

Values and Ethics in the Decision-Making of Rural Manitoba School Principals

by

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Abstract

This study examined the extent to which the espoused values and ethics of rural Manitoba school principals were reflected in their practice. The present study was framed around the possibility of seeing the rural Manitoba school principalship, ultimately, as a moral practice. To do this, attention was given primarily to Western philosophical approaches to human understanding and their relationship to the development of values and based on contemporary understandings of the Western philosophical traditions that have dominated the conversation around ethical administrative practice.

The social context of this research concentrated on leadership experiences of four school principals in rural Manitoba. A form of naturalistic inquiry model was used to gather a sense of the stories of these principals through the lens of their personal value structures and the impact their values structures have on their professional decision-making processes.

The analysis of the data showed no evidence of the principals separating their personal values from their professional values. Also, the local community context figured strongly in the working lives of the principals, and was a main factor in their decision-making priorities. Values of democracy, faith, respect, and common vision were cited as having a stronger impact than things such as policy, law and even consensus in their leadership approaches.

There is much more to be said about the experiences of the rural Manitoba school principals than merely the role of the local community context in their working lives. A comparison to the experiences of urban Manitoba school principals might disclose a greater attention other variables such as justice and critique in the rural principalship than is readily apparent. A deeper and more comprehensive examination of rural stories would potentially bring to light the compelling nature of their character.

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Chapter One: Purpose of the Study

My ultimate intention with this study was not so much to become a better, more effective administrator, or to convince others to think the way I do, as it was to seek a deeper understanding of my profession, my leadership qualities, my job, and of myself. It was with a sense of what school leadership demands – namely, competence and character (Hodgkinson, 1999) – that I made my way through this study. In a way, this journey began out of the quagmire of conformity that, according to Hodgkinson (1999) “turns potential educational leaders into . . . sychophants rather than cultural shapers and formers” (p. xiii). To avoid this quagmire, my professional work needs to focus on the continual pursuit of the good in education and in educational leadership. While maintaining an attitude of critique, I need to focus on the positive and the innovative in the work of others and to somehow make a contribution as an active, equal participant in school leadership. In short, I need to involve myself in “the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen . . . and heighten positive potential” (Walker & Carr-Stewart, 2004, p. 73) of the school environment in which I work, in the people with whom I work and for whose professional welfare I am responsible. The context most readily available for me to consider is in the educational reality that defines my experience – rural Manitoba.

A recent study by Wallin (2009) provides a broad but detailed review of initiatives and innovative practices in rural Manitoba schools focusing on the areas of teaching and learning, infrastructure, educational finance, and inter-jurisdictional collaboration. Avoiding a sychophantic quagmire is in many ways what Wallin’s study (2009) attempts to do, as it examines the creative elements of rural educational environments, the innovative thinking of the school communities and the positive visions of the leadership involved in the rural educational experience not often represented in the scholarly literature. More often, the

portrait painted of rural education is bleak, fraught with difficult challenges due, in large part but not exclusively, to a lack of adequate resources (MASS & MAST, 2006; Wallin, 2009) necessary for a quality education. But as Wallin (2009) states, confidently, “Rural schools have become more sophisticated and more adept at doing what they have always done best – they rely on the local expertise and the concept of community to work together . . . to make sure their children receive the best education they have to offer” (p. 6). In her estimation, the quality of available programming is based not on quantity but rather on the “educational and social environments of [their] local communities” (Wallin, 2009, p.6).

Mulcahy (1996), another Canadian rural scholar, suggests that traditional attempts to address rural educational issues are mostly attempts to contextualize them within an urban framework; that “[H]istorically, rural education reform has always assumed that improving rural schools meant making them more like urban schools” (p. 7). While this attitude may diminish the value of the ‘community’ component which is so important in the rural social context, there is hope in that “[T]he international field of rural education studies makes problematic all our traditional, ie. urban notions about education and schooling in rural communities” (Mulcahy, 1996, p. 7).

As Wallin (2009) and Mulchay (1996) make evident, there is a body of knowledge which acknowledges the needs, aspirations, and views of rural people themselves in the necessary critical and moral questions related to rural education: Why is rural education important? In whose interests is rural education being formed, shaped, and even advanced? What makes the community concept such a necessary feature in the success of rural students? What is the role of the school leader and administration in developing community-minded innovative programming for rural environments? And finally, what role do values, morals, and ethical practice play in the social context of rural education?

I believe that in order to answer questions about what it may mean to educate innovatively and creatively in a rural context, we must first examine how different perspectives on values, morality and ethics shape the idea of 'rurality' and rural education. If one of the primary defining features (if not the defining feature) of rural education is the "attempt to address formal educational goals within the local community context" (Wallin, 2009, p. 70), then what ethical or moral framework shapes the value of community? Furman (2003), proposes the "ethic of community" (p. 2) as a way to broaden understandings associated with values-orientated educational leadership theories (Furman, 2003, 2004). In defining the ethic of community, Furman (2003) designs a "working benchmark" to which universal questions related to human morality and ethics can be applied to specific questions about educational leadership practice. In her view, administrators have "the moral responsibility to engage in communal processes as educators pursue the moral purposes of their work and address the ongoing challenges of daily life and work in schools" (p. 2). However, this understanding of educational leadership emphasizes individual formal leaders as the "primary moral agents who have an impact on schooling" (Furman, 2003, p.3), and that "the community concept tends to be nested within a more dominating notion of individualism" (Foster, 2004), not to mention restricting the notion of community primarily to that which resides within the school building. In fact, such a framework for understanding educational leadership may have tremendous impact on what are considered to be innovative approaches to 'quality' within a rural community school setting. Therefore, in this study, concurrent with the discussion of rural leadership in Manitoba is a broader examination of ethics, values and morality in the context of educational administration.

If one accepts an assumption that values are a universal concern central to any conception of the human condition, then the study of values is appropriate for all disciplines,

including educational administration. Hodgkinson (1991) suggests that school administration currently finds itself in an “arena of ethical excitement” (p. 164), the first of which includes an examination of what educational administration itself aspires to do, which is to lead education. However, if one is being educated then one is being subjected by some method or other to knowledge which has been sanctioned as “valuable,” either as formal curricula or through regular practice. By extension then, if one is being educated, then one is experiencing a particular notion of morality perpetuated by the “leaders of education.” This suggests that the morality of the leader is of prime importance to the construction of “the good” or what is “of value” in education. In addition, there is much more to being educated than the acquisition of knowledge, as learning can be constructed as an objective of desire: a desire to know, to understand, to explain, and to act (Lonergan, 1961, p. 4). If educational leaders can foster this desire, and have some measure of control over what is considered to be worthwhile and meaningful knowledge, then administration itself perpetuates particular kinds of morality in its enactment.

Such a view may contradict traditional notions of administrators as managers or technicians. I believe that administrators may be both these things, but they can also be visionaries and “transcendental idealists” (Samier, 2003); they are also people who “must find ways to implement some of the most fundamental ideas of our society” (Strike & Haller, 1986, p. xii). All of these roles leads to the construction of the administrator as moral agent or moral scientist (Foster, 1986; Hodgkinson, 1991) who has a desire and obligation not only to understand the ideas (and ideals) being pursued but also to re-think established ideals and practices.

Visions of management, leadership, or administration in general tend to exist as abstractions on a continuum from hierarchical notions of power over subservience to a

reflective and egalitarian process of human interaction. And, according to some, educational administration is distinct from other forms of leadership. Hodgkinson (1991) sees educational administration as exemplifying a seemingly contradictory ideal: “[I]t embodies a heritage of value on the one hand, and is a massive industry in the other, in which social, economic, and political forces are locked together in a complex equilibrium of power” (p.164). This description seems to highlight the importance of looking at educational administration through an ethical lens, as it is underpinned by notions of complexity, tension, and power structures related to competing value systems. Hodgkinson (1991) celebrates the ethical opportunities available to administrators because of the diversity in notions about what education means – and can mean. Arguably, schooling is “big business” and politics combined if one considers the multi-million dollar textbook/resource industries, collective agreement issues, provincial/federal funding or jurisdictional issues, etcetera. Yet administrators are also people working in local spaces toward advancing the process of effective teaching and learning, which are contested terrains. Perhaps, then, administrators ought to push towards the ‘equilibrium of power’ by dismantling the processes of unjust use of power and doing so within the constraints of divergent and equal value structures (Foster, 1986). For this, Hodgkinson (1991) claims, the educational administrator requires “extraordinary value sensitivity” (p.164).

One of the problems I faced in surveying the literature on moral and values based school leadership was the origin of values. If notions of values and ethics are derived culturally (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007) what does that say about the individual’s moral development and internalisation of values? This takes us back to the basic problem of how knowledge itself is acquired and whether knowing and understanding are exclusive terms or whether one relies on the other in order to be validated. Further, if knowledge is acquired and understood in a certain way then perhaps our acquisition and understanding of morality happens in a similar way.

A shared experience in the acquiring of values does not mean that the values themselves should be the same. Foster (2004) would offer that despite the seeming uniformity in our society and in our schools, there are major differences in local school community values, and this would be more obvious if only the participants had a greater autonomy within the school. Yet, given the need for leaders to lead the social systems of schools, there is something attractive about notions of the universality of morality and how it should be applied in our institutions. Kant's (1996) categorical imperative suggests that leaders ought to act after determining a priori what is the "right" conduct using purely practical reason, thereby creating universality of moral law and avoiding getting entangled within established sets of rules derived essentially from empirical notions of human behaviour. The important point to note, however, is that while the categorical imperative is attractive in theory, even if one's mind could establish such a universalizing moral code outside the bounds of external rules and laws that are created to make society more orderly, an administrator's actions remain bound within them unless s/he wishes to forgo the position. However, this does not suggest that the leader should not critique and possibly try to change those external rules and laws should they be cumbersome, no longer applicable, or unjust.

Research on values-based school leadership is typically backed by a philosophical framework – schooling itself can be considered a moral practice (Norberg, 2003) – but a comprehensive discussion is rare (Christopher Hodgkinson, whose work was used in this study, is an exception). Perhaps this is due to the difficulty in connecting philosophy to the applications in education. What I posit is that philosophical perspectives ought to coincide with educational and administrative applications. As Lonergan (1993) suggests, "philosophy and education are interdependent. Philosophy is the reflective component, and education is the active component, at the ultimate level of reflection and action in human life" (p. 5) and that

“the discovery and articulation of [philosophy of education] calls for originality and creativity” (p.3). This suggests that conventional notions of leadership – ie., technical or management orientations devoid of reflection and creative action- are too narrow in perspective of what leadership actually encompasses, and therefore do not reflect the complexity of moral endeavours in which educational leaders are asked to engage.

If one considers educational leadership to be a moral endeavor, then it follows that leaders need to be critically aware of their own value systems (Foster, 1986, 2004) and the contingent factors that affect their work. I am interested in how, and to what extent, personal values influence the role and actions of school leaders. I believe there is often a desire on the part of administrators to use critical, ethical judgement but this is too often at odds with administrative constraints, such as policy, regulations, political correctness, and even laws. The end result, in effect, is that of “satisficing,” whereby administrators learn to “pick their battles” or ameliorate their own values in order to remain supported by the system. Such satisficing is explained by the difference between Kant’s (1996) notion of the “right” as that which would be right for any person in similar circumstances (a means of universalizing morality through an objective stance of pure moral reason) versus his notion of the “good” which fundamentally leads to enriching one’s self rather than others as people begin to consider how contingent factors play upon their own roles.

According to Langlois (2004), “[P]ractically no research in educational administration and management has been conducted on the role of moral judgment” (p. 89) and its limitations in a bureaucracy such as a school division, which suggests that the constraints out-weigh even the desire to write about ethical practice in school administration. Even the role of discretion in school leadership is lacking in research (Heilmann, 2006). Further, while there may be little existing research on the role of moral judgment, there does exist a call for more courses in

ethics and ethics-related training in educational administration graduate programs (Hodgkinson, 1975; Davis, 2007; Lang, 1999;), which indicates that there is at least attention being given to the role of morals and values in educational administration.

Even scarcer is the availability of research on the role of morality and ethics in school leadership specific to rural areas. Many scholars argue for a foundational perspective, concluding that morality and ethical principles are universal (Hodgkinson, 1975, 1991; Starratt, 1991, 1994; Strike & Haller, 1986; Begley, 1996, 1999a, 1999b, 2004). They argue that morality and ethics apply to any situation and any environment, this study will examine the values, moral and ethical principles utilized by educational administrators in rural Manitoba. An examination of the moral endeavor of leadership within the rural experience- or 'rurality' (Wallin, 2008, 2009; MASS & MAST, 2006; Mulcahy, 1996) constituted a primary focus of this study. Recent work on rural educational initiatives in Manitoba (Wallin, 2009) has revealed the advantages of a rural education and highlighted the responses of rural educational environments to the challenges of rural schools staying viable as institutions thereby, implicitly rather than explicitly, highlighting the role that particular values such as that of community play in educational leadership. If we accept the notion that values and ethics are derived culturally (Begley & Stefkovich 2007), it may be that innovation in rural environments is as much due to the value structure in the communities involved as it is to the individual qualities of the leaders who guide them. This is made even more complicated when one considers whether the value systems of any particular rural community (and the administrator of the school) align with that promoted by the centralized provincial educational system.

I am moved by a desire to take the theories of ethical educational leadership and apply it to my leadership context. There is a danger in reducing the work of administrators to theory especially if theory cannot be articulated. Rather than making assumptions about the role of

morality and ethics in the day-to-day life of school administrators and elaborating on them, this study melded past research, methodology and current theory in order to elaborate a grounded theoretical approach (Creswell, 2005) to ethical educational leadership. As Greenfield (1974) has argued, “[T]heory must arise out of the process of investigation itself and be intimately connected with the data under investigation” (p. 9). Not only did participants help to refine such a theory, but my own experiences as a rural school leader impacted my findings and conclusions. A grounded theory of ethical educational leadership in rural environments complemented, and was complemented by, the data that came from the investigation. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do administrators in rural Manitoba schools rely on their personal values and sense of morality to drive and inform their decision-making and professional judgment?
2. In what way(s) is the administrative approach to decision-making in rural Manitoba schools reflective of and traceable to particular values typologies and/or ethical paradigms?

Rationale

I can’t claim that this study was more important than others, nor even more necessary; but there is room for research related to educational administration in rural Manitoba. Why? Because it is expressly and authoritatively limited. Of course, I wanted to contribute to the knowledge base of what I see as a vast and unexplored territory, much like the prairie landscape in which I live and work. As Wallin (2009) has shown, there is much creative work occurring in rural Manitoba, and rural education has been identified as a priority for Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth. My interest is in what motivates these leaders to do this work, taking for granted that rural school leaders face many challenges to their schools’ viability (if you are a rural principal you are acutely aware of this). I wished to know if, upon reflection of their activities, school principals could consciously trace their actions and decisions to ethical

principles and values constructs, what similarities and differences in these principles and constructs occurred between rural principals, and why those similarities and differences may have (or may not) occurred. After all, rural school principals are very recognizable and highly public figures in the communities. Their actions are doubtless perceived to be motivated by some values structure which, if the principals are aware of this and of themselves, will require a platform from which to articulate their values to others (especially when a decision is being both pondered and made). I contend that, if principals reflect upon and articulate their work through the lenses of ethical principles and value constructs, I can justify a claim that they work from a morality-oriented base and not entirely a managerial and technocratic one. I should add that “managerial” and “technocratic” approaches certainly have moral or normative qualities, but for the purposes of this study there was a distinction when considering the extent to which principals of schools are allowed to impose a morality in their decision-making.

Delimitations of the Study

Some delimitations influenced the framework of this study:

1. The literature on values and ethics based educational administration is expansive yet there is none that is specific to rural Manitoba.
2. The participants of the study were active school administrators in rural Manitoba schools and currently reside in rural Manitoba.
3. Time and finances restricted the researcher’s ability to reach a large number of participants. The study group, therefore, consisted of four (4) principals from two school divisions.
4. Only principals who were granted permission from their respective school divisions were interviewed for this study.

5. The questions were specific to how school leadership practice in a rural Manitoba setting is reflective of their personal and professional values.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study are related to the nature of the questions and of qualitative research itself. The questions are open-ended and required the participants to be reflective and even biased in their responses: principals were asked to respond in ways that they perhaps have never had to before, possibly without ever having thought of their practice in the ways in which the questions suggest. This introduced the added risk of a response that was 'in the moment' and not entirely authentic to their true beliefs. Still, principals were advised by letter of consent and invitation to participate that the questions followed this line of thought and I am confident their answers were comprehensive and thoughtfully provided. As this study is based on self-report, what principals say they do, and what they actually do, may not align. However, this limitation was minimized in the questioning by asking them to provide exemplars of their ideas within their past practices in an attempt to provide a more contextualized and actual sense of ethical principles guiding practice.

Another important limitation of the study involving qualitative research is that, according to Creswell (2005), characteristics of qualitative research involves a reflexive and biased approach on the part of the researcher, relying on small numbers of sources (ie. individuals or settings) and personal interpretation. A broad and general research question(s) drives the study, and the literature plays a relatively minor role in the data accumulation. While Creswell (2005) posits that in qualitative research the literature plays a small role, I do feel that exploring existing work helped me prepare for the data I collected from the participants.

One final limitation of the study is that the topic and the approach taken were largely open-ended and the subject highly complex. However, I wanted to highlight the complexity

found within the ethical and moral concerns of rural Manitoba school principals and not focus on problems and challenges. To do this, I utilized a broad and open approach from which administrators explored and interpreted their practice. Demanding too specific of a framework, I feared, would limit this intent.

Organisation of the Report

Rural Manitoba school principals have a critical responsibility for providing quality programming and a positive educational experience for the people in their care, and over whom they exercise some measure of authority. Whether this is a burden or an opportunity may be reflected in the nature of their value structures and how these influence their day-to-day work in the school environment. It is appropriate, then, in my view, to explore and examine these possibilities.

Chapter Two is a review of the literature related to the application of philosophical notions of morality in educational administration, values and ethics and their practical applications in educational administration. As well, literature related to rural educational administration in several geographical and definitional contexts was examined. Chapter Three is a description of the methodology of the study. Chapter Four highlights the findings of the study in the context of the interview method based on a case study, and Chapter Five delineates final conclusions, reflections and recommendations for practice, research and theory.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

If education is moral by nature (Foster, 1986; Norberg, 2003; Hodgkinson, 1975, 1991, 2002; Starratt, 1991; Furman 2003, 2004; Rebore, 2001), where values are ethically examined and by extension embedded in leadership practice, then an understanding of the terms is necessary. This study utilises the terms morality, ethics, and values as conceptions that impact school leadership practice and will suggest that in many contexts they seem to be used interchangeably. Taken together, these terms interact with each other such that, in certain contexts, their connotations and definitions are barely distinguishable, even interchangeable. The important point for the purposes of this study is that the terms work to convey a deeper, more internal sense of how to think about educational leadership practice. In the literature, the words are often used to convey the same sense of meaning in that ethical practice, values based reflection, and moral considerations - rather than technocracy and efficient management – should be the underpinnings of educational administration (Foster, 1986).

Values – Based Educational Administration

While often defended as an alternative to, or even an attack on ‘management’ and in particular to the so-called ‘science’ of administration held prominently by earlier thinkers such as Herbert Simon (1965), the values and ethical perspective of educational administration attempts to see administration as what it *ought* to be rather than what it *is* (Begley, 2004; Foster, 1986; Hodgkinson, 1978, 1991, 2002; Starratt, 1991, 1994). This distinction is important when defining the major terminology of this study – morality, values, ethics – because the “*ought*” principle suggests subjectivity and, therefore, implies that “good” educational administration is something to strive for on an on-going basis, that may lead to improvement over time with practice, experience, reflection and human

interaction. According to Greenfield (1974), one of the problems with the management approach to educational administration, is that it “sees organisations as structures subject to universal laws” rather than as “cultural artifacts dependent on the specific meaning and intention of the people within them” (p. 2). The subjective aspect of this claim, grounded as it is in phenomenology, holds that people and their ideas make an organisation, and “[O]ur concepts of organisations must therefore rest upon the views of people in particular times and places, and any effort to understand them in terms of a single set of ideas, values and laws must be doomed to failure” (p. 2).

