of problem solving. In fact, unlike the APA, the CPA includes a problem-solving model for its member professionals (CPA, 1991). This seven-step process begins with identification

of the ethically relevant issues and practices. Next the professional develops the alternative courses of action, and then makes an analysis of likely short-term, ongoing and long term risks and benefits of each course of action on the individual or group involved or likely to be affected. The professional would then choose the course of action after a conscientious application of existing principles, values and standards. Next take that action, with a commitment to assume responsibility for the consequences of the action, and evaluate the results of the course of action. And last, the professional assumes responsibility for consequences of action, including correction of negative consequences and re-engaging in the decision-making process if the ethical issue is not resolved (adopted from the CPA, 1991).

In an effort to provide a model that encompasses not only the prima facie duties and principles but also decision-making guidelines for professionals, Oehler-Stinnett and Beaman created a six step comprehensive model (Oehler-Stinnett & Beaman 2001). This model provides for a greater consideration of all parameters that occur within an ethical dilemma, including the roles and responsibilities of the psychologist, from self awareness to decision evaluation. Unlike other models, this model is multidimensional taking into account that most dilemmas are complex and involve multiple decisions, and that professionals need a guide that assists them in examining all parameters of an ethical situation.

The first step in this model is Ethics Preparation which includes: self-evaluation, examination of extent of ethics training and training needs, organizational and operational training, and consultation awareness (Oehler-Stinnett, 2003). This model begins with the premise that the professional needs to first be aware of their own skill level, as well as

biases and decision-making style. This step requires the professional to examine, develop and apply the General Principles and prima facie duties. The professional also evaluates the extent of their training in legal and ethical guidelines to determine if they have sufficient knowledge to recognize an ethical dilemma and utilize a decision-making model. Lastly this step includes understanding not only the regulations and standards of the profession but the rules and procedures of the operating agency in which the professional is working or consulting.

The second step, Ethics Awareness, involves identification of the situation as having an ethical problem. It takes the professional through a series of substeps to assist in identifying whether the situation arises to the level of being an ethical dilemma or violation, and steps to either resolve it if it does not, or continue if it does. At this step, the professional is challenged to recognize whether or not appropriate ethical rules are being broken and if not, does there need to be a policy or procedural change that is more inline with best practices?

Ethical Issues Definition in which all of the parameters of the situation are identified, is the third step. The parameters include the settings, the stakeholders and any other systemic or environmental influences. For each stakeholder in each setting, there is identification of client and stakeholders' rights, responsibilities and welfare (Keith-Spiegel & Koocher, 1985). In addition, the psychologist's professional role and function must be identified and clarified with each stakeholder and client. Out of this step should come an understanding of the potential legal-ethical issues relevant to each party (Keith-Spiegel & Koocher, 1985), a rights determination analysis and prioritized concerns.

The fourth step, Ethical Issues Analysis involves developing questions and hypotheses related to the prioritized concerns generated in the previous step. For each question, necessary data is gathered, analyzed and summarized in order to facilitate the decision-making process. The professional is challenged to understand the relationship between the questions or concerns, and to determine reasons why this conflict has evolved or not been previously resolved. The outcome of this step is a set of objectives that are related to each prioritized concern.

Examination of each Potential Solution to the concerns is the fifth step. The professional begins by examining not only potential decisions, but courses of action as well. They then apply a risk/benefit analysis to each situation, potential decision and action in order to predict possible outcomes and the likelihood that an action can be implemented with integrity. It is important that the professional make data-based predictions of each potential outcome for their decisions/actions (Keith-Spiegel & Koocher, 1985).

Lastly, is the Ethics Action and Evaluation. The professional develops a plan of action as well as evaluation of the action. The process does not end there as the outcomes are evaluated and modifications to the decision and action are made as needed. The professional may need to re-engage in the decision-making process dependent upon the outcomes. In addition, the current policies and procedures should be re-examined to determine if the experience has indicated a need for them to change.

Perspectives in Training

Another aspect of ethics training that has not been explored in ten years is that of the perspective of training directors. Tymchuk et al. (1982) surveyed programs in clinical psychology regarding the ethics training of the students. Fifty five percent of the clinical psychology programs surveyed required an actual ethics course for graduation of its students. A portion of other programs, 12%, reported formal instruction on ethics occurring as a unit within the context of another course. Of the remaining, 29% indicated that ethics training was informal, occurring when the topic emerged in a class discussion, or at the discretion of the instructor. Tymchuk et al. also asked the training directors whether they believed ethics should be taught in graduate school, and 98% answered positively with 71% supporting a separate required course on ethics. A survey done in 1990 would support the notion that the approach to ethics education has evolved.

It would appear that ethics education has grown to be an important component in the graduate curriculum and is no longer being taught through "osmosis" (Handleman, 1986, p. 371). However, this does not necessarily indicate the quality or effectiveness of the instruction being offered to graduate students. At this time there exist numerous texts addressing ethics for an individual profession that could be utilized as a training text. However, so far as a curriculum, very few programs or supervisors have offered evidence of what an ethics education contains. In 1992, Welfel surveyed a random sample of 185 APA-approved predoctoral internship sites to quarry the training directors about the ethics instruction. Most internship directors had degrees in clinical psychology (76%) or counseling psychology (23%). The majority of internship sites were from general medical centers (22%), university counseling services (19%), VA hospitals (18%) and psychiatric

hospitals (18%). Training directors were asked to rate the intern's preparation in professional ethics using a 5-point Likert scale, across different ethic abilities. The mean score in each ability was consistently between satisfactory and good. Training directors were then asked to evaluate the competence of interns in handling 16 specific ethical issues, with a 5-point Likert scale. Directors rated interns competency in handling confidentiality highest, followed by testing and ethics research. The lowest ratings were in issues dealing with a client with HIV, fee setting arrangements and involuntary commitment. Directors then rated the level of satisfaction with the ethics training of interns. The mean level of satisfaction was 3.66, a moderately high approval on the 5-point scale. Last directors were asked to list the occurrences of unethical practice among individual interns. The mean number of incidents was 1.2, with a range from 0 to 7 and a mode of 0. The most common types of incidents listed were violations of confidentiality, limits of competence and dual relationships. At the end of the survey, training directors gave recommendations for the future of ethics training in graduate school. The most frequent recommendation was for programs to focus more on the clinical application of the APA Ethical Principles and to use case studies when discussing ethics.

Ethical Behavior

Contrary to the intentions of these models and graduate training directed at ethics, current research suggests that there continues to be much variability in the ethical decision-making practices of psychologists. Some studies suggest that this variability exists not only in the decisions made by psychologists when faced with an ethical dilemma, but also in the reasons given for the decision (Chevalier & Lyon, 1993; Haas et

al., 1988). Examples of the problematic behavior of psychologists' ethical decision-making are identified in research that includes incidents identified by the professional. In addition, research demonstrates the actual unethical and inconsistent behavior among professionals. A 1992 random sample survey of 1,319 members of APA asked for descriptions of ethically troubling incidents (Pope & Vetter, 1992). Responses from 679 members, a 51% return rate, identified 703 incidents, and divided into 23 categories. The most often reported area of ethical conflict centered on issues of confidentiality. Items referring to dilemmas specifically within the practice of school psychology reflected the struggle to act within the best interest of students despite pressure from administrators. In addition, conflictual relationships, training or supervision concerns, research, and conduct by colleagues were some of the delineated categories.

Jacob-Timm (1999) addressed the question of what types of ethical dilemmas school psychologists encounter using the same critical incident technique. NASP provided a random sample of members, and a structured questionnaire asked respondents to describe an ethically challenging incident that occurred in the past two years. There was a 22% return rate, with 159 respondents having useable data. Jacob-Timm notes that this is a low return rate in comparison to similar past studies, (e.g. Pope & Vetter, 1992) but that it is not unusual to expect a lower return rate when respondents are asked to report on the ethical incidents. In fact the respondents did identify 222 ethical incidents. The types of situations were divided into 19 categories: assessment, confidentiality, conflictual relationships, research and publishing, parent conflicts, supervision, administrative pressure to act unethically, unsound educational practices, job competence, job performance, school records, informed consent and self determination,

interventions, academic settings, sexual issues, payment, taking credit for others work, confronting, credentials and miscellaneous. The author suggests that the incidents described concerned difficult situations, not necessarily clear-cut ethics violations as would be outlined by professional codes. She goes on to suggest that because of this, professionals would benefit not just from knowing the content of the codes, but developing ethical problem solving skills as well. Jacob-Timm further makes a specific recommendation regarding the need for a "planned, multi-level approach to teaching ethics" (p. 214).

These surveys present information that clearly indicates that ethical dilemmas exist. The authors of those studies recommend a different approach to training in ethics and call for further research to assist with a better understanding of training needs. Hermann (2002) addressed this need through a survey of school counselors by asking about legal and ethical issues which had been encountered. Variables included years of experience, amount of coursework completed in ethics or legal issues, and the number of hours completed in continuing education on ethics or legal issues. Almost one half of the participants indicated that they had not participated in continuing education in legal and ethical issues. School counselors who had participated in continuing education on ethics or legal issues felt better prepared on three of the five issues presented. Years of experience and level of education were not significantly related to the respondents perceived level of preparedness to respond. The authors conclude that school counselors are legally vulnerable, and considering that school psychologists face similar legal and ethical situations, this conclusion could be drawn for school psychologists as well. The authors state that in order to minimize the risk of litigation there must be education on

how to respond to ethical and legal issues. This mirrors Jacob-Timm's (1999) conclusions that greater ethical decision-making does not just involve learning more in regards to the codes and laws, but having a model that guides the process on how best to respond to an ethical or legal situation.

There is limited research examining the ethical decision-making process of school psychologists. Surveys addressing ethical decision-making made by school psychologists have not been replicated and published since 1993, and no research specifically addressing use of the codes for ethical decision-making had been conducted prior to then (Chevalier & Lyon, 1993). However, the literature that does exist within the area of school psychology ethical decision-making, and a variety of other psychology professions, has been consistent in concluding that there is a lack of consistency among the respondents (Chevalier & Lyon, 1993; Haas et al., 1988; Schatzberg, 1998). Chevalier and Lyon (1993) surveyed practicing school psychologists to investigate the resolutions to ethical dilemmas. Utilizing the NASP membership directory, they randomly selected 250 members for which they mailed questionnaires. Of the returned questionnaires, 76 (31% response rate) were useable for data collection. The majority of the respondents were women (64.5) and between the ages of 36-50 (61.8%). Demographic data provided indicates a stratified sample was obtained. In regards to ethics training 64.5% of respondents reported that they received less then 20 hours of formal training in ethics. The authors note that "very few" of the respondents reported having a course that was devoted exclusively to ethics within the school psychology training programs (p. 329). The authors state that the respondents' information on ethics must have been "gleaned from discussions with colleagues, occasional presentations in

graduate classes, and independent reading of the ethics literature" (p. 329). Each respondent completed a questionnaire made up of three sections. The first section consisted of 7 vignettes each describing an ethical dilemma. Respondents were asked to choose among a list of potential decisions, concerning the dilemma or provide a personal choice not listed. Respondents were next asked to select from 6 possible reasons what the primary reason was for choosing the decisions. The reasons included upholding the law, upholding the ethics code, protecting society's interests, protecting clients rights, upholding personal standard and other. Last, respondents were asked to rate each vignette on the perceived level of seriousness of the problem, the frequency with which they had encountered a similar problem, and the confidence in the decision for which they had chosen. All responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale.

Using the seven different vignettes with a forced choice for resolutions or actions, only one vignette met the 75% agreement criterion. The agreement rates within each vignette ranged from 75.0 –28.9%. Analyses of other variables such as years of experience and hours of ethics training did not account for significant variance in reported chosen course of action. In addition, the study examined the reasons chosen by the professionals to support the decisions they made. Again the authors report considerable variability among respondents. Chevalier and Lyon's study also identified an additional concern in school psychologist's ethical behavior, that of choosing to respond in a manner that is deemed unethical. On two of the vignettes presented, 3.9% of the respondents chose actions that were in direct contradiction to ethical guidelines. The authors also discussed a second issue of a "sizable percentage" of respondents who indicated that they would not take an action, in several of the described vignettes

(Chevalier & Lyon, 1993). The authors indicate that each of the vignettes presented included a problem that required a response, and go on further to say that "to do nothing is tantamount to engaging in unprofessional practices at best, and encouraging unethical behavior at worst" (p. 333).

An important finding of this study is that the majority of respondents indicated inconsistent training or a total lack of ethics training within training programs. The authors suggest that the variability of responses may be indicative of a struggle by professionals to make decisions based on unclear guidelines. However, the authors do not believe that attempts to make ethics codes more specific would provide professionals with the assistance needed to solve ethical dilemmas. Rather, it is indicated that graduate training programs need to adjust the curriculum to include a more systematic method of ethics training, such as would be found in a model for ethical decision-making. This study did not include any information regarding whether the respondents had knowledge of the ethics codes or an ethical decision-making model. It also did not seek to further understand the process with which respondents made the ethical decisions. The authors do suggest that more research is needed regarding the decisions school psychologist make when faced with ethical dilemmas. Specifically questions of adequacy of training in identification of ethical situations and the utility of ethics codes within the ethical decision-making process.

Schatzberg (1998) conducted a conceptual replication of Chevalier and Lyon's study with 53 school psychologists in Florida. Results from this study also indicated that there was no consistency among subject's responses when faced with decision alternatives, as well as among subjects' responses when faced with decision alternatives

and no consistency among subjects' reported reasoning for the decision alternative. The variables of years of experience and hours of ethics training where considered to account for significant variability on 3 out of the 7 vignettes. Generalizability of this study is limited due to its small sample size and unstratified sample.

Another study of school psychologist's decision-making sought to not only identify ethical conflicts encountered, but to identify how decisions were made in resolving these situations (Humphreys, 2000). Semistructured interviews were completed with a sample of 36 Ohio school psychologists. Analysis was done through interview transcripts and independent raters using the Tymchuk Rating Scale to evaluate participants' decision-making ability. The most frequently reported issue involved balancing the interest of multiple parties who were invested in the outcomes of the decisions being made. Influences that played a role in decision-making included factors inherent to the individual school psychologist such as belief systems or approach to decision-making, and aspects unique to each situation such as perceived threats to professional relationships or the ability to continue to do ones' job effectively in the future. Variables such as differences in amount and type of training and problem solving style were not consistently identified as factors that promoted decision-making ability when confronted with ethical dilemmas. This study did not examine the critical variables of years of experience, training that included codes and/or a model and level of education. Again, limitations of this study include the unstratified sample.

In an earlier study Haas et al. (1988) addressed ethical decision-making with psychologists who were members of the Division of Psychotherapy of the APA. Subjects answered questions regarding vignettes that posed professional dilemmas with years of

experience and amount of ethics training examined as possible significant variables. Three out of the ten vignette responses were found to be significantly related to years of experience. Additional findings suggest that the amount of formal ethics training did not have an effect on choice of actions or reasons given. The authors do caution readers against interpreting this finding however. They reveal a possible floor effect due to the low mean number of hours in ethics training. In fact, the mean was less than one hour per year (SD = 32.42). Due to the median age of respondents in this study was 45.7 and the mean years of experience was 15.17, it is important to consider that formalized ethics training may not have been a requirement at the time some respondents were in graduate training. In relation to these findings, the authors recommend assessment of a sample of professionals that have been more recently trained in ethics. Similar to most of the surveys of ethical decision-making of psychologists, this study did not examine any components of the ethics training of respondents, such as if an ethical decision-making model was included. In as much as previous authors of surveys have recommended that improvement in ethical decision-making may emerge from a change in ethics training, it is disappointing that the majority of the research does not include this important variable.

Summary

Studies of school psychologists' ethical decision-making indicate that there is variability in decision-making, and that psychologists are not consistent in how they view ethical situations or problem solve the dilemma. In addition, professionals do at times act unethically. It is not surprising that there is a preponderance of evidence to suggest that the training in ethical decision-making is also extremely varied and inconsistent. Overall

there appears to be a lack of training specifically regarding ethical decision-making. Although ethics is a requirement of graduate courses, the approach to training may only include a brief review of the codes and that is not sufficient for ethical decision-making. A model that is the framework for the process of ethical decision-making, which allows for accurate identification of the ethical dilemma and all of the facets involved that guide the professional through the problem solving of the dilemma and provide for evaluation of the outcomes, is the necessity of ethics training.

The need for a different way of problem solving ethical dilemmas is not new, but as of yet the training for ethical problem solving in school psychology has yet to be implemented. Perhaps there is not enough information about the training and the current state of ethics knowledge and decision-making effort, to implement training at this point. Although a decision-making model has been the recommendation for how to improve the ethical decision-making practice, the current literature is very unclear as to the role that a model has played in training practices. Although hypothesized, it cannot be concluded as of yet whether or not models of decision-making are already used in the decision-making process of school psychologists, as that variable has rarely been examined. Are school psychologists being trained on an ethical decision-making model? One important further consideration is whether professionals even view the model as a useful tool. It would appear that school psychologists are indicating that there are struggles with ethical dilemmas in daily practice. However, is an ethical decision-making model considered a useful tool in such a dilemma?

Level of education has been a variable frequently included in research on professional activities of psychologists. It has specifically been examined with

preparedness to respond to ethical situations but has had limited implications as a result. When addressing training needs, level of education is often mentioned with years of experience as variables that help to define the amount and extent of training in ethics. In addition, ethics training has been evolutionary, so it could be considered that the level of training for participants would have evolved as well. What that evolution means for professionals, with varying years of experience as a whole, is that the level of education on ethics may vary as well. In effect, a professional with ethics training from twenty years ago may have received a vastly different training experience than is currently in place today. It should also be considered that professionals who were trained twenty years ago might recognize limits to the training based on the time period and may be more likely now to pursue additional training in this area. Would the various levels of education and years of experience be in important variable in determining which professionals are most likely to participate in ethical decision-making training?

The time period in which a professional was trained is not the only determinant in the level or quality of ethics training that could have been received. The type of training varies even within the same training period, indicating that there are further variables to consider. By definition the codes are not meant to be a stand-alone method of making ethical decisions, however they are central to the process. Due to the limited research regarding the implementation of codes, many questions exist as to the status and role of codes as understood by professionals. Some questions that evolve include, are school psychologists adequately trained on ethics codes to the degree that they could integrate them into a decision-making model? Does the amount of knowledge regarding the ethics codes influence the likelihood that a school psychologist would participate in additional

ethics training? For example, if a school psychologist has not been trained on APA or NASP ethics codes, would receiving training in ethical decision-making be a desirable or unlikely event? Specific to the varying degree in which professionals have been trained, would those professionals who have received training on both APA and NASP codes be more or less likely than someone who has not, to participate in ethical decision-making training?

Once each of these variables has been examined, there is still a question about the training itself. In considering the future training needs of school psychologists in ethical decision-making, it would seem apparent that this would most likely take place in the form of a workshop or continuing education program. It would seem a lofty goal to anticipate that ethics curriculums would evolve prior to an emergence of change within ethical decision-making in general. Therefore this study focuses on training that occurs within the workshop format. As workshops can be presented in many forms, three types of workshops are chosen for focus. Full day and half day are identified as the more common method of workshop training and included for that reason. In addition, current practices include the use of the internet and online training is a newer form of service delivery. Therefore full day, half day and online training are identified as target methods of determining the likelihood of participating in additional training in ethical decision-making.