The work of Christopher Hodgkinson is celebrated by many in the field of values and ethically based educational administration (Begley, 2004; Eldridge, 2009; Haydon, 2007; Lang, 1999; Leithwood, 1999; Samier, 2003). To Hodgkinson (2002) values are unique to the individual and descriptive of a group. At the individual level “we enter the moral and ethical domain” (p. 3) involved in a collective enterprise (ie. a mass demonstration, a sermon, a staff meeting). Further, values work as the “motivating determinants of behaviour” (Hodgkinson, 1983, p.36) and also as “a conception of the desirable” (Hodgkinson, 1978, p.121) which has an impact on the choices and decisions we make.

Hodgkinson’s status and contribution to the field of values-based educational administration is important enough that to leave it out of this discussion would seriously call into question the legitimacy of this study, as it has been noted that his work flourishes to the extent that he “may already have achieved canonical status” (Ribbons, 1999, p. xvi). The present study will employ his “values model” (Hodgkinson, 1991) as a context for examining leadership practice in general and specifically as it may be applied to educational administration in rural Manitoba.

In addition to the values model of Hodgkinson (1991), this literature review will examine in some detail the concept of the 'ethical paradigm' as developed by Starratt (1991, 1994) and extended by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005). As well, Furman (2003, 2004) expands on both Starratt's (1991,1994) and Shapiro's and Stefkovich's (2005) work to include what she calls an ethic of community that may work particularly well in rural contexts. The ethical paradigm stands as a framework for looking at the "competing value orientations [that have manifested] within particular educational communities" (Begley, 1999b, p.52), and how educational administrators have had to become "increasingly sensitive to values issues simply because of the pluralistic societies in which they live and work" (p. 52). The ethical paradigm highlights this phenomena and puts it in the context of possible leadership approaches. Starratt (2004) argues that the "dynamic interplay between these virtues (responsibility, presence, and authenticity) must ground any more formally explicit ethics of educational leadership, whether it is an ethics of justice, an ethics of care, or a synthesis of several ethical perspectives" (p. 111).

This values and ethical context of educational administration will be viewed, as well, within the context of rural education. While there appears to be little scholarship in the area of rural Manitoba education and educational administration, there is a body of work on rural education itself – challenges, successes, unique features, community influence – within the western canon (United States and Australia in particular- in addition to Canada and Manitoba). This study will make extensive use of Wallin's (2009) study, highlighting rural Manitoba educational innovations and initiatives in the face of growing challenges and increasing demands as resources become more scarce, to contextualize ethical issues for rural administrators. The task for this study is to reflect on rural leadership within a framework related to moral (values, ethics) scholarship. A

guiding question might be: To what extent are the challenges and successes in rural Manitoba education reflective of values – based approaches to leadership? I contend that administration of a school or a school environment in a rural setting or otherwise, is a moral science (Foster, 1986) or even a moral art (Hodgkinson, 1991). Given that premise, it is incumbent upon the individual administrator to articulate one’s values and ethical frameworks and act accordingly.

Philosophical Considerations

The changing dynamics of society (immigration, globalisation, standardization, emerging technologies) are clearly present in the schools (Begley, 1996; Foster, 2004), including those found in rural areas. Some of these changes speak to the changing dynamics of human behaviour and attitudes and philosophical understandings which impact upon how educational administration is enacted in schools. Philosophical influences are prevalent in discourse on educational administration (Greenfield, 1991; Hodgkinson, 1975, 1978; 1983; 1991; 1996; Lang, 1999; Samier, 2003) as they are in virtually any discipline. Hodgkinson (1975) has argued, that “[T]he essential contribution of philosophy is to clarify our language and conceptual understandings about values” (p. 18) where school administrative theory is concerned. Greenfield (in Forward to Hodgkinson, 1991) suggests, too, that philosophy plays a vital role, adding that “the central problems of administrative theory are philosophical” (p. 7).

In this study, I seek a deeper philosophical reflection on human morality and values and ask whether there is a universal ideal when it comes to acting and leading in a moral and ethical way. For the purposes of this study two philosophers’ perspectives will be examined as I explore: a) where and how values and morals may be acquired; and b) where and how they either are or can be employed in the professional practice of school

leaders. The first part of the discussion will look at the value of understanding as knowledge is acquired. To do this I will examine a concept articulated by Bernard Lonergan called “self-appropriation”. In the second part of the discussion I will look at Immanuel Kant’s “categorical imperative” and its maxim which promotes a sense of moral duty that an individual has to others and to society at large.

Self – Appropriation

How possible is it to respond appropriately to a contemporary moral or ethical problem if one’s foundation of thought and values are shaped by the perceptions of others? As a school administrator, I am often put into a position where expedient action is required; where decisions need to be made in order to resolve a problem quickly and efficiently so others can move on to what they need to do. Many times these decisions are made without adequate understanding of the variables involved. A simple example is student discipline. It is very difficult to actually get to the “truth” of the matter where scared children who know they are in trouble are concerned. I rely on testimonies from the children, consider the information presented to me, identify what it means and then decide on a course of action - some form of consequence. Such action will be punitive or restitutive. It is rare, however, that I feel completely confident that the consequence I administered was purely appropriate.

We rely, certainly in leadership roles, on what is presented before us first rather than what is in us first. We focus on what Bernard Lonergan called “scotomas . . . blind spots that get in the way of understanding what is actually happening” (Glendon, 2007, p. 18). These can be policies, rules, laws, opinions and even erroneous information that is presented in a valid way. What happens, then, is that the capacity for making decisions

and judgments based on one's values is diminished and one is forced to make decisions (and therefore accept outcomes) that are not necessarily appropriate (Langlois, 2004).

Lonergan held that the pursuit of knowledge is a personal one, that one cannot depend on others for true understanding. He describes this as "a breakthrough or insight as situated within the dynamic structure of human cognition: the cumulative processes of experiencing, understanding and judging" (Glendon, 2007, p. 19). From this process we seek the inner workings of our own capacity to understand. It is not enough to understand *something*; rather, the goal is to "[T]horoughly understand what it is to understand, and not only will you understand the broad lines of all there is to be understood but also you will possess a fixed base, an invariant pattern, opening upon all further developments of understanding" (Lonergan, 1961, p. xxviii). Self-appropriation is a shift in one's orientation toward objects. Instead of attending to objects outside of oneself, one establishes a kind of inner relationship to objects (Lonergan, 1997, p. 18). The attention moves away from the objects to oneself. The subject of perception turns to an internal observation of oneself as the subject, which shapes consciously observed acts of trying to know – Lonergan calls these "interior operations" (Lonergan, 1997, 18).

Self-appropriation is a process of accepting and taking on oneself as a knower and a doer. Further, self-appropriation represents the individual self-possession of oneself prior to the presence of outside knowledge and truth, and even value (Lonergan, 1997, p. 19). Self-appropriation holds that one should build an understanding of oneself operating in cognitive and moral capacities, and is a way of looking at or grasping for the possibility of knowledge. Looking for knowledge is a "conscious tendency" that involves an intelligent, critical, and deliberate endeavour (Lonergan, 1997, p.342). This is an implicit

conceptuality of an ideal of knowledge. The ideal, according to Lonergan, “is myself as intelligent, as asking questions, as requiring intelligible answers” (p. 351).

The key to self-appropriation is to move into oneself as one able to conceptualise, speculate and then judge. The move is inward to where the ideal is free of explicitly pre-ordained judgements, concepts, and even labels. The important thing to imagine as one makes the move inward is “the *you* that is present . . . the looker, not the looked-at” (p. 352-353). This is beyond introspection because it isn’t only about examining oneself, but rather the *examining* itself that matters.

Self-appropriation, then, is the individual attending to experiencing, understanding, and judging. It is also, however, a conscious acknowledgment (understanding) of oneself in the process of experiencing, understanding, and judging. This is the self-appropriative notion of how knowledge is determined: “the surfacing of experience, understanding, and judging” (p. 358). The point of attempting to achieve a sense of self-appropriation is to create one’s own threshold based on one’s own resources. It is not a matter of adopting the resources and approaches of someone else. One must first develop one’s own bases of knowing. Once done, one can move forward and move beyond into other possibilities.

The notion of self-appropriation is applicable to my experience as a principal of a rural Manitoba school because very often I am alone in the decision-making process and my nearest colleague may be two communities away. Because I am a rural principal I may not have a student services coordinator, guidance counsellor, vice-principal, or a full time resource teacher. In contexts such as these, I often have to make decisions based only on my own experience and understanding of a situation, and this is among the most important reasons I choose to remain in rural Manitoba as a principal. In this capacity I

have the freedom to consider more than the bureaucratic perspectives in my decision-making because, as mentioned above, I am often the only authority in the – often very lonely- process. I can examine a decision from the perspective of justice, or care, or community and rationalise it by representing a desire to understand before the dimensions of the situation are considered: “Am I capable of generating an insight into this problem?” If I am not, then I am not prepared to decide, even if outside pressure compels me to. If I have no choice but to follow through precisely because of the directive of an external authority, then I have lost the opportunity to appropriate an authentic understanding. If and when that happens, I have lost focus of the “invariant pattern” that applies to my perceptions.

The Categorical Imperative

Immanuel Kant’s categorical imperative has been cited in discussions on educational administration from the perspective of the role of duty, and specifically as duty relates to ethical and values-orientated notions of leadership (Lang, 1999; Rebore, 2001; Samier, 2003). A person can be said to have personal, internal obligations as they relate to thought, behaviour, and judgement (Lonergan, 1961) but individuals also have obligations to the greater society in which they live. A school administrator has a duty to her school: to the learning, to the climate and culture, and to the students. This is a microcosm of the duty she has towards a ‘greater moral good’ since that is what schooling ought to encourage (Norberg, 2003). Kant’s view was that morality is derived (via reason) from a person’s understanding of moral obligation and he sought to create the supreme principle of morality: the categorical imperative (Rebore, 2001). This is derived from his famous tenet that individuals ought to act as if what one does will, or could, become a universal law (Kant, 1996; Lang, 1999; Rebore, 2001; Samier, 2004).

Based on this, Kant sought to demonstrate his idea of duty as it pertains to a universal law of human nature by describing situations in which duty is tested. There are, for example, obligations to preserving life, ingratiating fundamentals of trust, making efforts to realise natural talents, and to helping those who are less fortunate rather than leaving them alone to their own misery (Kant, 1996; Rebores, 2001). These duties come with accompanying dilemmas since humans (because they can reason) can know right from wrong but may not act accordingly. Further, there may be room to make a distinction between the perceived good and the perceived right of a situation: the right thing to do and the good thing to do can be wholly different (Lang, 1999). Is it good that a school is closed due to a snowstorm or is it wrong because a day of school is missed? According to Kant, this would be a matter of the will and “the will is nothing but practical reason” (Kant, in Lang, 1999).

What has this to do with educational leadership? According to Samier (2003), the notion of administrative ethics in relation to Kant’s categorical imperative may be “sufficiently broad to encompass the complex tensions in human beings and their social relationships” (p. 1) and to address questions about “the moral nature of administrative decision-making, judgment, and character” (p.1). Even so, Samier (2003) argues that the categorical imperative is not typically taken seriously as a guide to resolving ethical dilemmas at the policy table of an educational institution given its relative proclivity for “rational decision-making models . . . One simply cannot reconcile Kantian ethics with conventional administration” (p. 18). That should not mean that there is no place for Kant in educational administration. The reality of the job of an administrator is in itself a push and pull of two seemingly opposing duties: to oneself and to the people in her care, and beyond – to humanity, for example. Changing the method of business in an educational

organisation requires an examination of core values, a critique of which follows the path of ethical practices. Kant's categorical imperative and the notion of duty is born of a comprehension of ethics that "provide a standard, or ideal, to resolve what appears to be a dilemma, and which can serve as a guide to administrative reform" (Samier, 2003, p. 19). Whatever values people cherish and live by -- equality and freedom are but two examples – people will consider it their duty to promote, perhaps even to conform to them in order to move towards moral development.

I include self-appropriation (Lonergan) and the categorical imperative (Kant) because I believe that they can shed light on ethical and moral leadership. If individuals are capable of deriving knowledge first by understanding the internal conditions of our knowing (self-appropriation) then it follows that the same could be argued for how individuals acquire a notion of values, or morality. The "fixed base" that emerges and to which can be applied to all other modes of understanding puts an educational administrator in a position to address the conditions, in all their inconsistencies and contradictions, of her obligations. As well, the duty to which she owes herself she owes too, to humanity, in acting on her impulses toward what is good *and* right within the context of her work as an educational leader working to improve the educational lives of children.

Before turning to the values model, I believe a word needs to be said about the element of judgment and its absence, directly, from the current discussion. I admit much of what may constitute a decision-making process includes the ability to, and necessity for procuring, judgments. Indeed, studies related to, for example, intentional action (Sripada, 2010) make revealing statements about the inner workings of a person's psychology when it comes to turning thought into action. As well, recent work on one's

understanding of human will as itself the verification of one's ability to reason (Hieronymi, 2009) can arguably reach into the decision-making realm of the school principal. While I acknowledge that the present study would lose nothing by undertaking to explore the impact of judgment in the examination, I feel my current purposes are adequately served without the important element of judgment. I will suggest, however, that the role played by judgment in principals' decision-making would make a worthwhile and fruitful study on its own.

A Values Model

Hodgkinson (1991) asserts that because "[v]alues, morals, and ethics are the very stuff of leadership and administrative life" (p. 11) there are several important reasons for putting educational administration in such a context. One is to acquire, to the extent possible, a semblance of self-understanding and self-knowledge (akin to self-appropriation). Another is to move towards a certain empathy for others while "gaining a sophisticated acceptance and recognition of the negative side of human character" (p. 11). Another reason, assuming the administrator is in the best position to address conflict within the organisation, is to develop a clearer sense of the problems that characterise human interaction, such as interaction within an educational environment. To put values within the educational administrative context is essentially to place educational administration in a context unique to organisational leadership (and unique to "educational" value) because it "embodies a heritage of value on the one hand, and is a massive industry on the other, in which social, economic, and political forces are locked together in a complex equilibrium of power" (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 164). Begley (1999a) adds that the question of the relevance of values in educational administration is shaped by several dominant perceptions. The first is that "organisations are essentially social

constructions” (p.1) and, therefore, considered in terms of the reflections and actions of individuals and people in general. The second is that despite best efforts and “increasing concerns for the development of moral or good organisations” (p. 2), the trend to treat people as objects for the pursuit of profit, or resources to expand power, remains as dominant as ever. Finally, Begley (1999a) proposes that scholars of educational administration ought to engage in the promotion of “reflection by individuals on personally held values followed by . . . promoting a sensitivity to the value orientations of others” (p. 2) for the purpose of inspiring networking on values – orientated thinking.

Hodgkinson’s (1991) values model encapsulates the concept of values and their place in educational administration – in organisational practice in general – and even, perhaps, in their place in the human condition itself. The model is supported by a preliminary definition of values as “concepts of the desirable with motivating force” (p. 101). The assumption here is that “human action is motivated by desire” (p. 101) and this conception influences the ways in which we decide on courses of action. With this definition of values in conjunction with Hodgkinson’s (1991) values model, it is possible to perceive the findings of Wallin’s (2009) work on rural innovations as ‘concepts of the desirable; action motivated by desire’ on the part of rural Manitoba educational administrators. The indicators produced by MASS and MAST (2006) require a reflection upon what was desired by rural schools and school divisions in order for them to remain educationally viable.

The innovations described in the study (Wallin, 2009) are illustrative of the desires of rural educators that reflect particular educational and community values, which lead to action on the part of rural Manitoba educational leaders to create workable and supportable educational opportunities for the students in these areas.

Hodgkinson (1991) refers to the values model as an “analytical model of the values concept” (p. 97), employed as a way “to chart our way across the seas of values confusion . . . to classify values and . . . establish some bases for the resolution of value conflicts” (p. 96). The model diagrams the values structure that highlights educational administration as a moral art. Starratt (2004) describes the model in terms of the presence of competing values “in which the leader attempts to orchestrate the tensions among individual values, the core values intrinsic to the work of the school, and the value climate external to the school, both local and national, always insisting that the leader will never completely succeed in that orchestration” (p. 8). Hodgkinson’s achievement is in placing into the arena of importance “general critical skills . . . since administrators occupy and operate within an increasingly fallacy-ridden universe . . . [and] a major concern with value . . . since administrators occupy and operate within a values-saturated universe” (p. 17). To know and understand the nature and challenge of values is essentially to know the nature and challenge of educational administration.

In the values model, Hodgkinson (1991) draws a distinction between two components: the right and the good (p. 97). These components are meant to clarify the philosophical terminology of the deontological (right) and the axiological (good) ways of perceiving value. The axiological notion refers to what one desires, a preference for one thing over another. The deontological notion refers to what one considers to be right, towards that which one may feel a duty or a moral tendency. For school leaders the differences between ‘right’ and ‘good’ may not be that clear. For example, I may think that literacy development is good for a child but because I think it is good I also think it is right. As well, the two notions can conflict. Lang (1999) argues that ‘good’ is a natural drive in human beings because people are capable of perceiving themselves in whatever

interactive environment in which they live (ie. nature, individual, cultural, political).

'Right', however, exists outside the mind and implies "universal moral thought transcending time" (p. 173). One cannot really have a conception of what is right unless one has an aptitude for rational thought (Kant, 1996). So, I have a preference for literacy and a duty to pursue it for the betterment of children. I also, however, think it is good for children and cannot appreciate how anyone – any rational person – could think otherwise, possibly because of my cultural and social conditioning as an educator. Therefore, there exists in my mind a collective duty to teach children to read. However, a distinction is necessary in school leadership because educational administrators are often torn between their preferences (the good) and their so-called duties (the right) (Langlois, 2004).

In the values model, the values themselves are placed within the categories of right (deontological dimension) and good (axiological dimension) and presented as a hierarchy of four value types Hodgkinson (1991). As well, Lang (1999) links these value types to essential human behaviour, contending that the "common theme is that humans possess three logically distinct sources of needs and motives, in order of influencing behaviour: faith/will, reason, emotions". (p. 170).

The first value type (from the bottom up), Type III, is referred to as the 'sub-rational'. This is the value that is most fundamentally human and motivated by self-interest and most closely associated with the notion of what is 'good' (not necessarily what is 'right'). Type III values are connected to an individual's preferences, desires, and even tastes. In terms of sources and motives influencing behaviour (Lang, 1999), Type III values are the emotional source.

The second value type is sub-divided into two parts: Type IIa and Type IIb, both of which reside in the category of 'rational'. Type IIb, motivated by 'consensus', is associated with what Hodgkinson (1991) says is motivated by "the will of the majority" (p. 98). In this sense, the majority is not so much a nation or a society but rather a family, a school staff, or a political affiliation. A consensus course of action, for example, might be the result of collaboration with the local community on the viability of providing and supervising religious exercises prior to the beginning of the school day.

Type IIa values (rational) are motivated by perceived consequences. In this sense the motivation is impacted by "reasonable analysis of the consequences entailed by the impending value judgment, some future state of affairs" (p. 98) that is deemed to be worth pursuing. A consequentialist course of action might be employed to, for example, provide a mechanism to offer Pre-Calculus Math by distance education (ie. interactive television) to students in remote areas where the school enrollment may not justify offering the course on site. Lang (1999) classifies Type IIa and IIb values as being motivated by reason.

The final value type, Type I, (viewed as meta-physical) is categorised as 'trans-rational'. According to Hodgkinson (1978), "the adoption of trans-rational values implies some act of faith, belief, or commitment" (p. 112) and "based on the will rather than upon the reasoning faculty" (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 99). Type I values, then, are beyond rational, unverifiable by equation and experimentation, and unavailable to purely scientific and technological analysis. It is something we believe as opposed to simply being a matter of want: universal health care, faith in the conception of a supreme spiritual force (ie. God) or a maxim that says "Make love not war!".

A trans-rational course of action is perhaps typified by a societal ethical grounding in the worth of mandatory formal education for children, or even that compulsory standardized testing of children is an effective way of linking assessment to instructional practice and accountability. It should be noted that metaphysical and transrational though Type I values may be, “they can also be deliberately irrational or anti-rational” (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 100). The example of standards testing could just as appropriately be argued from this angle as could be the example of the supreme deity, as when an anti-abortionist assassinates a doctor in his own home and claims that “It was the will of God that bade me do this”. Lang (1999) classifies trans-rational values as being motivated by will and/or faith.

While my inclusion of Hodgkinson’s values model (1991) is primarily an attempt to understand the model in the hopes of using it as a lens to examine so-called ‘real life’ situations (ie. responses to opportunities and challenges in rural Manitoba schools), it is necessary to maintain that the model is not absolute. The values model deals with motivating types whose meanings are often quite subjective. “Values”, Hodgkinson (1991) says, “are synonymous with meaning in the sense that we live within an invisible world of meaning in which the objective referents or contents of experience are distinct from whatever meaning or value we might ascribe to them” (p. 101). This depiction leaves room not only for Foster’s (1986) critical humanistic leanings but also for a link to value types with courses of action and decisions related to, for example, improving learning opportunities for students of small, rural schools (Wallin, 2009). Finally, the applicability of Hodgkinson’s model to this study is to explore the value and ethical basis of rural Manitoba educational administrators. The next section furthers an understanding of values-based administration by clarifying the multi-dimensional ethical paradigm with the

purpose of applying them to the experiences, methods, and approaches of rural Manitoba educational leaders.

The Ethical Paradigm

If school leadership is driven by a values construct (Hodgkinson, 1975, 1991) it follows that values are at the centre of any theory of educational administration. This is not a straightforward endeavour, however, given the “overly rationalistic approach” (Starratt, 1991) to educational administration and “the very real possibility that the extent, quality, and nature of discourse on values will . . . be further diminished and trivialised” (Ribbons, 1999, p. ix). The application of ethics in leadership roles and connecting them to a model for school leadership is potentially problematic (Starratt, 1991). We live in a “pluralistic society” and, therefore, “it is difficult to get agreement over which ethics to teach” (Starratt, 1994, p. 6). Therefore, it is helpful to be able to refer to some kind of framework in which to guide practice.

Starratt (1991, 1994) argues that the social sciences are abandoning positivism as a viable way of perceiving human interaction, especially where there exist management and leadership roles. In educational administration, for example, there is a developing recognition of the importance of moral and ethical issues in practice (Begley, 2004; Frick, 2009; Langlois, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1992; Strike, Haller & Soltis, 1998). Theory abounds but is somehow not quite accessible to the practitioner. What Starratt (1991) promotes is “a theory that helps practitioners frame moral situations in practice so that their moral content becomes more intelligible and more available to the practical intuitive sense of the practitioner” (p. 186). The ethical paradigm, then, “offers practicing administrators a way to think about their work and their workplace from ethical perspectives” (p. 186). Starratt’s (1991) position is that there is a ‘moral responsibility’ on the part of educational

administrators to build “an ethical environment for the conduct of education” (p. 187). Starratt’s (1991, 1994) multidimensional ethical framework stands as a way to consider the individual ethical frameworks from which we tend to work: the ethics of critique, justice, and care (Starratt, 1991; 1994). Added to this paradigm are two more elements or ‘ethics’: 1) the ethic of profession (Shapiro & Stefkovich (2005); and, 2) the ethic of community (Furman, 2003, 2004). Both ethics build on Starratt’s model to advance the pursuit of other ethical considerations in educational administration.⁴

The Ethic of Critique

Starratt (1994) states that the force behind the employment of critique as an ethical frame is “critical theory” (p. 46), which “provides a framework for enabling the school community to move from a kind of naiveté about ‘the way things are’” (p.47) to a position of seeing the school environment – from the perspective of administration – “in a wider context, one that needs its own critical analysis” (Foster, 1986, p. 11). This implies that schools are “structurally ineffective” (Starratt, 1994, p.46). The ethic of critique acts as a sort of lens through which to measure educational norms and practices against, for example, levels of fairness in that some will benefit from decisions and some will suffer. In effect, this admits that no social environment or organisation can make a legitimate claim to neutrality. Instead, to think of critique in terms of re-structuring, educational administrators need to see that no school environment *has to be* one way or the other. Rather, they need to try to link administrative practice to social and cultural concerns because “all theories, all constructs, all practices are open to critical reflection” (Foster, 1986, p. 13). Starratt’s (1991) ethic of critique suggests that the notion of re-structuring invites a kind of “moral fulfillment” (p. 191) on the part of the educational administrator and in which the responsibility lies in moral and technical challenges.

The Ethic of Justice

If the ethic of critique speaks to questioning existing norms of practice in a school organisation, then where does this lead the practitioner in realising what the vision of change might look like? The ethic of justice (Starratt, 1991, 1994) proposes that certain standards are upheld in the way people treat each other as a form of governance. We govern ourselves by both individual choices and community choices. In a school setting, according to Starratt (1991), “both are required . . . The ethic of justice demands that the claims of the of the institution serve both the common good and the rights of the individual in the school” (p. 194). Certainly the moral grounding of decisions related to instructional approaches, for example, will be as important as the curricular requirements that accompany them. In this sense the ethics of justice and critique have a shared purpose. Decisions about making the governance of the school more equitable or fair must originate in a critical examination of the variables that made those conditions unfair in the first place (Starratt, 1994) and simply by “naming . . . the problem (critique) will suggest new directions or alternatives for re-structuring the practice or process in a fairer manner” (p. 51-52).

The Ethic of Care

In discussing the application of critical pedagogy on authentic assessment practices (a critical reflection on high stakes testing in this particular case), Janesick (2007) offers that among the kinds of thinking skills that need to be encouraged includes “viewing each student as a thinking, human caring person” (p. 243). Furthermore, the extent to which we go to making the learning environments of children as challenging and intellectually stimulating as possible speaks volumes about what we care about in a just and caring society. The ethics of critique and justice (Starratt, 1991, 1994)

notwithstanding, people's concerns are diverse and will inevitably induce conflict. The important point is that these 'ethics' work towards a common goal of developing improvement for all. Janesick (2007) adds that "every educational activity is also a moral ethical activity and is also an opportunity to *empower* (my emphasis) any learner or any teacher" (p. 243). I believe this comes to fruition via the ethical paradigm (Starratt, 1991, 1994) if it is complemented or fulfilled in the ethic of care.

While the ethics of justice and critique act as perspectives for governance and reflective practice, the ethic of care situates relationships among people "from the standpoint of absolute regard" (Starratt, 1991, p. 195). Dignity for, not necessarily intimacy with, people is the overriding principle in the ethic of care. For school leaders this must be "grounded in the belief that . . . the school as an organisation should hold the good of human beings within it as sacred" (p. 195). One important way to complement this regard for human dignity in the school setting is through effective communication, which could be something as simple as greeting students by name as they enter the building or convening school-wide ceremonies of recognition for students who commit acts of selflessness (Lickona, 1992). Ultimately, in terms of the school climate and the relationships that exist among people, caring is a two-way street. Noddings (2003) admits that the "ethic of caring is a tough ethic. It does not separate self and other in caring, although, of course, it identifies the special contribution of the one caring and the one cared-for in caring (p. 99). Students will more likely respond appropriately if the school environment encourages a principle of caring: "A caring relation requires the engrossment and motivational displacement of the one caring, and it requires the recognition and spontaneous response of the one cared-for" (Noddings, 2003, p. 78).

This might not be the easiest thing for educational administrators to implement and maintain. Often decisions and actions are the very embodiment of uncaring but recognition of our weaknesses and failings can be the bridge to innovations and creative purpose precisely because the motivating feature is working for the betterment of the people in one's care.

Starratt's (1991, 1994) paradigm begs the question of how this combining of ethical theories can have practical applications for the practitioner. For one thing, the three ethics (critique, justice, care) are not necessarily exclusive of each other but rather "complement and enrich each other in a more complete ethic" (Starratt, 1991, p. 198). For the everyday educational administrator, whose day is typically replete with moral and ethical challenges, this combination of ethical theories "require that the administrator examine the problem from each framework and perhaps balance the demands of all three ethics in his or her response to the problem" (p. 199). Re-structuring practice ought to encourage a system where students are treated fairly, given opportunities to examine and articulate their surroundings, and are taught to see themselves and others with a mutual regard for human welfare.

The Ethic of Profession

The ethical paradigm put forth by Starratt (1991, 1994) highlights the ethical elements in school leadership that move toward the development of an ethical school culture and climate. This is noble and engaging in and of itself, however, there is another 'ethic' that seeks to expand the notion of ethical leadership: the ethic of profession.

Starratt (1991, 1994) argues for the need for a multiple ethical paradigm for creating a whole school dedicated to the improving of educational foundations for children while taking into account the multiple pluralities that mark society in general.

Taken together, the ethics of justice, care, and critique have the potential to address the challenges that globalization has incurred on Western societies in particular (Foster, 2004). Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), however, ask us “to consider current and real-life ethical dilemmas using four paradigms . . . [The problem is that] too often . . . professional ethics is seen as an extension of another paradigm and not thought to stand alone” (p. 7).

What the ethic of profession seeks to address, according to Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), “is a consideration of those moral aspects unique to the profession and the questions that arise as educational leaders become more aware of their own personal and professional codes of ethics” (p. 19). The heart of Shapiro’s and Stefkovich’s position, as posited by Greenfield (in Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005) is that moral reasoning on the part of educational administrators is a competency that can flourish in professional training. He says that failing “to provide the opportunity for school administrators to develop such competence constitutes a failure to serve the children we are obligated to serve as public educators” (p. 20).

Finally, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) frame the ethic of profession around a conception of the best interests of children. A problematic conception, the ‘best interests of students’ has been valued and vilified. Stefkovich and Begley (2007) argue that the term is used widely but never really defined; it is basically more rhetoric than genuine regard for the students themselves. Walker (1995) suggests, too, that the meaning of ‘best interests of students’ is at best rhetoric. Ethical principles and a drive to create schools that actually do work in the students’ best interests, however, are the key to making the use of the term more genuine.

The Ethic of Community

Furman (2003, 2004) defines the ethic of community as “the moral responsibility to engage in communal processes as educators pursue the moral purposes of their work and address the ongoing challenges of daily life and work in schools” (p. 215), thus complementing the existing ethical framework (Starratt, 1991, 1994; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). In terms of expanding the ethical framework, the ethic of community “centers the communal over the individual as the primary locus of moral agency in schools” (Furman, 2004) and, therefore, puts forth another dimension to the ‘why’ and ‘end-in-mind’ values typology of educational leadership (Begley, 1999d; Hodgkinson, 1991).

The critical piece about the ethic of community in terms of educational administration and, perhaps, its application to the educational realities of rural Manitoba, is its refutation of the belief that “individuals are the primary ‘moral agents’” (Furman, 2004), and in the best position to make positive change to educational environments. And even though Starratt’s (1991, 1994) model encompasses aspects of communal efforts, it still makes the case most strongly for the “foundational qualities of an ethical person” (in Furman, 2004, p. 218) as the essential architect of an ethical school. An honest person might, quite conversely, also consider the individual as the primary potential victim of power since, at its heart, power exerts control over individuals as the individual becomes a kind of cog in the machine (Foster, 2004). This influence is the by-product of bureaucratic controls over schooling which the ‘ethic of critique’, for example, encourages ethical leaders to repel. This suggests that the ethic of community is a stronger force in the ethical paradigm and in the values typology. The leader herself is important in this endeavour but while, as Furman (2004) argues, “common findings are

that administrators are very much aware of the moral aspects of their work” (p. 216), established ethical frames (ie. Starratt) “do little to pull our thinking beyond the mindset . . . of the individual as ‘leader’ and moral agent” (p. 220). The goal of the ethic of community, then, is to connect itself to ethical, values-based, and moral aspects of educational administration in communal and relational ways.

It is perhaps important to offer somewhat of a history lesson on the strikes against community as a possibility, rather than, ironically, as a necessity in modern schooling. Foster (2004) asserts that phenomena such as globalization have grounded community influence to a near halt. There is a notion that “the localism inherent to the democratic process has become usurped by a cadre of like-minded, well-rewarded, and self-appointed representatives of the profession” (p. 180) to the point where “[S]chooling, once considered as the means for the development of the educated person, has increasingly come to be seen as the venue for increasing the economic competitiveness of the state” (p. 182). Referring to MacIntyre, Foster (2004) goes on to add that an alternative to this consumerist standard of educating the young is to hold “virtues” rather than “rules” as the standard for developing an educated populace. The role of the educational administrator is in the area of spreading a culture of character formation wherein the morality of a person “is always to some degree tied to the socially local and particular . . . as part of a tradition in which we inherit [virtues] from a series of predecessors” (MacIntyre in Foster, 2004, p. 185). In other words, we gain our moral standards from those who have taught us directly – family, school, community. And given the context of rural schooling, this sense of community, though disturbed and changed by globalizing forces and changes in demography, technology and the like, nevertheless remains a strong virtue and strength upon which educational leaders rely.

Mawhinney (2004) refers to “deliberative democracy” as a method of politicising a notion of community building for schools by paying attention to the “particularistics” (p. 209) of the communities. Though the differing particulars of certain groups (ie. religious, political, ethnic) may pose challenges to deriving a common vision of a school community, there is also the potential for effective dialogue among the sectors involved, thus creating emerging “capacities for reciprocity and solidarity” (p. 211). In rural areas, this may allude to a hopeful result of divergent groups who share a common struggle against global forces that tend to minimize rural community capacity and which have had disastrous effects on rural schools.

Foster (2004), then, has suggested a metaphor of community as a critical alternative to the globalised, economics-driven reality that has infiltrated schooling in the Western world. Hoffman and Burello (2004) suggest that this alternative appears to be in motion. They found that a shift “from schooling economic utility to a focus on teaching and learning” (p. 268) is indeed occurring and that the change in orientation “was not considered the work of one group (the participants in the study were superintendents and area superintendents) but was exercised by people in many positions and disciplines” (p. 286) all of which went in the direction of questioning and then changing the attitudes towards existing structures. When Foster (2004) declares that there “has occurred a decline of the local – a movement away from community input into the conduct of our lives to the regulations of the state” (p. 189-90), it is important to note that there is hope for the community-minded in those of us who work to improve the structures of education; more than hope, there is action – community action.

Furman (2004) posits that “[M]uch of the literature on community in schools emphasizes the importance of relationships, collaboration, and communication” (p. 221).

This is not a bad thing in and of itself. The problem is, according to Furman (2004), that “in its general usage, the term ‘community’ tends to connote an entity, a thing, a product, or a specific type of social configuration” (p. 221). Even to equate ‘community’ with a family or a rock band is still to refer to it as a unit, so to speak. What Furman (2004) argues for is a conception of community as a “process”, “and it is more important to inspire commitment to these processes than commitment to the metaphor . . . as an end ‘product’” (p. 221). This means that interested groups commit to communal processes in carrying out the moral responsibilities of work in schools. More to the point, instead of seeing certain values as guiding ethical practices in schools (ethics of critique, justice, care, profession), the ethic of community, as a communal process, is the guiding force and central consideration in the ethical framework. What the ethic of community – as a process – proposes, then, is a change in perception as to what leadership represents and can represent. Furman (2004) argues that two prominent questions need to be asked: 1) To what communal processes should school leaders and educators commit; and 2) Why is a communal leadership practice important in contemporary schools (p. 223)? The answer lies in the fact that growing demographic, learning and ethnic diversity in schools and society in general (Begley, 1999a; Furman, 2004; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1991, 1994; Wallin, 2009) creates challenges for the traditional approaches to school leadership – there can’t be one value for all. It is the obligation of the school leader to “internalise the ethic of community as a guide to practice” (p. 228) and work with moral practices as a communal responsibility.

According to Furman (2004), then, the ethic of community ought to be a process rather than merely an entity, and as such work alongside but beyond the values of critique, care, justice and profession (Starratt, 1991, 1994; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). In

terms of leadership praxis (ie. moral action or, the action of morphing theory and practice), this blending of the more individualized ‘ethics’ conceptions (Starratt, Shapiro & Stefkovich), and corresponding process orientation (as the ethic of community is defined by Furman, 2004) has implications for application in rural schools where, it will be argued later, the community is highly influential in the educational environment. Without going into too much detail here, it is a standard assumption that the simultaneous dependency between the school and the community drives the community at large (Lyson, 2002; Wallin, 2009); greeting challenges together and devising approaches for addressing those challenges becomes a community and communal necessity.

Praxis and Values-based Educational Administration

In the introduction to Part I of *Values and Educational Administration* (Begley, ed., 1999a), Begley suggests that today’s educational administrative landscape in and of itself is a values training ground for the educational administrators “[A]dministrators are aware of values issues without any particular need for prior training in philosophy or exposure to the literature on administrative ethics. They have become increasingly sensitive to values issues simply because of the pluralistic societies in which they live and work” (p. 3).

School leaders can expect to confront values orientations both in values collaboration and values conflict, which, according to Begley (1999a), justifies values as meriting study in the context of school leadership. For example, the fact that decision-making plays such an important role in the work of an administrator implies that certain actions are taken over others (Langlois, 2004). This preference for one course of action, in turn, implies that values are at the core of the decision simply due to the aim of the decision itself. This goes hand in hand with the inevitability of working through values conflicts because administrators must make a decision “to distinguish between personal, professional,

organisational, and social values” (Begley, 1999d, p. 5). Whether or not the administrator is educated in values mediation, she will have to accept the inevitability of values conflicts as a matter of course.

It is, therefore, worthwhile in these times of ethical plurality to be able to rely on a method or ideal that seeks a practical perspective to the conflicts and questions. But why study values as a concept in educational administration unless there is something “useful” in it for the practitioner? This section of the study examines the notion of ‘praxis’ and how the concepts of values, ethics, and morality -- as applied to educational administration – can be more than just abstractions, suggesting that there is a utility in values-based school leadership.

Hodgkinson (1991) and Foster (1986) devote significant attention to the concept of ‘praxis’ and its application to the field of educational administration, which, in terms of organisational theory, tends to pit theory against practice or blends theory and action. Foster (1986), in advocating a removal of the limits set by our social and cultural environments insists that to do this “theory must become practical, must inform our methods of dealing with the world. . . Administrators and students of administration can utilise theory in their actions with others by using it to work with others” (p. 191). Of course, for Foster (1986), this utility “is basically praxis oriented toward sharing power, leadership, and effecting change” (p. 200) advocating for the role of critical theory in helping leaders to understand privilege and marginalization, and sharing the work of change among stakeholders. Hodgkinson (1991) says that the term ‘praxis’ stands as an essential part of thinking about educational leadership. It “suggests a duality of action, two moments of consciousness or reflection on the one hand, and behaviour and commitment on the other” (p. 113) and that, despite the inception of action associated

with the more reflective element of praxis, the “root and source of all true action is inner” (p. 140). Where this is particularly important to the study of values in school leadership is in the place that people – not organisations as such – have within the school environment. People bring their values to their practice (Begley, 1999b) which in turn “can transform . . . vague advice about reflective practice into something specific enough to act upon” (p. 61). An organisation isn’t an entity in and of itself but rather an organic body comprised of multi-layered attitudes and beliefs all of which are housed and nurtured within (rather than outside of) individuals (Greenfield, 1974; Sergiovanni, 1992). Rather than seeing the school as a system, it ought to be seen and maintained as a “constructed reality or illusion that is made by people” (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 141). In this light, for example, who can point to the government, for example, as the body or entity that seeks to make educational opportunities for students in rural communities equal to those of larger centers? If not for individuals, working towards common goals and who have in their minds visions of a better experience for children, there would be no such government agenda nor any action towards implementing it.

Schooling can be said to be the moral practice of acting on desirable (educational) ends – values (Norberg, 2003). In terms of internalising these desirable ends (itself an action, albeit a reflective one) “constitutive values” (Norberg, 2003) exist as a way of “requiring that those values saturate all activities and be shared by all working within a school” (p. 6). Ethics and morals somehow have a limited meaning in educational administration because of the lack of “translation of ethical beliefs into moral practices” (p. 7). The use of reflection on the part of educational administrators has been argued as a way to interpret their intentions when making their decisions, thus making the act of reflection contingent on future outcomes of their own actions (Coombs, 2003; Normore,

2004). Since decisions “make some comment about how things should be done – which by definition is a moral action” (Normore, 2004) – the development of “moral praxis” (Armstrong, 2004, p. 1) in administration is necessary.

Leithwood (1999) argues: 1) That school administrative practice is already ethical; 2) That it is much easier to exude caring than it is to follow through with ethical objectives; 3) That unethical activity can continue for only so long in a school system before it is found out; and 4) That all the scholarship in the world is unlikely to prevent unethical activity on the part of a school administrator bent on being unethical.

Leithwood’s (1999) challenge here is that as scholars and commentators on values-orientated, ethically-minded, and morally-driven educational administration attempt to make meaningful engagement within this aspect of the field, there is an inherent lack of attention given to practical utility. For example, “taxonomies of values rooted in moral philosophy” (p. 27), and even “empirical efforts to describe the values of practicing educational leaders” (p. 27), aren’t sufficient when the local school is under threat of being closed due to perceived enrolment decline and where educators/community members are desperate to keep their communities alive.