Future Training

In her article "*School Psychology in the New Millennium: Legal Influences and Ethical Issues*" Jacob-Timm (2000) presents her ideas about federal education policy

and how it will impact the profession of school psychology. She bases her article on the belief that "law will continue to shape the practices of school psychologists in the years ahead" (p. 39). She predicts many advances in not only education policy, but science and technology as well. For example, she explains that computer-assisted technology will have grown to include not only recording of classroom behaviors of pupil and teachers but for scoring and interpretation of most assessment instruments, and the creation of "automated diagnostic systems" (p. 44). The settings and make-up of the school itself will also evolve, with school-based wellness clinics and all districts containing alternative educational settings for students. School psychologists in these new environments will be charged with new ethical and legal dilemmas in areas that include student and family privacy, informed consent, confidentiality and record keeping. Students who require intensive behavioral interventions will have the opportunity to receive the education within an alternative education program for which the school psychologists will be an integral part. For example, they will ensure that "applied-behavioral-analysis techniques are used in ways that safeguard the rights and well being of children and youth" (p. 45). School psychologists will be involved in selecting the behavior goals, and the behavior-change procedures in an ethically acceptable manner that is consistent with the ethical principles and standards of the profession. Psychologists will also ensure that there is close and effective monitoring of the treatment plans, and that they are modified when the data indicates a need for a change.

Within each area of school psychologists' practice, there exist specific ethical and legal challenges. For example, within the area of assessment, and the continued growth of computer technology, professionals will face the question of extending the practice

beyond the boundaries of the competence. Knauss (2001) outlines other areas where legal and ethical issues can arise within assessment. These include parent involvement and consent, non-discriminatory assessment, and use of projective instruments. These are areas for which there may not always be an ethical code that presents an easy solution for a complex situation and requires a decision-making plan by the professional.

O'Neill (1998) suggests that there are two ways to teach ethics, the overriding principle approach, and then moral dilemma approach. The overriding principle approach assumes that knowing and applying the principles can resolve any dilemma. In fact, this approach posits that there are no real dilemmas, just a lack of knowledge of the right principles that need to be applied to the situation. The moral dilemma approach argues that there are competing principles and that the decision to choose one principle over another is an unsatisfying resolution. The "task is to find the best fit between competing principles and the interests of different parties. Attention is focused on the context, in the belief that a context can always create a situation in which following any particular rule is, in some sense, the wrong thing to do" (O'Neill, 1998, p. 199).

## Web-based Research

It is estimated that more then 30 million people are connected to the World Wide Web (WWW) (Michalak & Szabo, 1998). The American Psychological Society (APS) lists more then 80 links on the WWW to online psychology experiments (Azar, 2000). With the very connections that make the WWW "the web" it is a strong draw to those in the behavioral sciences conducting research. There are many advantages to conducting research via the web, including increased participant size, time and cost efficiencies and

facilitated data collection and manipulation. The web also poses disadvantages and ethical and legal obligations to its users. In an attempt to understand these obligations much has been written concerning the disadvantages and how to remediate them, and the need for established guidelines for conducting research on the web (Azar, 2000; Miller, 2002; Schmidt, 1997.)

Along with the ability to obtain larger sample sizes, the web also helps with saving money, a major advantage to researchers. The estimated costs to develop, publish and maintain a web-based form of data collection is significantly lower (Schmidt, 1997). Not only are there savings for not using laboratory space, but omission of print materials, and extensive labor costs reduce overall spending as well (Azar, 2000). The web also provides opportunity for increased accessibility. Some have argued that web-based research does not allow for a random sample (Azar, 2000). However, university research is often compiled exclusively of college students which does not provide for a random sample generalizable to the public at large. A diversity of subjects can be obtained via web-based research, and at the very least it often does not offer a sample less diverse then the lab. John Krantz, who maintains the American Psychological Society Web experiments list, has conducted research regarding validity of research on the web versus the lab (Azar, 2000). He reviewed all the studies to date that compared results from web-based and laboratory-based samples and found that the data match up, and that there is little difference between results from a lab and those obtained online. Miller et al., (2002) did a comparison study between web-based assessment techniques and traditional paper-based methods. They found no significant differences between assessment techniques, and significantly high test-retest reliability coefficients that support the use of web-based

measures for research and clinical applications (Miller et al, 2002). They also report that most participants (80%) found the web-based survey very convenient to use, and only 8% reported a preference to using a paper-based survey. The authors conclude that doing web-based data collection does not "statistically enhance or diminish the consistency of responses" and that "web-based assessment measures offers advantages to both researchers and study participants without compromising the reliability of the results drawn from the data" (p. 60).

Some of the concerns over web-based research have also included lack of control over the study environment and knowing for certain from whom you are collecting data and whether valid consent had been given. The risk of subjects submitting more then one set of data is "probably smaller then most fear" according to data collected to monitor responses (Azar, 2000). Further arguments for web-based research state that the concerns are not unique to the web and that just as policies and procedures mandated the ethical and legal collection of data in a lab, so will be done for the web. As Juli Espinoza, coordinator of the nonmedical Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Stanford University states "it's not so much that there are new issues, but we have to address old issues in a different way" (Azar, 2000, p. 50). Currently some organizations have begun to speak to how to readdress the issues. The APA's Board of Scientific Affairs has web research as a major topic of debate. The American Association for the Advancement of Science released the "Ethical and legal aspects of human subjects research on the internet" (APA Monitor, 2000). In addition, the national Institutes of Health's Office for Protection from Research Risks prepared guidelines for IRB's to utilize when reviewing studies for conducting research on the web.

In an attempt to provide a comprehensive set of guidelines, Michalak and Szabo (1998) compiled those recommendations outlined by APA, the general research guidelines, and those general guidelines for acceptable behavior on the internet. The authors have created a very comprehensive set of guidelines that keeps with the philosophy of the internet that "cyberspace is a public domain, where privacy or confidentiality cannot yet be guaranteed" (p. 73). The authors preface the guidelines by reminding researchers, "as with all research conducted with human participants, research performed via the internet requires respect for the privacy, dignity, and integrity of those involved" (p. 73). The authors provide points of action, that include researchers identifying themselves, the affiliation and providing a means of contact for participants to verify the legitimacy of the study. Potential participants should be assured of the confidential treatment of personal information. Participant's consent for participation should be obtained, as with all research studies, but it is more complex on the web. Some recommendations include stating what signifies to the participant consent to participate has been given. For example, a researcher can notify the participant that upon completion of the survey and clicking on "send", is in effect giving consent to participate. This can be stated in the directions of the survey as well as a statement that appears prior to clicking "send". Another guideline states that information regarding the purpose of the study, criteria for participation, research procedures, potential risks, use of data and method of responses should be fully and clearly presented. If there are incentives that may encourage subject participation, these should be introduced. For example, if the finding will be disseminated to papers or a newsgroup this should be reported. An additional guideline protects the respondents from becoming involved in a lengthy

questionnaire or test. The authors state that this should be "reasonable" and if it were lengthy (10-30 minutes) it would be more acceptable to administer it via a specific web page. This the authors state not only increases privacy and confidentiality but also is better suited for researchers who are attempting to identify a specific group who make a conscious decision to visit the web site. In reference to list servers or newsgroups, the authors state that researchers should not bombard the groups with frequent repeated postings. And in using one of these groups, it is advisable to contact the moderator or owner of the group, prior to posting.

## Statement of the Problem

Within the specific area of ethical decision-making by school psychologists, there exists a limited amount of research, as surveys addressing ethical decisions made by school psychologists have not been replicated and published for ten years. The current literature does however include findings that demonstrate the inconsistencies in ethical decision-making by school psychologists, as well as examples of the unethical actions in the face of a dilemma. As a result, there exist strong recommendations for a change in how school psychologists are trained in ethical decision-making. Unfortunately this training has not evolved and there is a need for a greater understanding of the training needs in order for change to take place.

It is difficult to determine the needs in training of school psychologist's ethical decision-making, when there is such limited research on the actual ethics training of professionals and the relevant variables that may influence participation in ethical decision-making training. At the heart of this need is a better understanding of the current

knowledge of ethics codes and decision-making models and the impact on future training. In addition, the variables of years of experience and level of education are identified as determinants in other aspects of professional practice but remain unclear as to the impact on future ethical decision-making training. Overall there is a need to determine the characteristics of those professionals most likely to participate in future ethical decision-making training, in order to make best practices recommendations for future training in ethical decision-making.

## Purpose of the Study

A goal of this study was to examine variables that were related to the likelihood of participation in certain methods of ethical decision-making training. On a descriptive basis, this study will seek to further the understanding of ethical decision-making by school psychologists, and to aid in conceptualizing those variables that influence the process. Specifically, identified factors related to decision-making may assist in explaining the differences that exist among school psychologists and their decision-making skills. This study will also provide information about differences in responses to ethical situations. It will attempt to determine if factors such as level of education and being trained on APA and NASP ethical codes influence the types of decisions and actions that professionals make.

## Significance of the Study

The results from this study will prove useful to the professional practice of school psychologists in several ways. First, the data will provide a useful contribution to the

narrow body of knowledge that exists regarding ethical decision-making by school psychologists. In addition, it will offer some explanation and interpretation as to what factors influence the decision to participate in training on ethical decision-making. This study will provide more information regarding the current degree of training within the broad concept of ethics and assist with identifying crucial deficits. In addition, this study will provide decisive information regarding how the future of ethical decision-making training should look, and what professionals are most likely to participate in training. The study will provide greater guidance in implementing a specific method of ethical decision-making training and allowing for the recommendation of more training, but in a different manner, to take place.