Two major challenges in relation to leadership training face the field of educational administration. One is to concentrate on aspiring leaders as they grow into a greater sense of their own professional values and how those influence their practice: notions of respect, caring, and justice, for example. These may be applicable to leadership but are also quite aptly personal since “they seem equally salient to all aspects of one’s life” (Leithwood, 1999, p. 45). Another challenge is in advocating (in leadership training programs) contingency in values priority: “At different points in time the school will need to give more priority to the development and maintenance of one aspect of its design”

(Leithwood, 1999, p. 46). In this sense, leadership praxis centers on a kind of self-awareness about one's values orientation and in what ways this can direct decision-making in schools and school environments where an important value such as community is concerned. Here is the balance educational leadership must achieve for both self-appropriation and upholding the moral imperative.

This notion of praxis can be problematic when set against traditional ideas of effective educational administration. Simon's (1965) contention that schools and school organisations concentrate solely on efficiency and pragmatism in their leadership may still hold true to a certain extent, but they hold very little place in the face of an ever-changing modern world (Begley, 1999a). Others argue that postmodernism has rendered not only conventional leadership theory and practice archaic but also that traditional moral reasoning itself has become obsolete (Ryan, 1999; Foster, 1999). In the age of an "increasingly fragmented, ambivalent, and uncertain world" (Ryan, 1999, p. 75) the problems revolve around what are the pertinent questions we ought to be asking in the field of educational administration. Ryan (1999) suggests that administrators acquire moral forms of life complemented by an understanding of and desire to critique their professional environments in order to address the moral ambiguity of postmodernism. Foster (1999), by invoking the term "post administration" (p. 111), takes issue with the dualism of science and post modernism. He says that, because science has garnered a hold on power because of its emphasis on the acquisition of so-called 'pure knowledge', social sciences – like education – had taken a back seat in terms of leadership practice. Today, however, according to Foster (1999), postmodernism's skepticism about the attainment of pure knowledge exclusively through science is developing a greater influence where educational administration is concerned. Post administration implies that

educational administration is an entity with its own power over “structures of control” (p. 111). Arguing alongside Furman (2004), Foster (1999, 2004) submits that for meaningful participation in public life to develop and prosper, the role of the community is crucial. To think otherwise would risk falling prey to the universality of power mechanisms (ie. standardisation of teaching and learning) driven by economic and social dominance. Put into terms related to practical applications of educational administration, the role of community is to enable individuals to work with others for the sustainability of local autonomy over values and educational goals.

Just as there are criticisms of traditional notions of educational administrative practice (Begley, 1999b; Foster 1986, 1999, 2004; Greenfield, 1974; Hodgkinson, 1991, 1999; Leithwood, 1999; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1991, 1994) in favour of more practical applications for the leader in the field, it should be noted that attempts to invoke a sense of coherence to educational administrative values praxis have been criticised as well. Allison and Ellett, Jr. (1999) argue that such endeavours have shown to be dated and their effectiveness debatable. What Allison and Ellett, Jr. (1999) oppose primarily is the tendency towards the “restricted treatment of human values and their place in both administrative theory and systematic inquiry” (p. 184) in attempts in scholarship to make values-based leadership more practical and accessible. Because people are formed by cultural interaction (Allison and Ellett Jr., 1999), there is a desire to commit to re-creating a reality that drives action and meaningful decision-making. To impose an all-pervasive empirical application of educational administrative theory is to depose ways to “actively engage practitioners and trainees” (p. 204) in the presence and use of values in their work. The danger in working out a theory of praxis in educational leadership seems to be that by doing so there re-emerges a movement towards exactly

what ethical and moral notions of leadership have been moving away from: a scientific, categorised model of organisational design. This, according to Allison and Ellett Jr. (1999), counters what values-based leadership theory is supposed to be about, namely the subjective and unpredictable nature of the work of school leaders. In this context, values neutrality is not an option.

What, then, do we tell the practitioners who “struggle to clarify and apply their values as leading educators in practice” (Ribbins, 1999)? If science no longer satisfies the requirement for effective school administration and flounders as a method of theoretical application (Foster, 1986) in the face of ever-changing economic, social, and demographic realities (Begley, 2007), what does? It may be closer to the point and, thereby, legitimising the verifiability of educational administration as a field of study, to apply values, ethical principles, and even morality to the leadership purpose simply because they do not need science to be relevant and applicable to educational discourse and practice. For this to happen, reflections on the future directions of school leadership are crucial (Leonard, 1999). Those themes that are dominant in the field of educational administration need to be re-examined -- such as an examination of what actually goes on in schools -- which puts the practitioner (i.e. the school administrator) at the forefront of academic debate (Leonard, 1999). This does not suggest that we replace people’s capacity to maintain political and social commitments with a values-free, technocratic approach but rather work towards advancing responsible action and a more just world (Bossetti & Brown, 1999) within the struggles and contexts within which people work. Educational goals that are formed by a vision of the future are, therefore, “concerned with preparing children for meaningful participation in that future” (Bossetti & Brown, 1999, p. 233), the failure of which will greatly diminish any hope of deriving “the ideal of

moral leadership in the encumbered world of the educational practitioner” (Leonard, 1999, p. 252).

Rural Educational Leadership and Ethical Praxis

What I turn to now is rural education in Manitoba and an examination of the possibility of moral, ethical and values-based educational leadership in the face of growing concern with the viability of schooling there. For the rural Manitoba educational administrator, much of the “encumbered world” involves continuous innovation: in programming, professional development, opportunity, and community resource use. Further examination will look at the motivation in designing and implementing creative methods of program offerings and delivery. It is hoped that this study can trace attempts in these areas back to an inherent sense of personal and professional value structures on the part of rural school leaders, and that their successes are the product of thoughtful reflection on these values and positive action; in other words, a sense of praxis.

Defining *Rural*

Attempting to define the term takes more than a casual glance at a dictionary or encyclopaedia. Further, what constitutes the term ‘rural’ ought to represent more than just its dualistic opposite, ie. ‘urban’ (the same criteria would apply in attempting to define ‘urban’). The two terms stand apart enough for the difference(s) to be recognized; but as abstract concepts they both require interpretation and personal experience in conceiving a definition. It is my view that an official (ie. from an academic source or a dictionary) definition must be weighed against (or with) the experiences of the individual. In this way, the term has meaning on at least two levels – authoritative and personal – and, therefore, can represent a more expansive understanding. I consider here the

definition of the term rural from the two standpoints of authoritative and personal supported further by a more anecdotal portrayal from my own experiences.

If I asked a rural development policy analyst the question, “What is the rural population of Canada?”, it is doubtful that I would get an immediate answer. More unlikely is the hope that I would get a definitive answer. Instead, and I prefer this, I should be prepared for a response such as, “Well, it depends on the reason you are asking. What are you trying to find out?” Note that this is much different than asking “How many provinces are there in Canada?” Here one should get both an immediate and (hopefully) a definitive answer. In asking what the rural population is, however, the hypothetical “What are you trying to find out” is a key response “because several alternative definitions of ‘rural’ are available . . . The challenge is to decide which definition to use” (Statistics Canada, 2002a, p. 4). I am trying to find out how an authoritative definition of ‘rural’ compares to my personal understanding of rural.

I believe that ‘rurality’ can be subdivided into different areas of examination. According to Statistics Canada, debate about what is rural often “concerns whether ‘rural’ is a *geographical concept*, a location with identifiable boundaries on a map, or whether it is a *social representation*, a community of interest, a culture and way of life” (2002a, p. 6). In both senses, it is population that determines rural. One examines the numbers in relation to each other; the other examines people *themselves* in relation to each other.

Rural as geographical concept. In a country the size of Canada and with a comparatively small population, virtually any study about it is affected by geography and geographical phenomena. Its sheer diversity in physicality is in itself a defining feature. In defining the term rural, then, statistics tend to be the first and perhaps most reliable data since they can track the placement of people, and the number of people living in a given area determine the definition

in a geographical sense. If the population of Hartney, Manitoba, (approx. 400), suddenly turned into 50,000, its status as 'rural' would be in question. So how is rural defined statistically? The 1996 census dictionary defines rural areas as "sparsely populated lands lying outside urban areas" (Statistics Canada, 1999, p. 226). This is a start, albeit a general one. More specifically, rural means that an area is situated outside of an urban or metro area relational to zone within the square kilometre formula. According to OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development)(in Statistics Canada, 2002b, p. 3), a "rural community refers to individuals in communities with less than 150 persons per square kilometre. This includes individuals living in the countryside, towns and small cities inside and outside of the commuting zones of urban centres". This brings the concept into better perspective, especially for those living in a rural area. They know where they are and they certainly know where "the city" is. Fundamentally, the defining feature may be that a rural area is not a city, and often nowhere near a city.

The determination of what constitutes rural, and what does not, will need to include a geographical perspective, much the same way that what constitutes a French or an Aboriginal community is determined. I caution, however, that it is a limited perspective and void of stories and sense of collective consciousness, which also defines a people.

Rural as social representation. I begin by asking "Is a definition of rural even necessary?" I say this because someone who grows up 'rural', as I did, usually knows what it is and what it is not. While a definition may not be possible (even desirable), this does not imply that the term is without certain characteristics. In this section, I will rely on my own perspective to define 'rural'.

A rural existence is matter of the mind: what is detected with the senses and then internalised. For me this is categorised by two things: physical landscape and human

interaction. In terms of physical landscape, my rurality is defined not by smallness but by immenseness; immenseness of space. The sky is always visible and the land extends mile after mile (rural Manitobans don't use 'kilometre' to designate distance!). The expanse of natural territory evokes the impression of freedom and the will to genuinely preserve it. This description might hint at the statistical definition of rural – sparsity – but only in terms of population, not of land and space. This observation brings me to another common notion of rural life, isolation, and how the perception of this influences the concept of rurality. In a study on rural education by Stevens (1992), the notion of 'rural' was treated with suspicion because the subjects of the study living in geographically remote part of Canada did not consider themselves isolated. The reason was that, because they were connected to the 'world' by extremely sophisticated communication technological systems, they felt the term did not apply to them. It begs the question as to whether 'rural' as a concept has a singularity of meaning if it no longer can be identified by isolation. The curious aspect of trying to categorise rurality into terms such as isolation and immensity is that regardless of either one, as a rural school principal I am nothing if not totally visible. Local people know me even if I don't know them. In this way the rural experience is a kind of paradox: As remote as my surroundings are, everyone knows where to find me.

Perhaps the one defining notion of 'rural' lies in the way people interact with one another through a shared consciousness. I think much of the 'things rural' need to be experienced rather than observed. Statistics couldn't possibly explain my grandmother's ('Gran') long-standing lover's quarrel with the weather. I can explain it, my mother can explain it, Mr. MacLeod (Gran's neighbour) can explain it, and the Co-op manager can explain it. Why? Because it is a shared experience and connects people to a common

understanding, the same way helping others, compassion, familiarity with each others' circumstances, and a united disposition of perseverance is somehow manifested and represented in an idea of rural life and passed on to successive generations.

The Rural Reality

Rural schooling in Manitoba faces challenges (MASS & MAST, 2006; Wallin, 2009), as does rural life generally (Rural Team Manitoba, 2004), a reality that seems never to grow old. Consider the following passage:

There is no doubt that rural conditions have changed immensely in the last few decades. The Canadian farmer no longer lives a self-contained and self-satisfied life. On the contrary he is being rapidly drawn into the great world currents . . . The older homogeneous population has well nigh disappeared . . . There have been, also, tremendous internal migrations, from east to west and from country to city... The rural problem, however, is not coincident with rural depopulation . . . What, then, is it?" (Good, 1923, p. 230)

The "it" in Good's question is the rural problem. The fact that this was published in 1923 indicates that rural issues have been considered a 'problem' for at least these 87 years, which does little to ameliorate the stereotype of rural life being in crisis. The Canadian Rural Partnership (in Rural Team Manitoba, 2004, p.8) acknowledges as its overall goal to enhance the quality of life in rural communities so that rural community members can be better equipped to compete on a global scale economically. Again, alluding to a sense of inadequacy, the CRP itself was formed to make rural life viable and sustainable since, according to Wallin (2009), the most influential challenges facing rural areas "stem from the consequences of globalization on trade, labour relations, regulatory control, or governmental rules and guidelines" (p. 3). In other words, rural education is at the mercy

of much larger trends that are out the control of the local jurisdiction. How, then, does one proceed in making schooling meaningful and equitable for rural communities?

Furthermore, what are the issues with which the rural Manitoba school administrator must deal and how do her decisions impact positively on the lives of the people in her care? Looking at it from the perspective of rural school leaders, I am motivated to find out what drives their own motivations, their visions of their schools and in many cases their communities, as well.

Problems with Rural Research

As for the literature on rural education, it isn't only that research and commentary in the field is lacking but also that it is inconsistent and tends to focus on the challenges and problems rather than the successes and hopes (Wallin, 2009). Browne-Ferrigno and Allen (2006) comment that despite the comparatively large percentage of children living in communities with populations under 2,500 residents, there is limited research on rural education issues and, in topic-specific areas such as how to recruit and retain properly prepared administrators for high needs rural schools, the research is non-existent.

Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, and Dean (2005) felt that the challenges in rural schools were great enough to look at the actual condition of the research itself in rural education and found, for example, that seldom does this topic receive scholarly attention and funding for such research is scarce. Ewington, Mulford, Kendall, and Edmunds (2008), in examining small schools in Tasmania, see small schools as a discrete and complex group. However, a "recent review of research in the last five years in four of the major Australian journals on educational leadership unearthed only five studies on small schools" (p. 1).

Starr and White (2008) seek to "fill a void" in the research on small school principalships

where economic and social globalisation has come to dominate educational environments world-wide.

The problem in the research also includes defining 'rural'. As discussed above, definitions depend on the context. Among the obstacles to conducting reliable research in the field are the variances in the term 'rural' in the research, which can make comparing results of studies quite difficult (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean, 2005). As well, Starr and White (2008) reveal the discrepancy between what are considered small schools and what is considered rurality in Australian schools. With certain bureaucracies defining rural differently, "[T]hese differing definitions produce profound population differences" (p. 1) and run the risk of obscuring accurate data where rural issues are concerned.

Though not represented in this study, I am interested in studies that compare rural and urban schools in terms of leadership approaches. I feel that by citing some literature that reflects this comparison, some more insight into rural perspectives may be achieved and in turn help to contextualise the experiences of the subjects of this study.

Hetherington (2007) writes that for rural school administrators a different approach to leading may be required than in urban areas, one where the major consideration is that one know her community in order to be successful. Howley, Howley, and Larson (1999) explain at length that the differences in approaches to planning between urban and rural administrators are largely due to locale and circumstances rather than size of the school but that planning itself is a fairly new expectation of principals – depending on the level of planning and the influence of the central administration (state/province/district/division). This could mean that the decline of 'managerial', 'technocratic' approaches to school administration is actually happening but

happening more slowly than we would like. In their study, Howley, Howley, and Larson (1999) cite rural West Virginia principals as showing more of a preference for what they call “organised anarchy” in their approaches to planning. Either the locale is chaotic and unorganised or the educational environment is active and independent. For small schools, this is a prime breeding ground for creativity. Starr and White (2008) found that, in terms of major administrative differences between rural schools and urban schools, small rural school principals have fewer resources, spend a great deal of their time teaching cross and multi-age student groups, have less support staff, and yet “standardised compliance requirements issued at the state and federal, state, and district levels involve the same responses from all schools irrespective of size and location” (p. 3).

This notion of fewer resources but the same expectations appears often in rural educational research, whether the context is the US, Canada, and Australia. What rarely appear in the research are examinations of successes in and preferences for rural school environments.

The concept that appears to be a unifying variable in the discussions of rural leaders experiencing successes despite perpetual challenges to providing adequate programming is the role of community support (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean, 2005; Browne-Ferrigno & Allen, 2006; Ewington, Mulford, Kendall, & Edmunds (2008); Hetherington, 2008; Howley, Howley, & Larson, 1999; Lyson, 2002; Mulcahy, 1996; Starr & White, 2008; Wallin, 2009). Recall that Furman (2003, 2004) classifies the idea of community as an ethic in leadership and one that is most effective as a communal process rather than a manifestation of an individual leading the school toward enlightenment. If access to and reciprocated direct influence on the community is the one valuable tool,

that rural administrators perhaps have to a greater extent than urban school administrators, then it is hoped that this will emerge in the data of this study.

Summary

The preceding literature review is perhaps intentionally elaborate and reflective of a personal need to understand the moral influences in educational leadership. The goal was to explore significant ideas related to values-orientated and ethical leadership approaches and link them to the framework of the research: rural Manitoba principals and the impetus for their decisions related to school development and improvement. I will attempt to make a link between their responses to critical issues facing rural Manitoba schools and the values, ethics and even morality inherent in their practices.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Broadly defined, qualitative research is based in inquiry into an understanding of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). The researcher will typically generate data by way of inquiry – posing questions, conducting observations, analysing documents – and interpreting the responses, actions, and nuances that emerge from multiple perspectives on an issue or idea. Creswell (2005) explains that an alternative to traditional quantitative methods of research was sought in order to access more of the views of the research participants. This new form was termed ‘naturalistic’ inquiry (Agostinho, 2005; Creswell, 2005; Willower, 1996) or ‘constructivism’ (Creswell, 2005; Willower, 1996) and highlighted the context and the environment of the participants. In this way a better and more accurate sense of peoples’ meaning was derived (Creswell, 2005). Still, debate about qualitative research is prevalent. Agostinho (2005) sees qualitative research as “an evolving field of inquiry” (p. 2) that will remain so because of its nature: requiring interpretation and multiplicity in views. In this study, the views of the participants are framed qualitatively to focus on values and “the close interrelationship of values and inquiry in moral choice in administration” (Willower, 1996, p. 349). The problems principals face in their day-to-day decision-making are, I argue, predominantly moral problems and, therefore, ought to be examined through a qualitative method of inquiry.

Treating a certain value principle in educational administration as an absolute does not comply with the variability of participant experiences: not all value principles are the same for all administrators nor do all educational administrators follow identical courses of action in their decision-making. While it may be true that “most educators are principled individuals who want the best for their students” (Willower, 1996, p. 359), it is dangerous to suppose that school leaders exist in the same context and reason the same

way. As Frick (2009) argues, “[T]he mix of values, beliefs, and assumptions from a myriad of interested parties” generates “difficult choices between . . . conceptions of what is desirable” (p. 51). These conflicts are a matter of perspective, which is what I had hoped to derive with a qualitative approach.

This study is based on naturalistic inquiry using a form of case study approach with interview methods. A note about the so-called case study approach: it is not so much that the participants and I viewed a case study or even devised one (but for reasons of brevity, I refer to it as a ‘case study’). Rather, the case study idea here takes the form of a kind of recalling of a significant incident and/or experience, one that had both significant value to each principal and had the elements of a values and/or ethical dilemma. I have chosen to add this method because educational administration involves “more than simply processing and carrying out certain technical skills to ensure effective and efficient management” (Frick, 2009, p. 50). I feel that having to recall an incident that made an impression on them might convey a sense of a rural narrative in that the principals will be sharing a story of their own experience and practice – something that might suggest the uniqueness of rural settings.

Referring to Lincoln and Guba (1985), Agostinho (2005) comments that case studies have been used in educational research as a way of “writing or presenting for reporting the results of naturalistic inquiry” (p. 2). Strike, Haller and Soltis (1998) create case studies based on actual experiences to inspire readers to reflect on what they may do in a certain situation given the ethical dilemmas that are posed. Zuelke and Willerman (1995), in discussing the case study approach in educational administration preparation programs, argue that case studies can be effective strategies for relating theory and knowledge to practical situations. They describe how case studies can be created by the

students themselves such that they grow out of their own professional experiences (Wassermann, 1993 in Zuelke & Willerman, 1995). In this study, the participants, in a way, built their own case study and interpreted an authentic dilemma for them to reflect upon. It was my hope that this exercise produce valuable data to which an association with their personal and professional values could be made. Further, because I am seeking values perspectives from school principals, an interview approach allows participants to “best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher” (Creswell, 2005, p. 214). A copy of the interview protocol can be found in Appendix A.

Sources of Data

The sources of data were four rural school principals who have actively practiced in a rural Manitoba school for at least three (3) years, and whose experiences as a group represented a variety of school levels found in rural contexts: K-4 and K-6 (Early Years), 5-8 (Middle Years), and 7-12 (Secondary and Senior Years). The sampling was homogeneous in nature, except all the participants were male. The interview sessions were semi-structured, one-on-one, based on an analysis of interview questions and a case study/administrative experience in which they had engaged. The sessions lasted between 45 minutes and 65 minutes. Participants were asked to reflect upon a time when they were required to confront their own sense of ethics or values structure. They were asked to describe an experience where they were required to make an administrative decision which they believe forced them into an ethical dilemma (This is Question #6 in Appendix A). Interview prompts directed a thorough reflection of the dilemma linked to an analysis of the ethical principles underlying the thought and action processes taken by these administrators.

I wanted to know how the examples they highlighted show that a dilemma in decision-making – ethical or values orientated--occurred and how they addressed it. Primarily, I wanted to examine clashes of values, how the situation was resolved or not resolved and why. For example, was the administrator put in a situation that caused her or him to question his or her own personal values; his or her own professional values; the values of the authority against which they were confronted (ie. a school division policy)?

I used the audio recording device, “Audacity” for the responses. I transcribed the recordings and returned the transcripts to each participant for authentication of the responses and member checking.

Participant Selection

As mentioned above, the participants were active school principals in two rural school divisions who have been principals for at least three years. I felt this best authenticated the data and provided for a wider range of experiences. As well, I anticipated that, with at least three years of experience, the participants’ confidence level enhanced their ability to articulate their experiences in this kind of forum. Lastly, and more specifically, I wanted the participants to have an understanding of the role that the local community plays in their administrative mandate.

After receiving consent to conduct the research by the rural school division superintendents, I sent invitations to participate in the research to every school principal – via the superintendents--in the school division representing elementary, middle, and secondary schools. The first four principals who represented each category and the criteria, and who consented to participate were chosen for participation. I sent the letters of written and informed consent for participants to complete. Once I received the consent forms, I

approached the participants by email, to give them a copy of the questions and to plan any other arrangements (ie. time and place) around their preferences and schedules.

Researcher Positioning

The role of the researcher in a qualitative research study is a critical consideration (Hatch, 1996; Ritchie & Rigano, 2001; White, Drew & Hay, 2009), even to the point of out-and-out discrediting qualitative research in its conventional practices (Frosh, 2007), because the 'role' is very often blurred in the process: for the researcher to remain neutral in a qualitative research situation is problematic because he or she must engage with the participant(s). The very fact that I am 'reporting' on my research positioning in this context implies that I cannot be totally neutral, and any claim to be would not be credible. The need for qualitative researchers to reflect on their roles in the process, then, is a fundamental part of the analysis. In a way, this study is representative of ethnography in that I am studying a "culture-sharing group's shared pattern of behavior, beliefs and language" (Creswell, 2005, p. 436.). The 'culture' is school principals in rural Manitoba; the shared behavior, beliefs and language exist in the ways they perceive and act on values and ethics in their working experiences. Because I am also representative of this culture, my role as researcher was to engage with the participants – bringing with me my shared experiences and biases related to what it means to act ethically as a rural school principal – yet, remain important to the participants, their responses, and their environments.

In this study, where the data is the result of shared conversations between the participants and me, it is important to comment on positioning theory. According to Ritchie and Rigano (2001) "[A]ny narrative that we collaboratively unfold with other people draws on knowledge of cultural structures and the roles that are recognizably allocated to people within those structures" (p. 742). As the process continues, "participants are constantly engaged in

positioning themselves and others through discursive actions” (p. 742). I positioned myself in what Hatch (1996) refers to as a “subjective reflexivity” (p. 370). Such reflexivity “demands disclosure of the internal thoughts and feelings of the researcher engaged in the research process” (p. 370). And, even though I coordinated a discourse where I recorded and interpreted the narratives of others, I participated in a discussion of shared experiences with colleagues and, by extension, put myself “into the discourses of [the participants]” (p. 372) precisely because I, too, am a principal in a rural Manitoba school. In this way my positioning may very well have been biased, but my “insider” knowledge derived from my standpoint as a rural Manitoba principal positioned me to see nuances and understand phenomena in ways that others who do not share my experience could not.

My perspective from life and work in rural Manitoba suggests that schools are really communities (a reflection of the larger community in which they are situated) and that children and families thrive when they are part of communities. There are characteristics of rural life that are obvious to me that I cannot substantiate empirically. I attach genuine importance to the personal values I bring to my leadership responsibilities. If I had to categorize my beliefs in this way, I would equate my experience with the concepts of trust and relationships. I believe, for example, that being part of a student’s life involves more than what occurs in the classroom during school hours (relationships). For that matter, the same could be said for my relationships with adults (community groups, local businesses, churches, civic organizations, and friends) with whom I share values that build and maintain healthy, safe, and stimulating environments for children and families. Still, I am also aware that values are relative. I’ve had more than one colleague (usually from a larger centre) comment on how highly unorthodox (and potentially dangerous) it is to leave my office open to anyone who wants to use it (trust). It is not

important that my office be my exclusive domain; it is important that people feel valued and I take responsibility for what I do and what I value.

This is what I am in my leadership context, and what shaped my analysis of the data I derived. I am aware enough of these beliefs to be able to represent the voices of the participants of the study. I also discovered that my findings aligned with and spoke to beliefs that are not necessarily my own.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed using the 'bottom-up' approach described by Creswell (2005) in which data was collected and then prepared for analysis. This "initially consists of developing a general sense of the data, and then coding description and themes about the central phenomenon" (p. 231). The transcripts were reviewed several times "trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts" (Agar, 1980, p. 103). The data is the result of a naturalistic inquiry but subjected to a framework based on Hodgkinson's (1991) values typology and the ethical paradigms of care, critique, justice, profession and community to develop a priori coding. I also searched for emergent themes. In the final analysis, I tried to blend the data with my own reflections. I did this for two main reasons: 1) because it is my position that school leaders cannot entirely separate their personal values from their professional practice, particularly in their decision-making related to improving teaching and learning in their educational environments; and, 2) I anticipated that the outcome of the discussions with the participants would at some level reveal that their decision-making can be placed within the context of an "ethic" (ie. justice, community, care, profession, critique). I also hoped to make connections to the existing literature and compare it to the data collected (ie. Furman, 2003, 2004; Hodgkinson, 1991; Wallin, 2009). The employment of the case study and subsequent analysis into the study added another dimension of authenticity to the process.

Willis (2007) argues that case studies are “about real people and real situations . . . [that] rely on inductive reasoning . . . [and] illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study” (p. 239). The prompts (Appendix A) as part of the interview protocol were designed to generate a sense of who the participants are personally and professionally in terms of the way values and ethics affect their working lives and the decisions they make, or attempt to make. I was not looking to ‘discover’ a story that had already been written, but rather to encourage the creation of one – the content of the case studies were elicited from the lived realities of participants rather than found (White, Drew, & Hay, 2009). For this study, I felt that discussing the participants’ experiences generated more of what Fontana (2003, in White, Drew & Hay, 2009, p. 23) refers to as “multiplicity of meaning”. In this context any preconceived notions of the subject at hand can be built upon through a dialogue between the participant and the researcher. Perhaps even more powerful is the possibility of seeing the participant as a narrator of sorts, guiding the process while the researcher participates in a meaningful exchange of discourse.

Research Rigour

In order to give credibility to the findings in a qualitative research study, the researcher must somehow validate the data analysis (Creswell, 2005). This can be a complex task for qualitative research studies because “the criteria for judging the quality, or goodness, of a qualitative inquiry are not well resolved” (Agostinho, 2005, p. 6). Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest eight forms of verification and advise researchers to utilize several of them in any research study. This study used two: triangulation and member checking. Creswell (2005) defines triangulation as “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (p. 252). The sources of information (ie.

the individual responses from the principals) in this study were investigated to support an emerging theme or themes related to Hodgkinson's values typology and ethical paradigms of care, critique, profession, justice and community. I compared data within and between the interviews, the interviews and the literature, and the interviews and my own experiences as a school principal and researcher. Member checking, according to Creswell (2005), involves the researcher requesting the participants to verify the accuracy of the report, such as whether the interpretations are "fair and representative" (p. 252) of the goal(s) of the study. This study engaged in member checking because the data analysis was dependent on the participants' accepting of what is reported.

Agostinho (2005) emphasizes the importance of demonstrating rigour in order to "facilitate 'truthful' and accurate findings" (p. 8). Agostinho's (2005) notion of 'rigor' relates to the "naturalistic inquiry paradigm" (p. 8) and is "discussed according to the naturalistic process quality criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity" (p. 8). This study established and maintained rigour by keeping the participants as informed as possible as to the nature of the research study: topics, thematic possibilities, interpretations of responses, emphasizing the importance of their ideas. It is my hope that the working and personal experiences of the participants were reflected fairly.

Confidentiality and Ethics

As per University of Manitoba ethics protocol (see: http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/research/373.htm), two rural Manitoba school divisions were approached for permission to conduct interviews with the four participants but I did not conduct the study within my own school division, as I felt this would have led to a conflict of interest. The identities of the participants were given pseudonyms. I contacted the respective superintendents by email to explain my intention and followed up

with a letter of request. After signed permission to conduct research had been granted by the superintendents, I submitted letters of consent to participate to all principals who work within the division via the superintendents. Copies of the ethics protocol, permission to conduct research, invitation to participate and participant consent forms can be found in Appendices B, C, D and E. I accepted the first positive responses from principals in each school level who met the criteria of having been an administrator in a rural school division for at least three years. After receiving the consent to participate forms, I contacted the participants by email to initiate the first interview meeting, at which time I once again went through the consent form to ensure all participants were aware of the study parameters and their ability to withdraw from the project at any time by contacting the researcher by phone, email, or mail.

Summary

This chapter is an explanation of aspects of qualitative research and my rationale for how it was used this study. The involvement of the participants in the study is outlined. As well, a discussion of research positioning and its relation to what I hoped to achieve because of it is explained. The plan for data analysis is included along with a review the ethical component of using human subjects in a research project.

Chapter Four: Results

The following chapter focuses on the responses of the participants of the study to the questions posed to them during the interview process. As indicated in Chapter Three, the interview protocol (Appendix A) was designed deliberately to draw out responses related to the research questions which guide and inform this study:

- 1) To what extent do principals in rural Manitoba schools rely on their personal values and sense of morality to drive and inform their decision-making and professional judgment?
- 2) In what way(s) is the administrative approach to decision-making in rural Manitoba schools reflective of and traceable to a particular value typology and ethical paradigm?

Creswell (2005) writes of the “need to analyse the data to form answers to your research questions” (p. 241). This involves the process of describing and developing themes, which “consists of answering the major research questions and forming an in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon” (p. 241). In this study, the discussions during the interviews concentrated on the values of the principals with whom I was talking and were highlighted by a description of an incident and/or scenario they experienced which tested their ability to maintain a sense of their own values and ethical principles. Each participant was given a pseudonym to respect anonymity and confidentiality.

To begin the data analysis, I thought it was important to get a sense of the participants’ values orientations. To access that, I asked participants to discuss from where they derived their sense of values and how they developed. In terms of the interview protocol, this question appears as Question 2, but upon reflection, I decided it should appear in the analysis first as a

general description of the participants' views of their own values systems, since it sets a framework for the development of the comparison tables discussed below.

For the remaining questions, a thematic analysis was developed by comparing the answers provided by participants to the questions in the interview protocol as examined through the conceptual lenses of the values typology and ethical paradigm. For example, Question #1 asked each principal to comment on the primary values that underlie how she/he made decisions in his/her administrative capacities. Each response to Questions One, Three, Four, and Five is categorized in a comparison table (Creswell, 2005). A comparison table is a visual form in a qualitative study "that compares groups on one of the themes" (p. 247). I have done this because I felt the questions invited both diverse and uniform perspectives depending upon one's conceptual understandings of the categories described in the ethical paradigm. I thought that the themes that developed in relationship to the ethical paradigm in particular would be better represented in this format given that it is comprised of five separate categories (Furman, 2003; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1991, 1994). For Question 6, however, I decided to portray the responses within the framework of Hodgkinson's values typology (1991) by using a narrative format. In short, I thought it best to use a form of story to demonstrate the nuances of participant responses. Supporting comments from each participant are included to provide evidence of the analysis of the question(s). The final aspect of the analysis involved discussing the findings in their relationship to the guiding research questions.

Participants' Values Systems

For the second question of the protocol, participants were asked to describe their own values system and from where they believed these values derived. Alex did not exactly convey origins of where he derived his sense of values but suggested that he had always felt that his own values centered around wanting to be a kind, hard-working person and a positive role

model. In his view, the desire to be a positive role model was the primary value an effective school leader must hold although he also recognized the subjective nature of what constituted a “good” role model. This speaks to another important value Alex described, which is having a strong sense of responsibility towards students and adults. For Alex, the important thing is “getting decisions right” because, he says, “ultimately it’s for the kids . . . It’s to make things better for the kids.” In fact, he discussed this sense of “rightness” by suggesting that principals have to be prepared to “encourage people to move on” (i.e. transfer or resign) if they are struggling with “running the school in a different manner.” There existed a sense in Alex’s responses that he had dealt with some resistance from staff whose values had conflicted with his own but, that over time, what has evolved is “kind of a new order and it’s a respectful order . . . when we are dealing with kids, it’s very respectful.”

Garry referred to his upbringing as a primary element in shaping his value system. He said growing up “in a mining town [that was] a pretty rough area” set the stage for what brought him to his faith. His strong faith did not come from his parents: “I acquired it through a rough road and I think that’s really the underpinning. And we go from there.” Garry talked about the nature of values, how they are “sharpened over time” and that, to make them stronger, sometimes “it takes something major to shake your foundation of your values.”

Garry suggested that the values teachers hold “are very much consistent,” and that “most teachers, most people who work in a school have similar values” even though the origins of them may be different. For Garry the real measure of one’s worth as a school leader came down to who one was as a person, not one’s formal position: “If you’re sure about who you are and who you want to be, the job comes a whole lot easier.”

Neil blended the reflection of the origin of his values with the way(s) in which his personal values drove his administrative work. Neil mentioned a desire to understand the

“value of individuals” as being a major part of his upbringing, as well as the “corporate body of a school;” “[B]ut,” he said, “more importantly that both of my parents were Ph.Ds in psychology.” Neil’s parents role modeled the need to consider variance in perspectives (local and global). Neil also indicated that extensive travelling over the course of a year’s sabbatical to developing countries had influenced his leadership capacity. Along his travels he came to realize that “the purpose was to understand, at least to some extent, people from a different perspective, and to sort of widen our scope of experience, but also our value base.” This experience instilled not only a sense of “my place in the world” but also “my responsibility to my community, to the kids in my school . . . in a larger way to the world around me.” To that end, he mentioned his administrative work as if it were a calling, suggesting, “I’ve never thought about the fact that I get paid for this.” Ultimately, Neil did not differentiate between school values and personal values but suggested, “the way I do things as a principal . . . has always been, as much as possible, just simply the way that I value the way I live.”

Keith cited the way he was raised as the primary source of his values structure: “My father was a hard-working person . . . He understood the idea of loyalty, and trust, and dignity.” Keith also alluded to the importance of role modeling values when he suggested his father “lived them out, every day.” Keith was also influenced deeply (and still is) by the church and his family’s commitment to faith: “We went to church together. Church was an important part of our lives.” From this Keith learned the value in honouring one another. In his view, the “whole idea of deference and favouring other people . . . a willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of other people” is reflective of the values base of his upbringing. Keith explained that these values also shaped his leadership practice in that “to have those values come out in my everyday [working] life is very natural, because it’s who I am.” As with Neil, Keith did not

distinguish between personal and professional values, suggesting that “it just flows out of you, like breathing oxygen.”

The responses of the principals suggest that they acknowledge little, if any, distinction between how they run their schools and how they live their own lives. Despite the fact that only two of the four specifically cite their upbringing as major influences in their personal values, their comments are illustrative of many shared experiences and shared values, such as the values of role-modeling and a sense of responsibility to and for students and the community. In addition, three of the four participants also alluded to having a faith-based understanding of the world. What these responses might suggest is that participants had built an understanding of themselves (Loneragan, 1961, 1997), based upon their upbringing or prior experiences, which was then transferred into other aspects of their lives, including work.

The principals in this study believed that understanding the ethical principles which impacted on their practice was a prerequisite for leading a school, or what Hodgkinson (1991) refers to as “the very stuff of leadership and administrative life” (p. 11). The question of the origin of principals’ values invariably turned into a discussion of what each actually valued in life based upon prior experiences. There existed broad reflections on values such as respect, faith, and responsibility as a world citizen as well as more specific reflections on values such as hard work, responsibility, dignity, setting positive examples, and providing quality experiences for students. Within the discourse existed an understanding that the nature of the rural Manitoba principalship was a reflection of the commonality of the personal values these individuals held related to prior learning experiences during which they had “learned lessons,” either through the role modeling of others, or through personal conflicts from which they had emerged. Based on these responses, the findings emphasize the strong cultural aspects of values transmission, commonality of experience, and shared understandings of what constitutes

“good” leadership practice in rural areas. Even though each of these principals had “learned” their values in a variety of different contexts, they had similar understandings of what values were “important” in shaping leadership practice in rural schools.

Primary Values Underlying Administrative Practice

The first question of the interview protocol asked administrators to discuss the values that underlie how they made decisions in their administrative practice. Table 1 provides a collation of the ideas presented by participants based on the ethical paradigm categories of the Ethic of Justice, the Ethic of Care, the Ethic of Critique, the Ethic of Profession, and the Ethic of Community.

This question generated many similar responses, which suggested that values were commonly shared among the participants. Keith, for example, points to the expectations of the community as being very influential. That the community “expects” the principal to share the values of the community is a strong statement about the close relationship between school and community in rural Manitoba, as well as community members’ desires for the school to be a site of cultural value transmission. The participants’ responses suggested that this expectation is not just a sharing of values between the principal and community members; it presupposes that the principal may have to adopt the predominant values of the community or be prepared to face conflict and/or resistance. However, the fact that the participants in this study ostensibly had a shared understanding of and appreciation for the existing values systems operating within these communities likely contributes to their success as leaders within these schools. It also begs the question, however, of the extent to which principals can truly allow for multiplicity of perspectives to surface, or if predominant community values ultimately constrain principals’ abilities to “do leadership” or make decisions contrary to a normative community understanding of what is “right” in particular circumstances.

Table 1 : Primary values that underlie how principals make decisions in their administrative practice.

	Alex	Garry	Neil	Keith
Justice				
Care	Encouraging well-rounded students; best interests of students	Children (students' best interests); safety, honesty, independent learning	Value of individuals	
Critique				
Profession	Vision statement of the school; helping teachers achieve goals	Work is a gift	Big picture; widened scope of experience through travel	Work ethic; Embrace challenges and lead change
Community	Influential parent organisation	Faith; transparency of perspectives	Responsibility to community; professional parents were involved community members	Community wants a leader who lives his/her values; rural principal shares values with community

This point is supported by Alex who centered on values related to students' "best interests." The vision statement Alex mentions has its roots in creating healthy and challenging learning environments for kids, which ostensibly will produce and inspire "well-rounded people." For Alex, however, having an active parent council was of dubious comfort, because it "can be quite political and not the easiest to deal with." He indicated that this group's expectations have caused him to make decisions on occasion "that won't cause a whole great amount of backlash." Though Alex admits that justifying everything to the parent council is not his first priority in the decision-making process, it does play a role in his ultimate decisions.

A similar point was made by Garry who spoke of a situation where he knew the community would be completely opposed to an issue that had "come across his desk." In this case, he decided to engage in conflict with the superintendent rather than face what he knew would be recriminations from the community. He contacted the superintendent to say that "it's stopping at my desk, and if you need to have a discussion about it with me, that is fair", but that the superintendent had to be informed of the potential for community resistance "so that there were no surprises." This example is consistent with Garry's contention that transparency be an integral part of a principal's values, and where the community is concerned, "you need to make sure the people you are working for are pretty clear on what you're doing." Of note is Garry's reflection on the value of caring. His straightforwardness about his practice extends to the point where he makes it clear to his staff that integrity speaks louder than "cheerleading" and that "I don't carry pom poms."

Neil blends the first two questions together, citing that the basis for his values stems from his faith background; he believes in the value of individuals and having an understanding of one's own potential (and shortcomings) within a human context.