Substantive Questions:

The following Substantive Questions have been chosen for examination in this study.

1. What is the frequency for each level of education, each level of years of experience, and levels of preservice training on a model and code levels? What is the frequency and/or mean rating for overall interest in participating in additional training, and likelihood of participation in each method of ethical decision-making training?
2. Is there a difference between groups defined by years of experience and level of education (independent variables IV) and levels of willingness to participate in training and types of training most likely to be received (dependent variables DV)?

3. Is there a difference between groups defined by knowledge of ethics codes and training on a model (IV) and willingness to participate in training and types of training most likely to be received (DV)?
4. Is there a relationship between past number of workshop hours obtained and belief that a model will help to advocate in a system (IV) and willingness to participate in future ethical decision-making training methods (DV)?
5. What percentage of participants utilized the six ethical decision-making steps in responding to the questions regarding the ethical vignette?

Null Hypotheses

1. Years of experience and level of education does not account for variance in willingness to participate in various methods of training.
2. Knowledge of codes and training on a model does not account for variance in willingness to participate in various methods of training.
3. There is no difference between the level of education and belief that a model will help to advocate groups on likelihood of participation in ethical decision-making training.

Assumptions Underlying the Study

Based on the design of this study, the following assumptions were made: absence of mulicollinearity, singularity among variables, linear relationships among dependent variables, multivariate normal distribution, and homogeneity of variance. The best

method for controlling for error was to apply the correct research design for the types of variables and substantive questions of the study. Every attempt to apply this method has been made in this study. In addition, the use of theory assists to control for error with correlated independent variables and provides for a randomized study. This study also assumes a sample size that supplies 12 or greater subjects per cell, and accounts for homogeneity of variance assumptions.

Definition of Terms

1. Ethics – For the purpose of this study, unless otherwise stated, the term *ethics* was used to describe the laws and codes that provide direction for ethical conduct by the profession. It did not include morality or virtue ethics.

2. Ethical decision-making – This term indicates the factors involved and process by which a professional makes decisions concerning a situation that contains an ethical factor.

3. Ethical decision-making model - A model that contains steps that are designed to assist professionals in the problem solving process of an ethical dilemma.

4. Years of experience – In the survey participants were asked to indicate the professional years of experience as a school psychologist. Six value brackets of 5 years or less to 26 + years were given.

5. Amount of training – this portion of the survey examined the respondents' ethics training within their college coursework, as well as the training in workshops outside of college. It allowed for individual accounts as well as totals across the areas of training.

6. Knowledge of codes – the survey specifically asked respondents to identify the codes that were covered across all of their training.

7. Ethical decision-making model training – Respondents were asked to indicate first whether they were instructed on a model. If they indicate positively, then they were asked to then describe the model they were trained on.

8. Willingness to participate in training – Respondents were first asked a general question regarding the interest to participate in additional training on ethical decision-making. Then, regardless of the answer they were asked to rank on a 4 pt Likert type scale the likelihood that they would participate in three types of training: half day service training, online course for training, full day service training.

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were practicing school psychologists, school psychology trainers, and school psychology graduate students. Respondents were contacted through the NASP database for members with email addresses. As this study was posted on a listserv, a wide demographic region was covered and a representative sample of professionals was obtained. The school psychologists varied in several areas, such as socio-economic status and background, current work setting, and level of training. No exclusionary criteria were set, other than for participants who did not complete the

survey, or did not indicate an understanding of the rights of participation and did not give consent to participate in the survey.

## Instrumentation

All participants received the following: solicitation letter, consent for participation, and the survey which consisted of demographic questions and a vignette, followed by questions. The survey was developed and posted on the internet through the Microsoft software, FrontPage. FrontPage software facilitated the creation and management of the website which contained the survey and vignette. The Microsoft Excel program was utilized as the manager of the data. A data file created in Microsoft Excel interfaced with the survey so that respondent's information or data would automatically load directly into an Excel file.

## Solicitation Letter

The solicitation letter (Appendix B) was posted on the NASP membership listserv. The letter introduced the researchers and stated the purpose and content of the survey. It asked participants who were school psychologists and interested in completing the survey to link to the survey from the letter of solicitation.

## Consent Form

The first item that appeared on the survey was the consent form (Appendix C). This consent form detailed the purpose and content of the survey, and informed the participant that participation was voluntary. The consent form also explained the efforts

made to maintain confidentiality, and included contact information for the researchers as well as the Institutional Review Board.

Survey

The survey was developed to contain general demographic information that would provide characteristics of the participants. In addition it examined those variables identified in previous surveys as important in understanding ethical decision-making (Chevalier & Lyon, 1993; Haas et al., 1988; Jacob-Timm, 1999). The survey consisted of 31 items, both of open and forced choice formats (Appendix D). The first twelve questions contained the demographic questions regarding age, degree, and current professional practice. Following this section were questions regarding ethics training. The first set of questions examined the amount of ethics training that the participant had received by asking specific questions regarding the number of hours spent in formal coursework and outside training workshops. An attempt was made to obtain both individualized and cumulative hours within ethics training. Next the participant was asked about the content of their ethics training, specifically what codes and models were covered. This question was left open to the participant, rather than being a forced choice, in order to obtain authentic answers. There was a concern that if choices of codes and models were listed, the participant may choose those that look familiar rather than having to recall what specifically was covered in their training. There were four questions regarding the likelihood of participation in future training, and what types of training might be chosen. Specifically full day and half day were chosen as the two most common options for additional professional trainings. Due to the increased utilization of computers

within professional practice, online training was offered as the third method by which to receive additional training in ethics.

Vignette

The last set of questions was preceded by a vignette that contained an ethical dilemma (Appendix E). The three identified ethical situations were: an expectation to test a student in a situation in which assessment would not be appropriate for numerous reasons, the student had obvious mental health concerns that were not being acknowledged, and there were specific cultural aspects to the case that would need to be integrated into any decision-making process. Participants were asked to respond to the vignette with regards to concerns, actions and potential decisions. Last was a question regarding services available to employ the actions recommended, and if there were constraints present that would prevent taking the preferred course. The questions regarding the vignette were included to examine the participants' steps in making ethical decisions. The initial question regarding concerns would examine whether or not the participant identified the ethical issues within the vignette. The actions and decisions examined how the participant addressed any identified dilemma. Did they follow certain steps as would be seen in an ethical decision-making model? Did their actions include those found in ethical decision-making models?

Procedure

The participants for this study were 100 school psychologists solicited from the NASP membership listserv. This listserv was comprised of 1,283 members of NASP who

have also requested to be part of the listserv. Both specialist level school psychologists and doctoral level school psychologists were members of NASP and the listserv. A letter requesting participation in the web-based survey was posted on the listserv, which was available 24 hours a day during the length of this research. The posted introductory letter stated that the purpose of the study was to examine ethical decision-making among school psychologists, specifically requested participation, and provided a link to view the study. Linking to the survey in no way required completion of the survey, and participants could leave the survey or solicitation letter at any time, and maintain confidentiality. If the participant decided to participate in the survey, the next step was to click on the link, which went directly to the web-based survey. The participant was then asked to indicate whether or not they wished to complete the survey by clicking either "I Agree" or "Sorry". A statement appeared before these items that restated the participants' rights in indicating "I Agree". If the participant indicated a wish to complete the survey by clicking "I Agree", then the next page was the survey. If there was a click on "Sorry" participants were taken to a page that simply stated, "Thank you for your time". The confidentiality of the survey and method of being online made it impossible to determine if a participant participated in the study more than one time.

The demographic survey contained both forced choice and open questions. In some instances the participant was given the option of "other" in the forced choice options, such as when asked to indicate their primary role as a school psychologist. If they selected "other", they were then given an opportunity on the next question to describe the role. This opportunity was given each time an "other" option occurred. For those who did not indicate "other", the question could be skipped.

Items following the vignette all included open-ended questions, and participants were asked to list and describe their responses. In some instances, the participant was asked to enumerate the answer by rank ordering the actions and decisions. After completion of the vignette questions, participants read a box that advised them to click "submit form" to ensure the answers were received. It also gave the option to "reset form" if there was a wish to modify the answers. Once responses were submitted, participants were taken to a page that simply thanked them for participating.

## Data Analysis

The data for the hypotheses of this study were analyzed utilizing multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The dependent variables (DV) identified for this study were likelihood of participation in three presented methods of training: online, full day and half-day. A MANOVA was chosen due to the fact that the dependent variables were conceptually related. In essence it addressed whether the subjects were willing to participate in any future ethical decision-making training. It was hypothesized that subjects would be willing to participate in future ethical decision-making training, and an attempt to isolate differences in the DV group would be beneficial in making future recommendations about preference in method of training. Hotelling's T was examined to determine statistical significance.

# CHAPTER III

# RESULTS

## Research Questions

1. What is the frequency for each level of education, years of experience, training on a model and code training? What is the frequency and/or mean rating for overall interest in participating in additional training, and likelihood of participation in each method of ethical decision-making training?

As a variable, level of education was examined across three levels, bachelor and/or masters only (0), masters + and/or specialist (2), or doctorate (3), with respondents indicating one level of education that best describes their educational experience. The variable years of experience was examined across four levels: 0-5, 6-15, 16-25 and 26+, with each respondent choosing one level. The examination of whether respondents received training on a model occurs across two levels, with respondents indicating either "yes" (1) or "no" (2). Code training was examined through an open ended question of what codes were covered in the respondents' ethics training. Depending upon the response, one of the following was indicated to categorize the response: no codes listed (0), only NASP listed (1), both NASP and APA listed (2).