The findings above demonstrate that for these principals, the Ethic of Community supercedes all of the other ethics categorized in the literature review. Ultimately, the decisions made by principals in rural communities are heavily weighed in favor towards community values, with which these principals tend to align themselves. This ethic is strong enough to enable principals within these communities to resist the suggestions made by senior administrators (which potentially compromises the Ethic of Profession) rather than compromise community values. On the one hand, this appears to make rural principals “champions” of their communities; on the other, it may not be surprising then that the Ethic of Justice and the Ethic of Critique are not represented as often in the responses of principals, either because (a) they believe that “justice” is that which the community desires to be “good;” (b) because they a-critically accept the predominant community values; or (c) because, even if they did not agree with the predominant community values, they are aware that their positions as leaders in these communities would be precarious if they made decisions that would ostracize them from the community.

Decision-Making Protocols and Processes

The third question in the interview protocol asked principals to reflect upon the processes and protocols they followed in decision-making. Table 2 outlines the findings in relation to the categories of the ethical paradigm. It should be noted that where participants asked for clarification or more specificity related to the question, I suggested they consider a programming decision, which impacted on the nature of the responses.

This question brought out discussion related to outside variables that impacted the decision-making of the principals. Policy was cited often, along with concepts such as democracy, order, relationships and common sense. This question was the first to elicit

Table 2: Decision-Making Protocols and Processes

	Alex	Garry	Neil	Keith
Justice	Equality of numbers (students and/or staff); adequate student support (esp. special needs); alternative programs	Vision of the school before policy; Policy as servant, not master; policy must make sense	Acknowledge intent of policy and laws; open, democratic process, where possible; need a semblance of order	Democratic process is important but has limits
Care	“We are a people’s profession”; Relationships			
Critique		Common sense on part of school and school division		
Profession	Programs should be run by the “right” people		Respect that decisions need to be made	Core values drive process before anything else
Community		Transparency about direction headed; mission statement (community reflective)	Communicate with staff, parents, community	

responses related to the Ethic of Justice, in that principals believed that the school must serve the rights of students and the greater common good (Starratt, 1994).

Keith made it very clear that the first and foremost consideration (out of a list of five considerations) in his protocol was his own core values, “which I think is a pretty good thermometer of the community.” In this way, he is given the responsibility (by the superintendent, for example) “to exercise my own judgment on how to fit that policy in the local context.” The comment also suggests, however, that his values are very much aligned with those of the local community. The remaining considerations, in order, are: community norms, the school board’s position, the law, and participatory decision-making. He finds that a total democratic process is unrealistic in that, unless core values are not the priority, then democracy is ineffective anyway. To make the point more clear he suggested that “if a million people do a dumb thing, it’s still a dumb thing.” And yet, he is somewhat contradictory in that he admits his core values align with community norms both of which, for him, supercede school board positionality, the law, and participatory decision-making. Once again, the Ethic of Community in this rural context holds more power to shape decision-making than other ethics categories.

Alex focused on the impact that relationships have on the decision-making process, citing *Appropriate Education* (Bill 13 in Manitoba) as a benchmark for programming decisions. In his view, if decisions do not satisfy the requirements of that particular legislation, for example, then the protocol needs to be reviewed. Although he makes it clear that programming is often centered on having adequate numbers for accessing resources, “ultimately we are a people’s profession,” and programs require “the right person” running them in order for them to be effective for students. The relationships (between students and teachers) are critical to Alex, and he suggests that school personnel “do a lot of work with trying to match the right people to the right programs...[because] . . .the best indicator of a child’s success is how well

they had a relationship with their teachers.” Alex’s contention is that the protocol for decision-making must be just for the students and the community. In his responses, Alex focused primarily on internal dynamics related to the profession and justice. However, it must be reiterated that the programming suggestion for discussion was one that was provided to him and prompted him to think about his answer in a certain way. I suggest this because he does ultimately clarify that his view of what is “just” takes into account what is just for the students *and the community* which suggests that even principals’ sense of justice within rural communities may be shaped by the values held by that community.

Garry was less adamant about the importance of a concrete policy or protocol in this context. Citing “common sense” in both school division policy and practice, he maintained the position that “where policy is seen to . . . work against . . . where we believe we should be going, we need to re-evaluate that policy.” In this way, policy is seen as the servant and not the master. Garry also referred to the division mission statement, which made room for concepts such as social justice and citizenship because he viewed them as reflections of community values. Protocol, therefore, ought to consider the mission statement, which, although ostensibly may be viewed as evidencing the Ethic of Profession was, in Garry’s elaboration of the idea, more about concepts that would be supportive of community values (Ethic of Community). Such a finding speaks once again to the idea that principals’ understandings of their professional identities are integrally connected to their understandings of community and personal values.

Neil admitted that policies and laws are “there for a reason and . . . to whatever end I can follow at the very least the intent of those, I do that.” As much as he thinks in terms of the “big picture,” Neil believed there should be a sense of order to arbitrate between “a completely open and democratic process and . . . an autocracy.” He added that decisions need to be made

and that people need to respect that “that’s part of my responsibility, to make those decisions on behalf of other people.” He is confident in doing this because he believes that he articulates his values framework consistently in his work, in that “I try to communicate that stuff as much as possible.” Integral to Neil’s responses was his underlying allusion to stewardship “on behalf of people,” which in effect references an Ethic of Community.

It was in the answers to this question only, in the data-gathering process, where the discussion turned toward what Simon (1965) would refer to as “management.” The deference to policy and law, for example, in terms of decision-making protocols/processes, suggests that the principals at the very least consider technical/legal issues in their thinking. However, it was clear in the responses that following policy is qualified by the sense principals have of its alignment to their personal values. The dominant attitude of principals in these rural schools is that, as long as decision-making protocols are grounded in student welfare and principals’ personal values, then principals are confident in the decisions they make and will defend them publicly, or perhaps even transgress policy. The issue of contention in these responses, however, is based on the allusions made by principals to the fact that their personal values are often aligned with community values. If this is true, it could be argued that (a) rural principals might be more apt to transgress policy when it is in their own best interests to satisfy the community; or (b) they can every once in awhile transgress predominant community values by making a contrary decision with a claim to moral authority because in general the community trusts them to uphold its values most of the time.

Alignment of School Practices and Personal Values

The fourth question in the protocol asked principals to discuss the ways in which their school practices aligned with their personal values. The second part of the question asked participants to offer examples of decisions they had made that demonstrated their values-in-

use. The third part of this question asked principals to discuss the ways in which school practice conflicted with their own values and how they dealt with this conflict. Table 3 provides an outline of the responses organized by the ethics categories.

This question, while centering on school practices, invoked some repetition in relation to responses previously collected. What it did encourage, however, was a focus on school practice, which made the participants think in terms of specific episodes in their reflections.

Alex was candid about his desire to seek change. He said, “my vision of what things should look like is always evolving,” which he believed made his transition to the school division much smoother when the “re-working of the mission and vision” of the school division was just starting. Alex believed the opportunity for reflection on vision and mission led to a genuine collaboration and collation of ideas among school and school division leaders, and promoted a commonality in thinking. He noted that “when I look at our administrative group, we have a lot of people that have kind of the same philosophy.” Alex’s drive toward a well-rounded school also related to developing common ways of thinking among teaching staff, justified by him because of the influence teachers have on the students and their programming. For Alex, the problem becomes one of dealing with teachers who “don’t want to follow through with what you’re looking for. . . What do you do with those teachers?” His solution spoke of hiring based on his own value beliefs, whereby he tried to “put the right person into each programme.” Although his comments are strongly suggestive of his need to take responsibility for his decisions and to provide stewardship to the children in his care, they also possibly allude to difficulties in working with alternate views. It may also be suggestive of an administrative and teaching culture that is strongly established (whether that is positive or negative), a strong emphasis on values transmission, and the use of hiring practices (and/or ways of ostracizing resisters) as a means of ensuring that predominant values are maintained.

Table 3: Alignment of School Practices and Personal Values

	Alex	Garry	Neil	Keith
Justice				Political astuteness when dealing with conflict
Care	Kindness is part of administrative philosophy; emotional investment; connecting with kids	Respect for human life	Instill in children a strong 'value' sense	
Critique	Vision of practices always evolving	Common-sensical mind set; Discriminating among problems and issues	What kind of school do we want to become?	Awareness of differences in perspectives
Profession	Issues with teachers resistant to change		Share values with staff; Work with staff wisdom	Principal sets moral tone; teaching is a way of life (not a job); Know your vulnerabilities
Community	Well rounded school	Decisions show others one's values; What are our dreams for the children?; Work with the greater community	Who we are not what we are; instill in children a sense of values	Respect for community values; It's all about 'fit'

Garry's practice centered around a core value of respect for human life and the need for "common sense" and transparency. He maintained that he attempted to "search for certainty" and "what is the same in all, amongst all people . . . in terms of beliefs and values" which is a highly foundational view of values and is arguable related to his faith background. Garry was adamant in his contention that people should know where principals stand, in that "I'm hoping my decisions show my values, and show the values of us collectively as a school and a school division, what's happening everyday." Garry once again spoke to the importance of community values when he suggested that school practices must align with a commitment to the greater good for the community, because "it's not misaligning when we have a garage sale to raise money for a family here in town. That's just consistent." When conflicts do occur over decisions over a child's needs, Garry deflates the conflict by asking the parents "what is your dream for you child" and alluding to commonalities of the values between the school and parents underpinning the dream. He believed that because the values of the dream are most often aligned, it became easier for him to manage the details of the conflicts that occur.

Neil had a unique experience where values and practice converge: he helped plan the construction of the school of which he is principal. This opportunity allowed him to "do lots of reading and preparing for the kind of school that I was hoping this would become." When putting a staff together, the hiring was designed to "work with their [the teachers'] wisdom . . . not imprint my values on them, but to share my values with them." Of course, it could be argued that if a principal is in the position of constructing a school and choosing its staff from its outset, then s/he is in a very powerful position for shaping the culture of the institution. He not only can "share" his value system, but also ensure that those who are hired "share" it as well. Neil has been able to drive the direction of the school from the beginning:

I believe very much that the purpose of education is to, and this is a values thing, to develop not only democratic citizens but young men and women who have a strong sense of a strong value base. That to me is the primary goal of what I hope to achieve here. You know, the “reading,” “writing,” and “rithmetic, that’s sort of the nuts and bolts of what we do at a school, but ultimately what do we want as a country out of our kids? It’s that they are people who have, obviously, a broad education, and experience, but also definitely that they understand their place and responsibility in the world.

The “strong value base” to which Neil referred includes values such as democracy and citizenship, both of which suggest a desire to move beyond the conventional classroom and productivity as the primary vocation for schooling (Simon, 1965). In practice for the new school, Neil adopted the “homeroom model,” where the students will have the same teacher for their core subjects and “the philosophy is that we’re going to put the relationships and the advocacy for students first.” Of course, this also provides teachers with three years of time for transferring the values of understanding “their place” and “responsibility in the world.” This provides educators with much power in shaping the values that are developed in the students of the school. For Neil, the three Rs are important but “that’s not why we do what we do . . . or who we are.”

Keith suggested that 70%- 80% of his personal beliefs/values shape his school practice, with the qualifier that, “I’m the principal but I am not a demagogue, and I can try to get some things across but ultimately there are a lot of independent people in the building and they might not necessarily agree with me all the time.” One value in particular with which Keith had experienced conflict was the value of work: “I value work, good hard work. And not everybody values hard work.” He suggested that if one thinks of teaching as a job, then one has devalued

one's commitment: "You think of it as a job and you've already lost." Such a comment demonstrates clearly that Keith believed there exists a moral imperative embedded within teaching. When asked how he dealt with such conflict, Keith replied, "Very carefully" as he was cognizant of the political nature of values conflicts. Keith's view on conflict was that any "good" administrator has to have "political savvy, must know the local community context, the divisional context . . . and be able to stick handle through all of that." Keith ultimately suggested that most teachers are too busy to worry about whether or not their values are being scrutinized in the school, and that they trust the principal to do her/his job. He ends by saying, "They really just want to know that the principal is able to get the job done, and do it well and in such a way that . . . things are going to be successful with him. Then they'll trust me". This comment supports the idea that common values shape the assumptions of principals and teachers who work in rural communities, and as long as the principal generally makes decisions aligned with those values, whether they are articulated or not, they gain the trust of both professionals and community members.

Dealing with Diverse Values

The fifth question asked participants to describe the ways in which they dealt with diversity or differences in values and the decisions or processes they use to deal with such differences. Table 4 provides a collation of the responses organized by the categories of the ethical paradigm.

This was the final question and rendered the shortest responses, perhaps because by this point the questions seemed to lead principals to espouse similar values around which they made decisions. In this case, however, the principals suggested they used the Ethic of Critique more than in any other question, though still not often. Probably this was due to being asked specifically about diversity, which often presents as a conflict, and what they do about it. None

Table 4: Dealing with Diverse Values

	Alex	Garry	Neil	Keith
Justice		Earned equity; Avoid lip service to empowerment	Make clear that perspectives and questions are welcome	
Care				
Critique	Respecting others’ perspectives; Offering others to change my mind; Often first to take controversial risks	Seek those responsive to change; Begin with the end in mind; Appreciate input you receive	Theory and philosophy joined to practice; Clarify implications of direction/change/action	Prepare for values differences, don’t pursue them;
Profession	Hiring people with ‘vision’; Accept that popular decisions are rare	Find common thinking first; Professional learning community	Consider positive impact of staff on the school; Follow through;	Model one’s beliefs; One must make judgment decisions; Advise staff about values clashes
Community		Work and think collectively		Community has overwhelming common value set

of the principals had a formal process or procedure to deal with diversity and difference in opinion and values, but they all understood that difference was inevitable. Their responses suggest that the principals were comfortable in responding to differences, but that they generally did not go out and seek it; rather, they tended to look for those already aligned with their values to build support for their ideas.

Alex made much out of the fact that he was usually the one in the division who took on unpopular, or even controversial initiatives. But he also made it very clear that he accepted and encouraged challenges to his ideas, saying, in response to a particular idea he was proposing, “I said to them, ‘You know what? If you can change my mind, that’s great.’” The discussion carried on for months, but when it came down to making a decision and no one had really offered a workable alternative, Alex moved ahead with his idea and, “it’s been a good move but it wasn’t all that popular first.”

Garry reiterated that even differences and diversity must be framed somehow around a common vision. It was imperative, in his view, that when decisions are being considered and differences are emerging, that common beliefs must be at the forefront of the discussion. He talked about the value of being part of a collective and that, within their collective decision-making obligations as teachers, “in that process also comes an alignment of values.” Garry suggested that the concept of change brought out the real differences in people: “It’s change . . . And so, who is more receptive to change? I think the people who are most receptive to change are the ones who are still actually learning and growing.” Garry believed that he had to appreciate the input he received from people and include them “with that shared decision-making process . . . we have to then appreciate what’s going on . . . the decisions that are being made.” He summed up this comments by referring to the reciprocity of decision-making

(empowerment) as earned equity. In this way he believed that everyone became responsible for the values for which the school stands.

Neil also leaned toward a shared decision-making process, “and I think I’ve made it clear over the course of time . . . that if there is a different perspective on doing something, it’s not like I have the only answer.” For Neil, the issue was a matter of knowing how to incorporate staff input so that it had a positive impact on the vision of the school, perhaps in spite of the fact that some people will still disagree with the direction of the decision. As Neil said, difference “is one thing philosophically, but once you actually put it into practice . . . it actually has to work.” Neil suggested that differences and diversity are normal, day-to-day occurrences. The duty of the principal in these situations is to invite participation and to genuinely value what people say and do. Neil framed education as a “people’s profession,” and believed that “working with people . . . is one of the most difficult things a person can do” because principals are daily trying to lead people with diverse ideas and differences are inevitable.

Because the community in which he worked had a “hugely overriding value set,” Keith did not really look for diversity in values. He prepared for diversity by telling people who were having trouble carrying out a certain plan or idea that may not be mandatory, but consistent with the values of the community, “you are your own person; if you don’t want to, you don’t have to.” Of course, this does not necessarily free staff from feeling a sense of obligation to the community for doing the additional work when the principal does not overtly support them if it will clash with community will. Keith expects clashes among values, but neither discourages or encourages them: “I just say if there is, if people have a difference of opinion just come and see me and we’ll talk about it.” He believed that his most important duty in this situation was to model his beliefs. He cited an incident where one child was teasing another one over a values difference. Keith intervened with a lesson on mutual respect, which could be present despite

difference in opinion and attitude. In his view, “that’s foundational.” Ultimately, the responses suggest that all the principals dealt with conflict primarily by appealing to foundational values in attempts to minimize differences in opinion. Generally, these comments support the view that diversity in values did not necessarily exist in these communities as much as diversity in opinion on how to operationalize them.

Values Typology

What follows is the description of the responses to Question 6 which provides the background to the case, or incident, each participant was asked to relay as part of the interview protocol and introduces a context for which to apply the value “types” that Hodgkinson (1991) developed.

Description of Cases

Alex described a situation where a teacher on his staff had been transferred because of her involvement in a very public attack on the school and the school administration. It began with an email message to about one hundred people “that was very critical of the school . . . So there was all these non-factual items listed.” A parent meeting was held, chaired by the husband of the teacher in question, to discuss the perceived sad state of the school. Because of the teacher’s close connection both to the school and the parents, and also the sensitivity and intensity of issues and emotions that emerged as a result, the teacher was put on leave and then transferred.

Garry discussed his involvement in an amalgamation process that was poorly handled by a very autocratic superintendent. Garry described how he had “spent a lot of time building a community-based school” where “every organization in the community had somehow a touch on the school.” The environment he had co-created with the community conflicted with a

superintendent who wanted to control everything. Garry's values and those of the superintendent were in direct conflict.

Neil found himself in the middle of a dispute associated with the *Appropriate Education* legislation. A father of a boy with Asperger's Syndrome challenged that Garry's school had been negligent in providing appropriate programming for his child. The case went through all phases of the dispute resolution process, concluding at a hearing with the Department of Education.

Keith dealt with a family who challenged Keith's role in providing information to one of the school communities about religious exercises. Even though the petition is supposed to originate from the parents, given the faith background of the community, every year Keith would provide parents with a casual reminder to get the petition prepared and submitted. Keith believed this to be a harmless act of kindness given that "you're dealing with a community that doesn't have a parent council" and a community with a relatively "low education level." Once the challenge had been made, Keith had to tell the community he was no longer able to remind them to complete the petition.

Each principal was subjected to certain factors that created discomfort for them in making decisions. In Alex's case, the school was vilified publicly with support from some of his own teaching staff. Garry watched as the relationships he had created together with his community deteriorated. Neil was faced with having to defend his own professional integrity and that of his school staff. Keith faced the laws around religious exercises and the right of a single person to challenge procedure.

These large values conflicts provide much insight into the nature of leading in rural schools. Alex talked about how one can "handle that kind of negative pressure especially when . . . and this comes through my lens, is that what happens in the school is good stuff." A comment such as this underpins how very closely leaders' "lenses" or ways of leading are

shaped by their notions of the “good” such that they become honestly bewildered when others’ values do not align with their own, particularly when their values generally align with those of the community. Garry’s view was very straightforward; he could not work in a system (or rather, with a superintendent) where he could not live out his own values in practice which were premised on the importance of community. The conflict in question involved too great a gap between “fundamental values about children, about learning, about the role of the community.” Neil understood the position of the father of the child with Asperger’s Syndrome and supported the parents’ right to question the education their children are receiving. However, when a communication protocol had to be created to deal with the excessive daily emails and phone calls, Neil felt conflicted because “now you’re restricting a parent, a parent’s right to communicate with the school” even though the actions had been deemed “unreasonable” in the end. Keith was pragmatic about the need to support the legal requirements around religious instruction, but was still baffled by what he perceived to be the “pettiness” of the situation. In Keith’s view, he became caught between two questions: should he “honour the people and serve them with all I have and can do for them? Or, do I pay homage to Caesar?” (Abide by the law which prohibits him from doing what he deemed to be “a simple act of kindness for his community”). There is little doubt that these responses demonstrate principals’ strong values of stewardship to the community and that they truly believe they are working not just for the school, but for the betterment of the entire community. However, what is not articulated by the principals is that the values of the community in rural areas often shape principals’ practice to the extent that the rights or perceptions of individuals whose views would challenge community norms are often framed as being bewildering, unreasonable, or petty. Such responses once again articulate how closely

aligned principals' values in rural communities are with community norms, and how powerful these norms are in establishing notions of what is "right," or "good" in leadership practice.