Frequencies and means, where appropriate, were generated for each variable and displayed in Table 1. Survey results were received from 100 NASP members. The majority (65%) reported having earned either a Masters + or Specialist (Ed.S.) level degree, followed by Doctorate (29%) and Bachelors or Masters only (5%). The most frequently reported group for years of experience was five or less (39%), followed by 6-15 (29%), and 16-25 (28%). The smallest group (4%) reported 26 and more years of experience.

Eighty percent of respondents reported having not been trained on an ethical decision-making model. Half of respondents reported being exposed to both NASP and APA codes during their training. A smaller, but nonetheless significant amount (36%) was unable to report any codes being covered in their training. The variable of overall interest in participating in additional training on ethical decision-making was examined through a direct response question indicated with a "yes" (1) or "no" (0) (Table 1).

Table 1

*Frequencies for Levels of Education, Years of Experience, Code and Model Training and Overall Interest*

| Variable | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Years of Experience | |
| 5> | 39 |
| 6-15 | 29 |
| 16-25 | 28 |
| 26+ | 4 |
| Level of Education | |
| Bachelor/Masters | 5 |
| Masters+/Specialist | 65 |
| Doctorate | 29 |
| Codes | |
| None | 36 |
| NASP | 14 |
| NASP/APA | 50 |
| Model | |
| No | 80 |
| Yes | 20 |
| Overall Interest | |
| No | 29 |
| Yes | 71 |

Note: Frequencies are presented as percentages that do not always total to 100 due to rounding.

The variable, likelihood of participating in a method of additional training, was examined through three separate questions, one for each method. Respondents were able to answer for each method, full day, half-day or online, the likelihood of participation. The measure was based on a four point Likert scale with a range of 0-3: (0) "not likely",

(1) "possibility", (2) "probably" (3) "definitely". Frequencies and/or means were calculated for the variables of overall interest in training and then for each method of training. Results are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Seventy-one percent of respondents indicated that they were interested in participating in additional training on ethical decision-making. A greater degree of willingness for half day training was indicated, with 52% (see Table 2) rating the likelihood of participation from "probably" to "definitely". Online and full day training rated with 67% and 75%, respectively, reporting within the range of "not likely" to a "possibility".

Table 2

*Frequencies of Likelihood of Participation in Training*

| Training Method | Frequencies | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not Likely | Possibility | Probably | Definitely |
| Online | 25 | 42 | 26 | 7 |
| Full day | 31 | 44 | 19 | 6 |
| Half day | 12 | 36 | 43 | 9 |

Note: Frequencies are presented as percentages, which do not always total to 100 due to rounding.

Each method of training was then examined for statistical means based on the values of ratings of likelihood to participate in training: (0) not likely, (1) possibility, (2) probably (3) definitely (see Table 3). Half day training, the method endorsed as most preferred, had an overall mean rating of 1.49. The overall mean for full day was 1.00.

Table 3

*Mean Ratings on Likelihood of Participation in Training*

| Training Method | *M* |
|---|---|
| Half-day | 1.49 |
| Online | 1.15 |
| Full day | 1.00 |

2. Is there a difference between groups defined by years of experience and level of education for both main effects and an interaction effect, on participants' interest in participating in certain methods of training?

A factorial ANOVA was used to determine the effect of years of experience and level of education on interest in participating in each method of training. The results indicated that there was not a significant interaction effect. An ANOVA was performed to determine the effects of years of experience and level of education on a subject's interest in participating in each method of training. The results of the ANOVA for the main effect of years of experience were not significant for any of the types of training offered. A further examination was used to determine if there was a greater degree of willingness for a method of training by groups, indicated by 50% or more of the group with a likelihood rating of probably (2) to definitely (3). Both the 0-5 and 6-15 years of experience groups met the preference criteria for a half-day of training at 60% and 52% respectively. The group with 16-25 years of experience did not meet the preference criteria for any of the methods of training. The 26+ group met the criteria for preference for the half-day training, but with a N of 4, there is caution in interpretation of results. Crosstabs were

utilized to examine years of experience with the variables of ethics codes covered in training and instruction on an ethical decision-making model. The results are presented in Table 4 and indicate that the majority of respondents in all of the groups indicated being trained on both APA and NASP codes, except for the 6-15 year group.

The results of the ANOVA for level of education indicated that the proportion of variance in likelihood of participation in full day training accounted for by level of education was significant, $F(2,96) = 5.881$, $p = .004$ (Table 5). The Tukey HSD post hoc further isolated the significant difference and indicated that the Bachelor/Masters group was most likely to participate in full day training ($p < .05$). Table 6 provides mean ratings with a range of 0-3, for each education level across likelihood of participation in full day training.

Table 4

*Percent Receiving Training on Codes and Model, by Years of Experience*

| Years of Experience | | 0-5 | 6-15 | 16-25 | 26+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Codes | None | 28 | 48 | 36 | 25 |
| | NASP | 15 | 14 | 14 | 0.0 |
| | NASP/APA | 56 | 38 | 50 | 75 |
| Model | No | 72 | 90 | 86 | 50 |
| | Yes | 28 | 10 | 14 | 50 |

Note: Frequencies are presented as percentages, which do not always total to 100 due to rounding.

Table 5

Analysis of Variance for Level of Education and Years of Experience

| Source | *df* | *F* | η | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Between Subjects | | |
| Level of Education (E) | 2 | 5.88** | .11 | .00 |
| Years of Experience (Y) | 3 | 0.21 | .01 | .83 |
| E x Y | 4 | 0.20 | .03 | .93 |
| *S* within-group | | | | |
| error | 96 | (.687) | | |

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors. *S* = subjects.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 6

*Group Means for Full Day Training*

| Education Level | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bachelor/Masters | 2.200 | .447 | 5 |
| Masters + / Specialist | .985 | .820 | 65 |
| Doctorate | .828 | .889 | 29 |
| Total | 1.000 | .869 | 99 |

3. Is there a difference between groups defined by knowledge of codes and training on a model for both main effects and an interaction, and a subject's interest in participating in certain methods of training?

A 2 X 3 ANOVA was conducted to determine the significance of each main effect and the interaction of the independent variables and interest in participating in each method of training. Results indicated that there was not a significant interaction of the independent variables. The results of the analysis also indicated that there was not a significant difference between being trained on a model and preference for a certain method of training across all methods. However, there was a significant difference between knowledge of ethics codes and interest in online ethical decision-making training, $F(2,97) = 4.588$, $p = .012$ (Table 7). The Tukey HSD post hoc further isolated the significant difference and indicated that the group that identified only NASP codes as part of their training was most likely to participate in online training ($p < .05$). As Table 8 further reveals, the NASP/APA group was least likely to participate in this form of training.

Table 7

Analysis of Variance for Knowledge of Codes and Training on a Model

| Source | *df* | *F* | η | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Between Subjects | | |
| Codes Training (C) | 2 | 4.58** | .07 | .01 |
| Model Training (M) | 1 | 2.63 | .03 | .11 |
| C x M | 2 | 1.35 | .03 | .26 |
| *S* within-group | | | | |
| error | 84 | (.737) | | |

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors. *S* = subjects.
*$p < .05$. **$p<.01$.

Table 8

*Group Means for Online Training*

| Codes | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| None | 1.28 | .944 | 36 |
| NASP | 1.64 | .929 | 14 |
| NASP/APA | .92 | .752 | 50 |
| Total | 1.15 | .880 | 100 |

For additional analysis levels of education, years of experience, training including codes and training on a model were cross-tabulated as a group and with the different methods of training (Tables 9 and 10). A significant chi square was evidenced between code training and model training, $X^2(2, N = 100) = 6.349, p < .05$. An examination of the relationship indicates that 89% of the population that reported no codes were covered in the training also reported not being trained on a model.

Further analysis of crosstabs was used to find the greatest degree of willingness for training. A greater degree of willingness was defined as 50% or more of a group rating the likelihood of participation in the training method as in the "probably" to "definitely" range. All levels of the independent variables that met the preference criteria indicated that half- day training was most preferred for receiving additional training in ethical decision-making.

Table 9

*Percent Receiving Training on Model, Levels of Coursework and Education by Codes*

| Codes | | None | NASP | NASP/APA |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Course-work | No Course | 22 | 7 | 2 |
| | Supervision Only | 6 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | Part Course | 44 | 50 | 54 |
| | Whole Course | 28 | 43 | 44 |
| Model | No | 89 | 93 | 70 |
| | Yes | 11 | 7 | 30 |
| Education | Bach/Mast | 3 | 7 | 6 |
| | Mast +/Spec | 86 | 86 | 45 |
| | Doctorate | 11 | 7 | 49 |

Note: Frequencies are presented as percentages, which do not always total to 100 due to rounding.

Table 10

*Training on Model, Years of Experience and Level of Education by Level of Training*

| Training Level | | None | Supervision Only | Part Course | Whole Course |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Years of Experience | 0-5 | 3 | 0 | 44 | 54 |
| | 6-15 | 17 | 7 | 38 | 38 |
| | 16-25 | 14 | 0 | 68 | 18 |
| | 26+ | 0 | 0 | 75 | 25 |
| Model | No | 11 | 3 | 53 | 34 |
| | Yes | 5 | 0 | 40 | 55 |
| Education | Bach/Mast | 0 | 0 | 60 | 40 |
| | Mast +/Spec | 12 | 3 | 45 | 40 |
| | Doctorate | 7 | 0 | 59 | 35 |

Note: Frequencies are presented as percentages, which do not always total to 100 due to rounding.