Resolution of Dilemmas

Alex endured peripheral consequences of the teacher transfer. One of the most trying consequences was the backlash from another staff member who was a veteran and respected teacher, and whose influence in the community was expansive. The relationship between Alex and the staff member had become tense because Alex had been planning to move her out of her subject area for the following year. Alex framed his reasons for the move by suggesting that her program was in decline and lacked innovation, primarily because "it had been taught the same way for thirty years." Alex was fairly certain, too, that this teacher had played an active role in the backlash from the incident with the teacher transfer. Even so, he questioned whether it was "unethical the way I behaved? But I could also argue that it was very ethical because the teacher we have doing the program now is absolutely fantastic." In some ways Alex's response to the ethical dilemma was that the ends justified the means but he continued to struggle with the decision he made, although he considers what he did to have been in the best interests of students.

Garry noted that his own values were under threat from the actions and attitude of an autocratic superintendent. Because he was asked to lead in a situation where "that's not who I am," he resigned from his position. One significant consequence was the reality of being, suddenly, unemployed with a family to support. I asked him about this and he said, "What's more important? That you can live through life with a clear conscience, or that you can just live and work through it? And it wasn't an easy decision, okay. But it was my beliefs and my values that certainly stood out for me." When I asked Garry if he would have remained in that position had the situation worked out differently, he prefaced his answer with a discussion about how

the school community “had aligned beliefs really well.” He mentioned that he still receives calls from parents from there who update him on the current status of their children. Proudly, he states “it was that kind of community that was built around there. So, would I still be there otherwise? Absolutely!”

Neil dealt with intervention from his own school, the superintendent, the school board, and the Department of Education itself. Neil thought that the boy’s father had gone to excessive lengths in advocating for his child’s programming, especially in his communication demands. Neil and other school personnel had to go through reviews by the superintendent and the department committee, the purpose of which were to assess whether the school was doing what it could (and should) for the child. Through it all, Neil felt that “in hindsight I was bending over backwards a little too far” to help this child and his parents, but “that’s where the values system comes in . . . I probably should have, well, metaphorically shut the door a little more,” but he didn’t, and suggested he probably still wouldn’t had he to do the process over again. The case prompted Neil to consider whether there existed times when “I really believe that we really went beyond reasonable”, and the extent that schools can allocate continual and additional resources for children in their care. This dilemma was difficult for Neil “because at some point it becomes at the expense of the other kids . . . that’s a dilemma [and] how to do that one correctly.” In this case, as with others, the dilemma came down to perceptions of how to balance the rights of the group with the rights of an individual. With everything that occurred with this case (which includes “mountains” of paper and documentation), Neil fended off feelings of bitterness. His last assessment of the case is worth sharing:

I can’t say . . . that I became bitter about stuff. This parent was doing what he felt was the right thing for his kid and so, and he had the right to do that, and he followed the process that was given to him . . . Was it, you know, did I struggle with what he did on

a sort of ethical level? Sure. You know, was it fair to the people involved, like the teachers here? I don't think so, but again, it's his kid. He's gotta' go to bat for his kid.

What guided Keith through his dilemma was "mutual respect, was an ethical lever. Also, resisting the tyranny of the minority, because the minority can be the tyranny." Rather than focusing on the individual's religious rights that are protected by law, Keith was more concerned with how one person could have so much power as to "hurt other people and cause so much damage as they can to prove a point." Clearly, Keith privileged community norms and the sanctity of community relationships over the rights of the minority whose views differed from those of the larger community. Keith also admitted that politics helped guide him with the decision-making: "You have to be able to stick-handle and I had to know when to back away from community service in favour of black and white law. And when not to . . . everything is contextual." It wasn't clear if Keith was bitter about the situation but he was taken aback by the insistence of the individual on his legal rights when, in his view, this insistence was a "petty" intrusion on the way things typically had been done. Whether or not the principal "reminded" parents about their need to write the petition for religious exercises, it still would ultimately go forward so the end result would be the same. Ultimately, Keith believed the damage done to community relationships was more critical than the individual's claim, particularly when the end result would not change actual practice. When asked what other decisions he could have made, Keith suggested that in the beginning he could have merely ignored the community outright. But, "they want their children to have the Lord's Prayer and a Bible reading to start the day ... I could have done that, but I, again, trust and loyalty . . . honour, those are the things that guide my life and I never want to break trust with my parents." In the end, the parents of that community did follow protocol to get the petition together. Presumably, by winning the

claim, the parent who made the challenge in the first place got what he wanted, as well . . . or did he?

Suggestions for Pre-Service Administrators

As a final exploration of the values question, each principal was asked to comment on how they would advise a group of pre-service administrators who might find themselves in similar dilemmas. I had hoped this question would lead to some critical judgments about their profession and about their own values in use. I decided that an authentic way of conveying the meaning of their thoughts is to let the responses speak for themselves.

Alex, on recounting the in-fighting that occurred as well as the criticism he endured, suggested “you got to hold to your guns . . . you gotta’ stick it out until the end.” And even though “you’re never going to have everyone happy . . . you gotta’ stick with what you feel is right. And you keep going.”

Given Garry’s decision to quit his job rather than bow to the pressures of the superintendent, it was not surprising to hear him say, “the last thing you could do is to compromise your own values. When you compromise those, what do you have left?” Garry believed that leaders with integrity demonstrate consistency in their values, and that people who work with them “can pretty much predict where [your] thinking is and what [your] decision-making is going to be because it’s transparent.” He concluded by suggesting that leadership “isn’t about . . . being liked; it’s about trying to do the right thing.”

Neil demonstrated patience and understanding towards the behavior of the child’s father whom he framed as undertaking a kind of protective quest. Neil began his response by asking, “What is the purpose of education?” The focus on the importance of values transmission was demonstrated when Neil suggested values are “the most important thing that we have in the young people that come out of the school system.” He cited values like integrity

and honesty as examples of “the core, universal values,” and that values are “the filter through which you look at things and by which you make the decisions you make.” Neil was the only principal in the study to suggest that part of the training of pre-service administrators ought to include a values recognition process, “where they would identify for themselves what their core values are.” Although identifying commonly held values is a topic of many team-building activities and professional development sessions once an administrative position is acquired, Neil suggested that the process needs to be focused more on “self-application” and “self-examination.” In Neil’s view, acquiring a degree in educational administration “doesn’t mean their bedside manner is of any significant value.”

According to Keith, “as a principal you are a moral agent for your school.” Embedded in this comment is a tacit understanding that every conflict will be underpinned with moral dilemmas, and that notions of the “good” will inevitably play a role in how those conflicts are resolved. At the point of confronting an ethical dilemma or values conflict, Keith suggested that administrators should “take your time. Don’t rush because often quick decisions are not good decisions.” His contention was that motives need to be “pure” or else “your motive isn’t right,” which both speak to strong foundational values underlying notions of the “good” or “right.” He brought in the political expediency of asking “where is your senior admin on that issue?” In Keith’s view, if the leadership in the division office isn’t “thinking that [a decision he made] is even realistic . . . then I’m asking for, to be further isolated.” In extreme situations, Keith suggested that at some point, administrators may need to “decide at what point are you going to look in the mirror and say, ‘I think I have to step aside.’” These extreme situations, though rare for the participants in this group, are the ultimate test of the conviction of one’s values; certainly Garry decided to remain true to his convictions, and Alex mentioned this possibility in

passing. In these cases, Keith stated “you have to wrestle with it,” especially when “you really believe in something and it’s so dear and near to your heart.”

Applying the Values Typology to Principal Dilemmas

The responses of the principals indicate to me that Hodgkinson’s (1991) values typology is evident in all of the experiences they described. What follows is how each level of the typology is applicable to the decisions and experiences the principals described.

Type III: Sub-Rational. Values Based on Basic Wants

In terms of the experiences described by the principals, I would argue that the sub-rational value type did not play a significant role in their decision-making. It would be an exaggeration to claim that Type III was non-existent, given the anxiety that emerged in these dilemmas, and the fact that principals are human and cannot entirely escape basic impulses. I would also suggest that the sub-rational values could be argued to exist within the framing of the principals’ descriptions of their leadership practices as being “good” or “right.”

Unfortunately, participants did not elaborate on what they meant by these terms, so I cannot with confidence suggest that basic wants underpinned their notions. I do suggest, however, that in terms of the decision-making, the sub-rational level played much less of a role than community norms did in leadership practice. The fact that personal values appeared in most cases to be consistent with community norms would likely allow these principals to more readily further their own desires, because their desires tended to be oriented towards community service and stewardship. In other words, it is unlikely that these principals would generally not get what they wanted, because what they wanted tended to align with what the community wanted as well. And, in cases where individuals from the community transgressed those desires and/or challenged them, community norms tended to prevail in the ultimate resolutions of conflict, except in cases where legal action shaped the result. In these cases, it

could be argued that the basic wants of principals to have “won” the cases in favor of community norms were evidenced in their characterization of individuals or the situations as “bewildering,” “unreasonable” or “petty.”

Type II b: Rational. Values based on Consensus

At this level, I found that each principal underwent varying degrees of influence by consensus. Alex had to deal with forces outside the school that generated a consensus to oppose the direction in which Alex was leading the school. He attempted to counter the negativity by creating a consensus of teachers within the school to constantly update the public on the good things happening in the school. Garry spoke of working tirelessly to build a strong relationship with the community. Much of what he accomplished at the school was done by working with the community to come to consensus on direction – before it was compromised by an autocratic superintendent. Neil had to work through a collaborative process if for no other reason than there were so many agencies involved in his particular experience, culminating in a final interview with the Department of Education. In his case, it could be argued that the school’s “side” of the argument he promoted had been based on a consensus of ideas that service provision to the student had been adequate, which was ultimately supported in the Department’s decision. Keith’s experience clearly demonstrated his alignment with community consensus on the provision of religious exercises, to the extent that he was frustrated that he had little control over the technicality inherent in the law, and worried more about the effects the incident would have on community relationships than on the rights of the individual who made the complaint.

Type II a: Rational. Values Based on Consequences

For Type II a rational values, a consideration of consequences is a primary motivating force in decision-making. At the heart of each case, these principals had to weigh the

consequences they would face from, or that would be faced by, groups (most often conceived broadly in terms of community rather than just the school alone), versus consequences that they would face from, or would be faced by, individuals. In all cases, the principals of these rural communities were ultimately more concerned with consequences they would face, or that would be faced by, groups rather than individuals. Although these principals could be critiqued for their commitments to community norms and the politics this no doubt entails (at times to the point of negating the value of individual rights), they made their decisions with strong commitments to the ideal of stewardship to their communities. For example, while Alex was aware of the consequences of what was happening around him, he still maintained that his decisions were made “in the best interests of students” even when those decisions had major impacts on individuals on staff and lead to some very ugly politics within the school and community. Garry knew that his commitment to the community might lead him to severing his relationship with his employer, which it eventually did, though he remained strong in his belief that he had made the “right” decision. Neil allowed a consequentialist course of action to guide his decision-making on the programming for the child at the center of the incident. He balanced the consequences that the child might face with those that would face the school. Keith considered the potential legal consequences of a decision to keep supporting the parent petitions for religious exercises, when clearly he was not following protocol even though he was remaining true to long-established ways of working with the community. He had to weigh the legal rights of the individual making the challenge, and reasoned that the consequences of ignoring the parent complaint would have had an even greater negative impact on his school community. He therefore made the decision to support the individual request, because he believed that would be in the best interests of the community as a whole.

Type I: Transrational. Values Based on the Will

It is under the transrational value type that the principals expressed the most sentiments in relation to what guides them in their decision-making. Hodgkinson (1991) says the transrational value type includes concepts such as faith, belief, even commitment. I would argue that the responses of principals in this study also demonstrate strongly that stewardship to the rural community is a transrational value in these contexts. Under transrational values, decisions are guided by “the will rather than upon the reasoning faculty.”

Alex maintained throughout his discussion that his ultimate motivation was whatever course of action(s) best served the students to the extent that he at one point considered whether these interests would be best served by his stepping down as principal. Garry never wavered from the fact that the sole motivation for everything he did was reinforced by his religious faith, particularly during the times when he referenced “apologetics” and his “search for certainty.” Neil was dedicated to the “big picture” perspective of school leadership and talked about values as the “filter” that one uses to make decisions and to see the world. Keith was guided by what he described to be the “moral agency” of the school principal which acts like a compass that “guides his life,” based on the principles such as trust, honour, and loyalty. In all cases, a commitment and dedication to particular foundational belief systems guided the leadership practices and lives of these principals.

I argue that while each principal made suggestions that the other value types played a role in their decision-making during the personal incidents they described, the underlying notion that “the sense that we live within an invisible world of meaning in which the objective referents or contents of experience are distinct from whatever meaning or value we might ascribe to them” (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 101) was clearly evident. This idea is supported in the number of instances where principals alluded to their conceptions of working in “the best

interests of students,” or that their leadership practices and decisions were made upon their commitments to notions of what was “good” or “right” without any articulation of what these were. These notions were just accepted as if they were commonly shared ideas about education, leadership practice and, most importantly, life. However, one of the most important contributions of this research is that these notions were very clearly oriented around community norms, many of which centered on notions of stewardship, strong faith backgrounds, and commitments to group norms over individual rights. It is clear in the results of this study that the values of principals working in rural environments tend to be (and probably need to be) aligned with community norms and, therefore, the relationships these principals foster with the community are important elements for developing the trust these principals must earn from the community. Once this trust is developed over time, principals are more able to defuse or resolve conflict by appealing to foundational values they hold in common, and or “transgress” the values once in awhile because most of the time their decisions do prioritize community norms.

Summary

This chapter addressed the findings of the interviews. The responses to Questions 1, 3, 4, 5 were applied to an ethical paradigm using a comparison table and follow up summary. Question 2 and 6 were analysed using a narrative summary. The final chapter examines the essential findings from the analyses of the data and includes several recommendations for theory, practice and research.

Chapter Five: Recommendations and Conclusion

Originally, I had decided I would use this study to answer one question: “Can school principals separate their personal values for their professional practice”? The process of my thinking, however, led to questions on ethical decision-making, which led to an examination of an ethical paradigm (Starratt, 1991, 1994). Not content with just three ‘ethics’ I added to the mix the Ethic of Profession (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2005) and the Ethic of Community (Furman, 2004). Thinking this wouldn’t give me a strong enough framework, I decided on a more established voice in the canon: Hodgkinson’s values typology (1991). At this point I thought I had a broad framework and plenty of sources with which to support my aims. Still, a context was missing, which brought me to my last (and lasting) variable, that of rural Manitoba. Rural Manitoba is the setting for this study and is, therefore, where I begin Chapter Five.

Jenkins (2007) argues that in rural schools and school divisions, the community is too prevalent to ignore. Begley (2004) goes a step further, suggesting that principals “must pay a lot more attention to the community as a relevant administrative area and source of influence” (p. 10). This study concentrated on four principals in rural Manitoba schools. I asked them questions about their values, their beliefs and attitudes, and questions about experiences that tested their values structure. What I discovered was, that to a large extent, personal values and ethical consideration are prevalent in their administrative lives. I discovered that their values-based approaches to the principalship are integrally connected to the values held by the communities in which they work; so much so, that at times administrators must choose whether or not they will remain working in professional contexts which would not support community values. This was the primary finding of my study, a finding which, as a rural administrator, I intuitively recognized but, as a researcher, I have gained tremendous affirmation from the data that were collected.

Education in Rural Manitoba and the Ethic of Community

There is a perspective that education in rural Manitoba is in decline, and that adequate resources are severely lacking (MASS & MAST, 2006). Another perspective, however, holds that rural Manitoba schools are teeming with life, creativity, and are using the best resource they have at their disposal to succeed: “The concept of community” (Wallin, 2009, p. 6). Wallin (2009) argues that educational goals in rural Manitoba are guided by “the local community context” (p. 70), which echoes Furman (2003), whose contention is that principals have a moral duty “to engage in communal processes” (p. 2) in their schools. In fact, Furman’s contention, which is limited to the school context, is too limiting in its conception of communal processes in rural schools. I have found rich data to support that the Ethic of Community, as defined as the values of the community norms in which rural schools reside, is the primary ethic underpinning the work of principals in rural contexts.

The four principals in this study cited the local community context, and the community values that are embedded within it, as a major force in their work, which also provided a benchmark for their own values. Alex cited perhaps the hardest experience of the four in relation to feeling as if he was pitted against the norms of the local community. In order to offset the subsection of the community which had started protesting against the school, Alex decided to promote what was working well within the school to provide evidence of its thriving school culture: “you just keep nailing people with the positive stuff: Here’s what we’re doing this week; here’s what we’re doing this week; here’s two or three lines on all these things.”

Keith’s attachment to his local community was evident in the first five minutes of our talk, where he stated that the community expects the principal not only to honour its local values, but to actually have the same values. This alignment is implicitly or explicitly articulated throughout the interview data.

Garry's decision to resign from one of his administrative jobs occurred because of a perceived betrayal of the community with which he had built strong relationships. Ultimately, he refused to compromise his commitment to the community by "caving" to senior administrators.

Neil oversaw the actual physical building of the school of which he would be principal. The construction was guided largely by a principle of children understanding "their place and responsibility in the world," through the lens of the local community in which the school was being built.

In each case, the principals were clearly oriented towards a sense of stewardship to the community. They were highly conscious of community values, and made constant references to foundational values which they used to defuse or resolve conflicts. It was this alignment of values between the individual principals and the local rural community which fostered their sense of "rightness" or "goodness" in the decisions they made. It also fostered a tendency towards supporting group norms over individual challenges to those norms, which has both positive and negative implications for the inclusion of voice, the openness towards multiplicity of perspectives and views towards those who don't "fit" community norms. Interestingly, however, the findings do align with current conceptions of leadership practice that advocate for the creation of shared norms and the design of processes that encourage community involvement within education (Begley, 2004; Jenkins, 2007; Wallin, 2009). Although the negative aspects of fostering shared norms to the exclusion of advocating for diversity have the potential to surface, rural communities have actually been fostering for generations the conditions current theory is suggesting is necessary for effective educational practice.

The findings also have some political implications in that these principals were highly conscious that they had to weigh the potential consequences of their decisions through

community values. However, perhaps because of their focus on relationship building with the community, they were able to develop trust as stewards to the community, and were granted some leeway in the fewer instances where they transgressed community norms because most of the time they had demonstrated an alignment with those norms. In all cases, however, the principals' foundational belief systems on doing what was "good" or "right" for students was highly dependent on what was "good" or "right" in the views of the community. In this way, leadership theory for rural schools must move beyond current conceptions of leadership that tends to keep notions of "schooling" and leadership practice within the confines of the school building, and must be more cognizant of the key role that rural communities play in shaping (or ensuring) the values and practices of school administrators.

The Best Interests of Students and the Ethical Paradigm

What does it mean to serve the best interests of students? Walker (1995), Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), and Stefkovich and Begley (2007) examine the concept but plainly reveal that there is no reliable definition of "the best interests of students." The term is little more than rhetoric in practice. How reliable, then, is a principal's word when s/he says that decisions are informed by the best interests of students?

I would argue, based on my discussions with the principals in this study that, in rural Manitoba, the concept is not only genuinely believed but is commonly understood. These rural Manitoba principals know their students intimately: their histories, their families, their skills and limitations, and even their goals. It is not unusual, for example, for a rural Manitoba principal to watch students enter his/her school in Kindergarten and graduate from Grade 12. That said, I found in my research that each principal felt one of his primary motivations to be the welfare and care of the students in the school. The Ethic of Care was demonstrated in the numerous comments principals made that alluded to caring for students, staff and the greater

community. Care was conceived broadly to include the community, and these principals conceived of themselves as stewards whose leadership work ultimately should ensure that the people “in their care” were treated with respect and integrity.

The comparison chart in Chapter 4 clearly indicates that the Ethic of Profession (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005) is a major consideration, though it remains second to the Ethic of Community in the articulation of principals. I also would suggest that, although the Ethic of Profession was articulated more often than the Ethic of Care, the Ethic of Care might have been more intuitively understood and therefore less often overtly cited. The principals in this study viewed their own learning and development as having broad benefits for the students in their care, often related to their understandings of the larger community (local and global) in which these students would lead their lives. This aligns with Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) who suggest that the Ethic of Profession is framed around a conception of students’ best interests that are believed to be most effectively served by a commitment to developing professional competency. The principals had a strong desire to role model their values for students, and supported in their comments the key role that rural schools play as a means of values transmission. A final item worth noting here is that no principal attempted to define or explain what they meant by “best interests of students.” My own understandings based on my experiences as an administrator in rural schools were evident in this regard, because in hindsight when examining the transcripts, I realized that their understandings were commonly shared and commonly understood—by me, as well as by the participants, to the extent that I never asked the participants to elaborate upon those understandings.