4. Is there a relationship between past number of workshop hours obtained and belief that a model will help to advocate in a system, and willingness to participate in future ethical decision-making training methods (DV)?

Results of the MANOVA test of significance for the effect of workshop hours and perception of help on methods of training reveal a significant Hotelling's Trace $F$ (6,178) = 2.620, $p$ = .019 for workshop hours. A post hoc was completed to isolate the

contribution to the overall level of significance. A univariate analysis at the .05 level indicated a significant difference between number of workshop hours received and likelihood of participation in online training $F(2,92) = 5.208$, $p = .007$ (Table 11). A Tukey HSD post hoc further isolated the difference revealing that the group with 1-10 hours of workshop training was significantly less likely to participate in online training as compared to the 0 hours group and 11+ hours group.

Table 11

Analysis of Variance for Workshop Hours and Perceptions of Help in Advocating

| Source | *df* | *F* | η | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Between Subjects | | |
| Workshop Hours (W) | 2 | 5.21** | .07 | .01 |
| Advocating (A) | 1 | 0.34 | .00 | .55 |
| W x A | 2 | 0.49 | .03 | .81 |
| *S* within-group | | | | |
| error | 98 | (.392) | | |

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors. *S* = subjects.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

# CHAPTER IV

## DISCUSSION

This survey set out to identify groups that were most likely to participate in additional training on ethical decision-making and to identify factors that may influence the decision-making process. As an overwhelming number of respondents indicated interest in participating in additional training on ethical decision-making, it would appear that there was a strong interest in this type of training among school psychologists. The reported overwhelming preference between a full day of training, a half-day of training and online training, was for the half day of training. When looked at across the six different variables examined in this study (level of education, years of experience, codes in training, trained on a model, workshop hours, interest overall) all groups reporting a greater degree of willingness to receive training preferred the half-day of training. Variables that related to a greater likelihood of reporting participation in a certain method of training included level of education, amount of workshop hours in ethics training and if training included codes.

Demographic results of this survey indicated a fairly equal representation of years of experience from 0-25. The 26+ group was smaller, but representative of the profession

at large. The Masters +/Specialist group was the largest group in the sample, which again is representative of NASP members. There was still a representative sample at the Doctorate level, commensurate with the NASP population. Results indicated that a significant portion of this sample report not receiving training on an ethical decision-making model, but receiving training on both NASP and APA codes.

Ho: Years of experience and level of education do not account for variance in willingness to participate in various methods of training.

Interestingly the variable years of experience was not found to be related to reported willingness to participate in the various methods of training. Examination of Crosstabs indicated that each years of experience group mirrored the population as a whole. Years of experience was not reported as a factor in a school psychologist participating in a specific method of ethical decision-making training. These results differ from other studies of ethical decision-making indicating experience as an important variable (Chevalier, 1993; Haas et al. 1988; Schatzberg, 1998).

Although past ethical decision-making studies did not specifically address years of experience and the level of willingness to receive training, they did examine experience as a factor in the decision-making process in response to ethical vignettes. This led to the hypothesis that years of experience might be associated with components of the decision-making process such as knowledge and use of codes and models. This hypothesis is consistent with Haas et al. (1988) and Schatzberg (1998) who both found years of experience to be a significant factor in response to a portion of the ethical vignettes. Unfortunately, the results revealed that there was no difference between years of experience groups as all responses indicated overwhelmingly that they were not

trained on a model. As these results appeared to be consistent across years of experience, this may indicate that not being trained on a model is a persistent problem and possibly a factor in why psychologists may not choose the most ethical course of action.

Further examination of years of experience with training on codes and indicated that the majority of respondents, across years of experience, have received training on both NASP and APA codes. The only group not reporting a majority being trained on both sets of codes was the 6-15 years group. This information, included with what we know about who is being trained on a model, would indicate some consistency in training over the years; it generally includes both APA and NASP codes, but does not include a model.

The majority of respondents were at the Masters + / Specialist level of degree, followed by the Doctoral level. The smallest group was the Bachelor/Masters group with a total group size of only five. Professionals with a Bachelor/Masters degree were associated with a greater likelihood of participation in full day training on ethical decision-making, compared to Masters +/Specialist and Doctorate groups. No significant differences were found between the groups for other methods of training. There are limitations to interpreting this finding as the Bachelor and Masters group had a negligent sample size at five. However, when crosstab comparisons of education responses are looked at across the other variables (codes, model, years of experience, overall interest, workshop hours), the Bachelors/Masters group is the only one that reported a likelihood of participation in a full day of training. In fact all of the Bachelors/Masters respondents rated the likelihood in the probably to definitely range. Perhaps this group has the least amount of formal training and is therefore more likely to participate in gaining additional

training. In fact all Bachelor/Masters respondents also indicated they would be interested in additional training and were unanimous in response to receiving a half-day of training. This indicates a strong interest in more than one method of training and a greater likelihood to participate in training. One hypothesis regarding this group is that they may not have had much opportunity for training in ethics and therefore there may be a strong desire to learn more about this subject. Examination of crosstabs with this group and reported type of coursework in ethics indicated that all respondents reported having part of a course or whole course devoted to ethics. So although they report having ethics covered to some degree in their program's coursework, they continue to indicate a strong interest in participating in additional training. This could constitute a group that is either still in training, considering the degree level, or one that would be an optimal target to participate in additional workshop training on ethics due to their reported interest.

Ho: Knowledge of codes and training on a model does not account for variance in willingness to participate in various methods of training.

It was hypothesized that there would be a difference in training willingness between groups trained on a model and those not. An unexpected outcome affecting this relationship was that the majority of respondents report not being trained on a model. In effect, there was not a relationship between being trained on a model and reported willingness to participate in various methods of training. Additional analyses of those who were trained on a model indicates a large portion report having a part of a course or a whole course in ethics and also report covering NASP and APA codes. This generated a new hypothesis. Is there a relationship between being trained on codes and a model and

the level of education received? Unfortunately there is not, as a significant amount of respondents reporting not being trained on a model also reported having a whole or part of a course in ethics. At this point it would not be safe to assume that training on an ethical decision-making model is a component of ethics courses. This relationship is further examined after an examination of training on codes. The question of ethics codes was purposely not force choice to see if respondents could generate an answer pertaining to ethics codes. The lack of responses to this question was unexpected and of professional significance. Many participants did not fill in answers to this question, leaving the impression that they could not remember the codes on which they were trained or perhaps thought that the answer should be self-evident as this was a NASP survey.

The likelihood of participation in online training was dependant upon what types of codes were covered in the subject's ethics training. Being trained on codes contributed significantly to the proportion of variance accounted for in likelihood of participation in online training. Groups that identify NASP codes only as being a part of ethics training across all hours were associated with a greater likelihood of participation in online training. This was the only group (across codes, model, education and experience) that showed a greater degree of reported willingness for online training. Considering that this survey was posted online and participants were solicited through their NASP listserv email, it would seem probable that a large portion of respondents were professionals trained on NASP codes and also familiar with the use of online services. Therefore as a group they may more readily identify the NASP codes as a training component and respond favorably to something they utilize in their profession – online services. It may

prove beneficial for future trainers that are targeting professionals familiar with online services to utilize professional listservs as possible resources for participants.

Additional statistical comparisons indicated a relationship between being trained on a model and being trained on codes. Being trained on a model makes a professional more likely to report also receiving training on both APA and NASP ethics codes. One possible explanation for the relationship is that a model gives a frame of reference for remembering components of ethics training. Therefore surveyed psychologists trained on a model will more readily recall the ethics codes on which they where trained. These results might also indicate that courses with systematic content such as covering codes are also more likely to introduce ethical models. However, training of the majority includes NASP and APA codes, but not a model. In application of this information to the knowledge that psychologists are inconsistent in response to ethical dilemmas and can act unethically, it appears that knowledge of codes may not be a factor in understanding why. However, the absence of the use of a model by the majority may be the significant missing factor in ethical decision-making. The implications of this would include utilization of an ethical decision-making model for ethics instruction that includes but is not limited to the codes; that without a model, the codes are not sufficient in assisting psychologists in navigating the complexities of ethical dilemmas

Ho: There is not a difference between groups based on the past number of workshop hours obtained and belief that an ethical decision-making model would help them

advocate in a system and willingness to participate in future ethical decision-making training methods.

There is not a reported significant relationship between the belief that an ethical decision-making model will help with advocating in a system, the number of workshop hours received in ethics training and the likelihood of participation in ethical decision-making training. Individually however, receiving 1-10 hours of workshop training is reported to be associated with being less likely to participate in online training. Professionals with 0 hours accumulated in workshop time, or more than 10 hours, reported being more likely to participate in online ethical decision-making training. Along this same line of comparison, all groups examined in this survey reported a preference for half-day training, indicating that full day and online training are less desirable. However, the groups that indicated some level of desire to participate in full day or online training, appeared less trained in regards to codes and workshop hours. Those having 0 workshop hours and those identifying only NASP codes as part of their training were the only groups reporting any desire to do online training. Those with a Bachelor/Masters degree were the only group that showed a likelihood of participating in a full day. In effect, a lack of experience in workshop training and exposure to the different professional codes, may lead to a greater reported willingness to participate in online and full day training because the participants are not yet turned off to training. In addition, they may perceive that there are gaps in their training and view workshops, regardless of the format, as a viable option to obtain more training.

The majority of respondents reported receiving no additional workshop hours. Breaking workshop hours down by level of education would address the hypothesis that

the Doctorate group is more likely to report receiving additional workshop hours due to requirements to receive continuing education/professional credits. In fact, the Doctorate group reported the most ethics training through additional workshop hours, followed by the Masters +/Specialist group. Some Ph.D. level participants may be required by their licensure board to obtain ethics training. In comparison, the Bachelor/Masters group report not obtaining any additional workshop hours in ethics. In relation to earlier findings that the Bachelor/Masters group is indicated as most likely to do full day training and that 100% of the group is interested in additional training, but have not received additional hours. If these are practicing school psychologists, it would be important to determine why. Most, however, indicated that they are preservice students who typically do not have a need nor the time to seek out continuing professional development.

Ho: There are no differences between participants' utilization of the six ethical decision-making steps in responses to questions regarding the ethical vignette.

For the purpose of classifying the vignette responses, the six step *Ethical Decision Making: An Integrative Model* (Oehler-Stinnett & Beaman, 2001) was used as a guideline. Responses to the vignette support the information obtained regarding training; there was little evidence of the use of a decision model in responding to the vignette. In fact, no participants identified a model or particular model steps within their responses to the vignette. Following the Oehler-Stinnett & Beaman model the participants would need to do some amount of self evaluation at the onset of evaluating this vignette. No participants made reference to the extent of their ethics training; however, 4% did make statements regarding the potential need for additional training regarding the core issues of

the dilemma. For example one participant stated that they would need to assess their and the school's "competence" in responding to this situation. Three participants made reference to the potential need for consultation in addressing the cultural needs of the situation. Looking across the variables of level of education, training on an ethical decision-making model and training on codes, the differences between individual group levels mirror those of the overall demographics of the participant group. For example, 80% of participants who did not include self evaluation in their decision-making steps were also not trained on a model; this is consistent with the overall demographics of the participant group with 80% of participants not being trained on a model. A participant indicating that they had been trained on a model did not increase the likelihood that they would include self evaluation in their vignette decision-making responses.

The second step of the model would guide the psychologist to identify the potential problems in the situation. As previously stated, there were three possible ethical dilemmas within the vignette: an expectation to test a student in a situation in which assessment would not be appropriate for numerous reasons, the student had obvious mental health concerns that were not being acknowledged, and there were specific cultural aspects to the case that would need to be integrated into any decision-making process. Fourteen percent of respondents did not identify any of the ethical dilemmas in their stated concerns. These results would appear to support Chevalier & Lyon's (1993) earlier findings that included surveyed school psychologists failing to provide any response to an ethical dilemma or choosing an action that is unethical. In line with their conclusions, it would appear problematic that 14% of participants in this study did not

identify any of the overt ethical dilemmas in the vignette and would therefore be unlikely to incorporate these ethical aspects into their decision-making.

The largest response from participants in identifying potential problems from the vignette was in identification of the mental health issues as a concern (66%). A smaller portion (22%) identified the issue of assessment and (27%) identified the important cultural aspects of the case as being potential ethical concerns. It is surprising that the inclusion of a cultural piece within an assessment case did not warrant more notice than 27% of respondents. Responses across the three questions would indicate that the majority of respondents did not factor in culture in their concerns, actions or decisions. Consistent with the previous step, identification of each potential ethical problem was consistent with the overall participants' demographics. Again, level of education and training components such as a model and codes did not provide additional information on who is most likely to include this step in their decision-making.

The next step in the model would have the professional identify the parameters of the situation. For this vignette, the stakeholders would be at minimum: the student, parents, teacher, and Native American community. All participants identified the student as a stakeholder in their ethical decision-making. The majority with 67% and 69% identified the family and school as stakehholders respectively. Again, the cultural issue was a negligent amount with 27% including it as a parameter of the ethical situation. The potential for ethical issues to arise out of an assessment case with a student who has mental health issues and is from a minority culture, is high. Why did this not factor into the decision-making of respondents? Perhaps respondents paid attention to the assessment issue, which may have mirrored their personal work experiences and

therefore did not identify the cultural issue due to their unfamiliarity with the situation. This hypothesis would indicate that the group would have greatly benefited from a model that would have guided them to consider all issues, including cultural factors of any stakeholder or client.

The final steps of the model involve developing questions and gathering data necessary to facilitate the decision-making process. The professional then examines the potential decisions by applying a risk/benefit analysis and making data-based predictions. Lastly, the professional develops a plan of action as well as evaluation of the action. All vignette responses included data gathering in their list of actions, the majority of which involved interviews with the parents, school staff and client. What was missing from the actions was the risk/benefit analysis needed to determine which potential decision needed to become an action. Respondents went right from data gathering to implementing actions. There was not an understanding of how to incorporate the data obtained into data-based predictions or development of a plan of action. Fifteen percent of participants did include the need for some type of outcome measure based on their actions. This was the only area that appeared to be influenced by model training, as 40% of those who included this step were also trained on a model. Being trained on a model may have influenced respondents' ability to recognize the need to evaluate the outcomes of their actions.

# SUMMARY

Best practice services by school psychologists are characterized by consultation, intervention and assessment, as well as those standards outlined by the profession's codes of conduct. Within each area of school psychology practice there exits specific ethical and legal challenges. Clearly the role of a school psychologist is complex, and ethical decision-making challenges can occur within each facet of the profession. The presence of these ethical considerations is an opportunity for the occurrence of both professional growth and probable dilemmas. The literature does include findings that demonstrate there are inconsistencies in ethical decision-making by school psychologists, as well as examples of unethical actions in the face of a dilemma (Chevalier & Lyon, 1993; Haas et al., 1988). As a result, there exist strong recommendations for a change in how school psychologists are trained in ethical decision-making. Unfortunately this training has not evolved and there is a need for a greater understanding of the training needs in order for change to take place.

There is limited research on the actual ethics training of professionals and the relevant variables that may influence participation in ethical decision making training. This study sought to further the understanding of ethical decision-making by school psychologists, and to conceptualize those variables that influence the process. Another goal of this study was to examine variables related to the likelihood of participation in certain methods of ethical decision-making training and to make recommendations regarding how the future of ethical decision-making training should look. In addition this

study hoped to identify factors that influence the differences in how professionals respond to ethical dilemmas.

Utilizing a web-based survey for data collection made some of the procedural parameters difficult to verify. Although the survey was only sent to those professionals included on the NASP listserv, there is no certainty that the person completing the survey was in fact the school psychologist they identified themselves as in the survey. However, as all data appeared commensurate in response patterns associated with the profession of school psychology, this does not appear to be a significant concern. As stated, NASP listserv members were targeted for completion of the survey, but this group may not be representative of the profession at large. This group may represent professionals more likely to participate in any additional training related to their profession, and therefore be favorably biased to this kind of study. Some types of questions in the study were categorical in nature, which excluded some forms of data analyses that may have been beneficial to the study. Future studies may wish to consider utilizing questions that by form do not exclude certain types of data analyses.

Respondents to this study were consistent in their indication of interest in participating in additional training in ethical decision-making. Seventy-one percent of respondents indicated that they were interested in receiving additional training in ethical decision-making. The greatest degree of willingness to receiving training, across all respondent variables, was for the half-day method, over a full day or online training. However, the mean overall rating of likelihood of participation in a half-day indicates between a "possibility" and "probab(ility)" that the respondents would actually participate in the training. A full day of training was the least desirable with an overall

mean rating that indicated no more than a "possibility" that respondents would participate in this form of training. However, the Bachelor/Masters group, although small, did indicate a greater willingness to participate in a full day of training when compared to other levels of education groups. Yet, they also reported not previously participating in any additional training in ethics. This finding is true for the majority of respondents. From a training aspect, it may prove beneficial to examine why respondents indicated overwhelmingly that they were interested in receiving additional training, but had not historically received additional training in ethics, nor were they strongly endorsing the types of training offered within this study. Perhaps an open-ended question that allows the participant to state what type of training they would participate in would be a better indicator of what types of training to offer.

The results of this study support previous ideas (Brewer & Faitak, 1989; Sieber, 1988) that knowledge of the professional ethics codes alone does not provide what is necessary to make decisions regarding ethical situations. Although 50% of respondents reported being trained on both APA and NASP ethics codes, there were no significant differences in responses to the ethical vignette between this group and those not trained on codes. Jacob-Timm (1999) addressed the concern of responding to ethical situations with only knowledge of the codes as a training tool when she made a call to include ethical problem solving as a necessary component when teaching ethics. Chevalier and Lyon (1993) mirror this suggestion in concluding from their own research that the ethics codes are not enough to help professionals solve problems. Results of the current study would indicate that 80% of the professionals responding to the survey have not been trained on a problem solving model, regardless of their years of experience and extent of

coursework in ethics. Therefore the current state of ethics training has not evolved to include the crucial component of an ethical decision-making model. It would appear that in fact for the majority, training on ethics is mostly about the codes and does not include the decision-making skills necessary to address the complexities of ethical and professional practice. This study's findings are explicit in their implication for a change in the ethics' curriculum of school psychology programs. Training in an ethics decision-making model is imperative to the professional practice of school psychologists.

Responses to the vignette indicate that those respondents who report being trained on a decision-making model did not differ significantly in their decisions and actions in response to the vignette, from those respondents reporting not being trained on a decision-making model. Of the 20% reporting being trained on a model, 3 respondents were able to name the model that was covered in their training. Unfortunately, it would appear that the current attempts to train on a model or the current models being covered in training may not be sufficient for professional ethics practices. Perhaps these models were not sufficient in addressing the complexities of today's ethical dilemmas. Responses to the ethical vignette would support these hypotheses. Utilizing the Oehler-Stinnett and Beaman (2003) integrative decision-making model as a guide to responding to the vignette, it is evident that crucial ethical factors are being eliminated, regardless of type of training received. For example, only 4% of respondents included any form of self evaluation prior to their making decisions regarding the ethical dilemma. Even more surprising, 73 % responded unethically by failing to recognize the crucial cultural factor of this dilemma in their ethical concerns or actions and 9% included a potentially unethical action in their responses. Those respondents who reported being trained on a

model, did not differ in their exclusion of critical factors and inclusion of unethical actions. The only area that respondents who reported being trained on a model differed was in their inclusion of an evaluative component. Unfortunately, this group, along with all other respondents, failed to move forward in their decision-making from the steps of problem identification and data gathering, to data analyses, risk/benefit analyses and making data based predictions, decisions and actions. In fact, these steps of the problem solving process were absent from the majority of the respondents, which brings up another significant area of concern. Although the respondents are somewhat able to identify the parameters of the situation, they fail to actually undertake any problem solving steps, choosing instead to move from gathering data to making a decision and implementing an action. It may be that a model is the crucial ethical problem solving piece that is missing. But not just any model, a model that is comprehensive and that takes individual as well as social contexts into account, that is nonlinear to account for the complex factors and multiple decisions that typically must be made, and includes data based decision-making. Future research might investigate the influence of an ethical decision-making model that is able to examine the complexities of an ethical dilemma. It may be important to look at differences between groups that are trained on a nonlinear, data driven model, such as the Oehler-Stinnett and Beaman model (2003). It would be hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in how participants responded to an ethical dilemma after receiving training on this type of model and indicating that the multidimensional model significantly affects the professional's ability to problem solve in ethical situations.

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# APPENDIX A

## PROPOSED PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A MARKETING ETHICS CURRICULUM (AGARWAL AND MALLOY, 2001)

**The Seven Modules**

Module I & II: The Process and Elements of Ethical Decision-making

Module III-VII: The Moderators of Ethical Decision-making

Module III: Individual Moderators

1. Philosophical profile
2. Psychological profile (moral development)
3. Demographic profile

Module IV: Issue Specific

1. Proximity to the issue ( psychological/physical)
2. Societal consensus
3. Responsibility for results
4. Magnitude of evil/good
5. Concentration of effect
6. Tactical- procedural
7. Strategic – policy

Module V: Significant Others

1. Personal
2. Intra – organizational
3. Extra – organizational

Module VI: Situational

1. Organizational ideology
2. Organizational culture
3. Organizational climate

Module VII: External

1. Political
2. Societal
3. Economic
4. Technology

# APPENDIX B

## SOLICITATION LETTER

Dear School Psychology Professionals,

I am a doctoral student in School Psychology at Oklahoma State University. I am writing to request your participation in my research on ethical decision-making practices of school psychologists. As professional issues continue to be an area of growing interest, I hope you will consider taking a few minutes to provide some valuable information about your current practices. This survey consists of a short case vignette and a brief demographic questionnaire. Participation should take about 10-15 minutes. If you would like to participate in this project, please link to the following web page:

http://fp.okstate.edu/jos

This request was sent to some professionals over the summer. If you have already responded to this request, "Thank You" and please delete or forward to a colleague.

Thank you for your consideration in this important professional research topic. If you would like to contact me, or my supervising professor, Dr. Judy Oehler-Stinnett, please feel free to email me at willpsych@cowboy.net or phone at (405) 744-5474.

Sincerely,

Kathryn C. Beaman, M.S.
Doctoral Student
Oklahoma State University

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# APPENDIX C

## CONSENT FORM

**A Study of Ethical Decision-Making Among School Psychologists**

Dear School Psychologists,

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by an Oklahoma State University school psychology research team that is investigating ethical decision-making by school psychologists. The purpose of this study is to investigate the strategies being used by school psychologists in ethical decision-making and perceived restrictions on the decisions and/or actions. In addition, we will be gathering relevant demographic and experience data to determine a possible relationship to ethical decision-making. This study will aid in the development of an ethical decision-making model that can be utilized by school psychologists. If you are a practicing school psychologist, school psychology trainer, or school psychology graduate student please consider taking a few minutes to complete this survey. There are no foreseeable risks to those who participate in this study. If you choose to participate in this study you will be asked to do the following: 1) complete a non-identifying demographic data sheet, 2) read a clinical vignette posing an ethical dilemma, and 3) provide responses to the dilemma. This should take approximately 20 minutes.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary, no payment or reward is offered. Once you have entered the survey, and decide to participate, you are completely free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation at any time. If you complete the survey and submit your responses, confidentiality will be maintained. Your name will not be attached to the responses sent to the researcher, and all efforts to preserve confidentiality will be made.

The person in charge of this study is Kathryn Beaman, a doctoral candidate in School Psychology at Oklahoma State University. Dr. Judy Oehler-Stinnett, a faculty advisor and trainer of the program, is providing guidance for the research project.

A poster providing the results of this study will be presented at the American Psychological Association's convention in August 2002. If you have any additional questions, you may contact Kathryn Beaman (405) 744-8147, or thru email at willpsych@cowboy.net. You may also contact Dr. Judy Oehler-Stinnett at (405) 744-9450, or Sharon Bacher, Executive Secretary to the OSU Institutional Review Board, at (405)-744-5700.

I hope you will decide to complete the survey and assist in our research by clicking the "I Agree" button below. Thank you for your time!

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Sincerely,
Kathryn Beaman, M.S.
Doctoral Candidate
Oklahoma State University

Judy Oehler-Stinnett, Ph.D
Professor/Trainer
Oklahoma State University

By clicking "I Agree" I am indicating that I understand the research project and my participation requirements. My completion of these tasks indicates my willingness to participate. I understand that I can withdraw my participation at any time and simply quit completing the survey.

**I AGREE** **SORRY**

# APPENDIX D

## SURVEY OF DEMOGRAPHICS

1. State in the U.S. in which you reside? _____

2. What is your age?

____ 24 or younger
____ 25-34
____ 35-44
____ 45-54
____ 55+

3. What is your highest level of education in school psychology?

____ Bachelor's
____ Master's
____ Master's +
____ Specialist (Ed.S)
____ Doctorate

4. How many years of professional experience do you have as a school psychologist?

____ 5 years or less
____ 6-10 years
____ 11-15 years
____ 16-20 years
____ 21-25 years
____ 26+

5. What is the primary setting in which you currently work?

____ school system
____ private practice
____ university
____ community agency
____ hospital/residential facility
____ other setting (specify _____)

6. if other,.....

7. What is your primary role as a school psychologist in the above setting?

____practitioner/clinician
____ trainer
____ other role
____ student
____ administrator/supervisor

8. If other,.....

9. What is the approximate number of students in your school district/community?

10. How many school psychologists serve your school district/community?

11. Approximately how many clients do you see a week?

12. Approximately how many hours a week do you work?

13. During your college coursework, what ethics training have you completed? Select one:

    ____ whole course ____ part of a course _____supervision time only

    ____ My college experience did not include a course on ethics.

14. During your college coursework, was ethics training integrated across courses?

    Yes or No

15. Across all coursework, what was the cummulative number of clock hours you spent in ethic's training?

16. Outside of college coursework, have you received workshop training on ethics?

    Yes or No

17. If yes, how many cumulative hours in workshop training?

18. Across all methods of training you have had on ethics, what ethics codes were covered in your training?

19. During your training, where you instructed on an ethical decision-making model?

    Yes or No

20. If yes, please describe.

21. Are you interested in participating in additional training on ethical decision-making?

    Yes or No

22. What is the likelihood you would participate in a half day service training on ethical decision-making?

0= not likely 1= possibility 2= probably 3= definitely

23. What is the likelihood you would participate in an online course for training in ethical decision-making?

0= not likely 1= possibility 2= probably 3= definitely

24. What is the likelihood you would participate in a full day service training on ethical decision-making?

0= not likely 1= possibility 2= probably 3= definitely

25. You are faced with an ethical decision and have determined a certain action is in the best interest of the client. However, this action would violate system rules. In your setting, to what degree would you have administrative support to do what is best for the client?

0 = no support 1 = limited 2 = adequate 3 = substantial 4 = full support

26. Do you think having an ethical decision-making model based on codes and supportive of your data, would help you to advocate within a system when you have an ethical dilemma?

# APPENDIX E

## ETHICAL VIGNETTE

### Ethics Scenario

A 12-year-old Native American child has been referred to you from the teacher's assistance team, with the expectation that you will test her. She has the following presenting concerns: dropping grades, excessive school absences, and a recent parental divorce.

List your immediate concerns:

List with numerical notations (1., 2., ...) the actions you would take.

List with numerical notations (1., 2.,...) your potential decisions.

What support services do you have available to take the actions you feel are in this child's best interest?

What constraints do you have on your actions that might prevent you from taking your preferred course.

# APPENDIX F

**Oklahoma State University**
**Institutional Review Board**

**Protocol Expires: 4/11/03**

Date: Friday, April 12, 2002 IRB Application No: ED01S77

Proposal Title: A SURVEY OF ETHICAL DECISION MAKING PRACTICES AMONG SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Principal Investigator(s):

Judy Oehler-Stinnett
425 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

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Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to this research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 203 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Carol Olson

Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Kathryn C. Beaman

Candidate for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dissertation: A SURVEY OF ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING AMONG SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Major Field: EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Jenks High School, Jenks, Oklahoma in May 1988; received Bachelor of Science degree in Special Education from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 1992; received Master of Science degree in Applied Behavioral Studies in Education from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 1996. Completed requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 2004.

Personal Data: Born in Jenks, Oklahoma, on July 12, 1970, the daughter of Dean and Jewell Williams.

Experience: Employed as a School Psychologist for Jenks Public Schools; employed as a graduate teaching assistant by Oklahoma State University, College of Education 2000-2002.

Professional Memberships: American Psychological Association, National Association of School Psychologists, Oklahoma School Psychologists Association, Northwest Pennsylvania Psychologists Association.