The Ethic of Justice and the Ethic of Critique were least often cited in the responses of principals. When they were articulated, the Ethic of Critique tended to be reflected in principals’ understandings of dealing with conflict, whereby principals were more apt to deflate

or minimize conflict or critique rather than spur its development within the system. Notions of the Ethic of Justice tended to prioritize group rights or norms over those of individual rights, and were very much informed by principals' understandings of the role they played as stewards of the community and the care they felt they owed those who lived, worked or attended school in that community.

Transrational Values

Hodgkinson's (1991) notion of a transrational value type was not discussed overtly during the interviews, though comments were clearly dominated by their presence. I often wondered in my discussions with participants how it was possible to apply the immeasurable – faith, democracy, integrity, stewardship, honesty – to the principalship, but was not surprised by its presence in the beliefs and attitudes of these rural principals.

Alex focused on the intuitive yet commonly conceived notion of working “in the best interests of children; Garry and Neil remained firmly committed to their faith backgrounds and the impact this had on their practice; Keith was guided by a sense of “moral agency” based upon principals of trust, honour and loyalty. In all cases, a commitment and dedication to particular foundational belief systems guided the leadership practices and lives of these principals.

The fact that these principals alluded to what they truly believed were commonly held values of working “the best interests of students,” or that their leadership practices and decisions were made upon their commitments to notions of what was “good” or “right” were suggestive of the power of values transmission within rural communities. Most of these principals' understandings were oriented around community values of stewardship, strong faith backgrounds, and commitments to group norms over individual rights. It is clear in the results of this study that the values of principals working in rural environments tend to be (and

probably need to be) aligned with community norms and therefore, the relationships these principals foster with the community are important elements for developing the trust these principals must earn from the community.

Alex and Keith maintained visions of leadership that perhaps touched on the more pragmatic end of the transrational spectrum but, like Garry and Neil, there remained a respect for “character” in the principalship as defined by foundational values of integrity, honesty and hard work that crossed over professional responsibilities into their personal and community lives. Character, which goes hand-in-hand with competency (Hodgkinson, 1999), emerged as a notable trait for the principals in this study. Their views of what they considered to be strengths in character emerged in a number of comments:

Alex: “You have to stand your ground, stick to your guns.”

Garry: “Work on who you are and the other pieces will fall into place.”

Neil: “It’s hard to argue against integrity as being an important value.”

Keith: “People will judge you more for your motive than they will on the actual decision.”

The principals in this study spoke most comfortably about transrational values, perhaps because these related to foundational values that they had adapted to over time. They could also articulate that these values were helpful in deflating conflict and moving their own initiatives forward because they were values that the communities in which they worked also supported. Because principals work in systems where they must daily manage the differing points of view of various individuals, their ability to appeal to foundational sets of values is one way of helping people to understand the rationale and reasons for various decisions, even if individuals may not agree with the actual means of achieving them. Lonergan (1993) posits that education is ultimately a composite of reflection and action. The challenge for the rural

Manitoba principals with whom I spoke, is in the need to reflect on the connections between how their strongly held value of stewardship to the community, which is applauded within rural communities because of the sense of care and commitment it engenders, might have negative repercussions for those individuals whose values do not align with community norms. There exists a very real danger when one's self-proclaimed values become community-oriented to the exclusion of an authentic respect for and understanding of the importance of individual rights, the need for critique and multiplicity of perspective. Rather than supporting the positive connotation that the word "stewardship" holds, when taken to its extreme thinking of this nature could become paternalistic and exclusionary.

Separating Personal Values from Professional Practice

The last major finding is that there is virtually no difference between the personal values of the principals and the manner in which they administer their schools. Although anyone who lives and works in rural communities would suggest this should not be a surprise, there remains a professional leadership culture and literature base which encourages principals to "leave personal issues – including values – at the school door." Foster (1986, 2004) argues that school leaders need to be aware of the contingent factors involved in their work, which includes their personal value systems. Yet, Heilmann (2006) makes the case for a serious lack of room for personal discretion in the decision-making abilities of school principals. I would argue that there exists much room for the personal discretion of rural school principals, but that they do not tend to utilize this discretion in extreme ways because their values for the most part align with the community values already in existence. The findings of this study suggest on one hand that principals ignore their personal value systems in their work in rural communities at their peril. On the other hand, the findings suggest that because rural principals tend to be more committed to the Ethic of Community than they are to other ethics of Profession, Critique,

Justice, and even Care, they are granted discretion because of the trust they have built with the community over time.

From my discussions with the principals it was clear that there was no notable distinction between the values that guide their work (especially when it comes to making decisions) and the values that guide their lives. Alex implied this idea in his remarks about why he entered the profession: “I’ve always liked to think that my values are to be a kind person and to be a hardworking person,” both of which are values that characterize his personal life. His idea of the “primary purpose” or “primary value” in administration is to be a healthy role model. Garry overtly stated: “The values that I use to make my decisions here at school are the same values I use to make decisions in life. And so they aren’t separate.” Neil talked about how he sometimes forgot that he gets paid to do this job when he concluded that “the way I do things as a principal, or as an educator, has always been as much as possible just simply the way I live. It’s just an extension of my life.” He added that “It’s not like I have a specific value base, that I put on a different hat when I come to work than I would otherwise.” Keith articulated that he never has “to worry about that because I do happen to hold the same values” as the community in which he works. He also suggested that “Probably 70-80 per cent of what I believe is inculcated in the school practices . . . with my own values.”

Recommendations

Given that I am also a rural school principal, I was not surprised by the findings I generated in this study. Although I was somewhat puzzled not to find more evidence of the ethics of Justice and Critique within the responses of individuals, I recognized the notions of stewardship to and care for the community as consistent drivers of the leadership practices and decisions made by these principals. Basically, I have found that rural Manitoba principals rely on their local communities to provide a context for their practice, and that their personal values

and ethical principles co-mingle with those of the community to help them thrive in their work. As has been discussed, rural Manitoba provides a rich educational environment to observe, in which to participate, and to study.

The first of the main recommendations I make is for greater attention to rural Manitoba educational research, especially the interplay of the school and community dynamics. Wallin (2009) has produced a comprehensive review of rural education in Manitoba and the perspectives are largely those of principals in the schools. The community influences are evident in the study, but what is needed are more stories about the experiences that define “rural,” in terms of education, leading, and life.

The second recommendation is for administrative training to expose principal incumbents to the presence and power of values and ethics in their role. In an ethnically diverse world, in particular the western world, conventional notions of the principalship are waning, becoming virtually obsolete (Begley, 1999). This growing ethnic re-imagining is not only proprietary to urban and city schools. The social landscape is changing in rural Manitoba schools. For this reason especially, principals (all administrators) could benefit from graduate programs that include coursework in the area of values and ethics in practice (Davis, 2007; Hodgkinson, 1975; Lang, 1999). I would add that at the very least a training program would emphasize the importance of self-analysis and an examination of where one stands given myriad ethical situations. From there an individual might gravitate to either one, the other, or all of the following: 1) A clearer and perhaps more tolerant perspective of unfamiliar values structures; 2) A more grounded and perhaps more confident understanding of one’s own values framework, and, 3) The ways in which these ethical frameworks are evidenced (or not) in leadership practice, and what could be done to ensure that principals consider all the ethical categories of the ethical paradigm (including, for example, more discussion on how the ethics

of Justice and Critique could be exhibited in practice, an examination of why the ethics of Care and Community and so firmly rooted in rural leadership practice, and a focus on how the Ethic of Profession can be more clearly articulated around notions of “the best interests of children”).

In terms of future research, I am interested in three developments. The first is that in the expansive rural context (including northern and remote areas) of the Canadian prairies, there are voices in educational leadership that can broaden our understanding of the rural experience. These voices need an academic forum to validate the contribution they can make to this arena of research. The second development in which I am interested is comparisons between the values-based contexts of rural and urban school principals. For example, is there stronger evidence of the ethic of critique and justice in the decision-making of a principal in a Brandon or Winnipeg core area school? Is there less? I know the experiences of rural and urban principals will differ, given their respective social contexts, but in what ways do they speak to similar moral and ethical concerns? The last comment I’ll make about future research in this area relates to gender considerations. One of the major shortcomings of this study was that the four study participants were male, which makes the credibility of the data, in some respects, vulnerable to justifiable criticism. As well, new questions emerge as I ponder this direction in future research: How far can the current findings reflect a lived experience of rural Manitoba school principals? Is community stewardship in the principalship shaped somehow by gender? Is the ‘ethical paradigm’ an appropriate model for the perspectives that would be derived from female principals? Would ‘transrational’ values be the active values guiding decision-making of women in the principalship? I have also wondered if feminist research itself is enough to justify future research in the area of values in school leadership. A thorough search of the literature in this area might reveal a sincere lack of attention to this particular framework.

Summary and Personal Note

Chapter Five is comprised of the principal findings of the study and recommendations for further pursuit. In these many pages, however, I have assumed the responsibility for, among other things, recording a proper reflection of the experience of being a principal of a school in rural Manitoba. What I have discovered, beyond all the scholarship and commentary, the responses from the principals, and even my own conclusions, is the great lengths rural Manitoba school principals go to realize the good in people. If it is as Wallin (2009) notes, that rural Manitoba schools continue to pursue what they always have – an innovative and community-supported approach to providing the best education for their children that they can – then I am confident of where I am as a rural principal. I have tasted the kindness, the generosity, and the unassailable dedication that lives in the hearts of these communities. Should the next study take this further, the field will be all better because of it.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

- 1) Describe the primary values that underlie how you make decisions in your administrative duties?

- 2) From where did you acquire this sense of the values, and/or how did they develop?

- 3) Describe the process(es)/protocols you follow in making administrative decisions. Consider: policy (school and board), law, community norms, participatory decision-making, etc.

- 4) In what ways do you believe your school practices (processes, protocols, programs, initiatives, etc) are aligned with your values? What decisions have you made in relation to any of these that demonstrate your values-in-use? In what ways do any of these conflict with your own values, and how do you deal with this conflict?

- 5) In what ways do you either encourage, or deal with, diversity or difference in values within your school? What decisions or processes do you initiate to deal with such differences

- 6) In order to help me understand the ethical principals that underlie administrative decision-making, for this next part of the interview I would like you to reflect on a case, an instance, or a regular condition of your leadership practice that required you to confront your own sense of ethics or values structure. Describe an experience where you were required to make an administrative decision which you believe forced you into an ethical dilemma.
Consider:
 - a) What issues surrounded this situation?
 - b) What were the factors that put you into the dilemma you faced and/or that put you into a position of discomfort in making the decision?
 - c) What values were in conflict within this situation?
 - d) What ethical principles guided you as you worked through this dilemma?
 - e) How did you make your decision regarding this dilemma and what was the outcome of the situation (ie. Was it resolved? How?)

- f) Why did you make the decision(s) you did?
- g) What other decision(s) could you have made? Why could/did you not make that/those decision(s)?
- h) What consequences came about as a result of the decision you made?
- i) How do you think what you experienced embodies your own sense of your values structure?
- j) If you were given the responsibility to speak to a group of pre-service administrators on the topic of the influence of one's own values in the decision-making that occurs in the principalship (praxis), how would you advise them to deal with a situation in which they are forced to make a decision that contradicts their own sense of values and ethical practice?

Appendix B

Ethics Protocol



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA **FORT GARRY CAMPUS RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD**

SUBMISSION FORM

Psychology/Sociology REB **Education/Nursing REB** **Joint-Faculty REB**

Check the appropriate REB for the Faculty or Department of the Principal Researcher. This form, attached research protocol, and all supporting documents, must be sent **in quadruplicate** (original plus 3 copies), to the Human Ethics Coordinator, CTC Building, 208 - 194 Dafoe Road, 474-7122.

Principal Researcher(s): **Chris Hicks**

Status of Principal Researcher(s): (please check):

Faculty Post-Doc Student: **Graduate** Undergraduate WRHA Affiliate

Other Specify: _____

Address (to receive Approval Certificate): **11 River Ave. PO Box 245 St. Jean Baptiste, Manitoba R0G 2B0**

Phone: (204) 758 - 3562 Fax: _____ Email: hickscw@mymts.net

Project Title: **Values and Ethics in the Decision-Making of Rural Manitoba School Administrators**

Start date: **January, 2011** Planned period of research (if less than one year): **Four Months**

Type of research (Please check):

Faculty Research

Administrative Research

Student Research

Self-funded Sponsored Central **Thesis** Class Project

(Agency) _____ Unit-based Course Number: _____

Signature(s) of Principal Researcher(s): _____

For student research: This project is approved by department/thesis committee. The advisor has reviewed and approved the protocol.

Name of Thesis Advisor: Dr. Dawn C. Wallin **Signature** _____

(Required if thesis research)

Name of Course Instructor: _____ **Signature** _____

(Required if class project)

Persons signing assure responsibility that all procedures performed under the protocol will be conducted by individuals responsibly entitled to do so, and that any deviation from the protocol will be submitted to the REB for its approval prior to implementation. Signature of the thesis advisor/course instructor indicates that student researchers have been instructed on the principles of ethics policy, on the importance of adherence to the ethical conduct of the research according to the submitted protocol (and of the necessity to report any deviations from the protocol to their advisor/instructor).

Ethics Protocol Submission Form
(Basic Questions about the Project)

The questions on this form are of a general nature, designed to collect pertinent information about potential problems of an ethical nature that could arise with the proposed research project. In addition to answering the questions below, the researcher is expected to append pages (and any other necessary documents) to a submission detailing the required information about the research protocol (see page 4).

1. Will the subjects in your study be **UNAWARE** that they are subjects?
No
2. Will information about the subjects be obtained from sources other than the subjects themselves?
No
3. Are you and/or members of your research team in a position of power vis-à-vis the subjects? If yes, clarify the position of power and how it will be addressed.
No
4. Is any inducement or coercion used to obtain the subject's participation?
No
5. Do subjects identify themselves by name directly, or by other means that allows you or anyone else to identify data with specific subjects? If yes, indicate how confidentiality will be maintained. What precautions are to be undertaken in storing data and in its eventual destruction/disposition.
Yes
6. If subjects are identifiable by name, do you intend to recruit them for future studies? If yes, indicate why this is necessary and how you plan to recruit these subjects for future studies.
No
7. Could dissemination of findings compromise confidentiality?
No

8. Does the study involve physical or emotional stress, or the subject's expectation thereof, such as might result from conditions in the study design?

No

9. Is there any threat to the personal safety of subjects?

No

10. Does the study involve subjects who are not legally or practically able to give their valid consent to participate (e.g., children, or persons with mental health problems and/or cognitive impairment)?

If yes, indicate how informed consent will be obtained from subjects and those authorized to speak for subjects.

No

11. Is deception involved (i.e., will subjects be intentionally misled about the purpose of the study, their own performance, or other features of the study)?

No

12. Is there a possibility that abuse of children or persons in care might be discovered in the course of the study? If yes, current laws require that certain offenses against children and persons in care be reported to legal authorities. Indicate the provisions that have been made for complying with the law.

No

13. (a) Does the study include the use of personal health information?

The Manitoba Personal Health Information Act (PHIA) outlines responsibilities of researchers to ensure safeguards that will protect personal health information. If yes, indicate provisions that will be made to comply with this Act (see document for guidance - <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/phia/index.html>).

No

13. (b) PHIA requires that all employees, students, or agents who handle or are exposed to personal health information take PHIA Orientation and sign a pledge of confidentiality that acknowledges that they are bound by written policy and procedures. Has PHIA Orientation and pledge-signing been completed by all employees, students, and agents? _____ Yes _____ No

If "No," the Principal Investigator should contact UM Access & Privacy

Coordinator's Office to make arrangements, fippa@umanitoba.ca

Where individuals have not completed PHIA Orientation and signed a pledge, and for the purpose of ensuring that they do, Principal Investigator's contact information will be provided to the University Access & Privacy Coordinator's Office.

Provide additional details pertaining to any of the questions above for which you responded "yes", excluding question 13 (b). Attach additional pages, if necessary.

____/____/____

dd mm yr

Signature of Principal Researcher

Fort Garry Campus Research Ethics Boards
CTC Building, 208 - 194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
Phone: (204) 474-7122

Protocol # _____
(Assigned by HES Admin.)

Ethics Protocol Submission Form

Page 5

Review your submission according to this:

Checklist

Principal Researcher: _____

☐	Item from the Ethics Protocol Submission Form
	All information requested on the first page completed in legible format (typed or printed).
	Signatures of the principal researcher (and faculty advisor, or course instructor if student research).
	Answers to all 13 questions on pages 2-3 of Ethics Protocol Submission form, INCLUDING ANY QUESTIONS FOR WHICH YOUR RESPONSE WAS "YES".
	Detailed information requested on page 4 of the Ethics Protocol Submission Form in the numbered order and with the headings indicated.
	Ethics Protocol Submission Form in quadruplicate (Original plus 3 copies).
	Research instruments: 4 copies of all instruments and other supplementary material to be given to subjects.
	Copy of this checklist.

NOTE: For ease of reviewing it would be much appreciated if you could number the pages of your submission (handwriting the numbers is quite acceptable).

Additional Information:

#5: *Do subjects identify themselves by name directly, or by other means that allows you or anyone else to identify data with specific subjects? If yes, indicate how confidentiality will be maintained. What precautions are to be undertaken in storing data and in its eventual destruction/disposition?*

Because this is a qualitative study based on a personal interview, each participant will identify himself or herself by name directly since I will need to know who they are and how to contact them once they agree to participate in the study. Respondents will be assured through the use of the consent letter and consent form that all of their responses will remain anonymous and confidential, and that all identifiers will be stripped from the analysis and dissemination of the results of the study. All participants and/or schools will be designated with pseudonyms. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to conduct a member check of their transcripts, to verify their commentary, make additions, deletions, and to ensure that any potential identifiers are stripped from the commentary. During interview and case study data analysis, all responses will be collated for the purposes of generalization and no one individual will be identifiable or identified in the results. Should any comments suggest the identity of a person, this data will simply not be used in the results. All results will be reported and/or disseminated in a general format. All data will be stored in a password-protected computer and/or locked file cabinet in my office at home and will not be made available to anyone except for my advisor who may aid me in the analysis of the research. The data will be destroyed upon final approval of the thesis by Graduate Studies, which is anticipated to be May, 2010.

**Ethics Protocol Submission Form
(Required Information about the Research Protocol)**

Each application for ethics approval should include the following information and be **presented in the following order**, using these headings:

1. **Summary of Project:** Attach a detailed but concise (one typed page) outline of the **purpose** and **methodology** of the study describing **precisely** the procedures in which subjects will be asked to participate.

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature and role of values and ethics in the decision-making of rural Manitoba school administrators. I rely principally on major work by Christopher Hodgkinson (values-based leadership), Jerry Starratt (ethical paradigms in school leadership), Gail Furman (the ethic of community), and Dawn Wallin (rural Manitoba school administration) to set a foundation for the study. My methodology will be qualitative in that my research is based in inquiry into an understanding of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2005), in this case values-based decision-making, of four rural school principals who represent the various school levels found in most rural school divisions: elementary, middle, secondary and comprehensive (K-12). The method of inquiry in this study will be an interview around a participant-generated case study which is based on an ethical dilemma in which they found themselves as principal of a rural Manitoba school. It is anticipated that the interview will take approximately one hour and the transcript review will take up to half an hour, for a total participant time of one and a half hours. I have chosen this method because educational administration involves "more than simply processing and carrying out certain technical skills to ensure effective and efficient management" (Frick, 2009, p. 50), little of which would elicit meaningful data given that the focus of the study is on the varying nature of moral and values-based decision-making in educational administration. Because I am seeking values perspectives from educational administrators, an interview "can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher" (Creswell, 2005, 214). The interview protocol I plan to use will be modeled after Creswell (2005, p. 222). A copy of the interview protocol can be found in #2 "Research Instruments."

2. **Research Instruments:** Attach copies of **all** materials (e.g., questionnaires, tests, interview schedules, etc.) to be given to subjects and/or third parties (See Attached).
3. **Study Subjects:** Describe the number of subjects, and how they will be recruited for this study. Are there any special characteristics of the subjects that make them especially vulnerable or require extra measures?

One rural school division will be approached for permission to conduct an interview process with the four participants. The identities of the participants will not be revealed. I plan to contact the respective superintendent by phone to explain my intention and will follow up with a letter of request. After signed permission to conduct research has been granted by the superintendent, I will submit letters of invitation to participate to all principals who work within the division and who represent elementary, middle, secondary and comprehensive schools. I will not contact the participants directly. I will accept the first positive response from principals in each school level who meet the criteria of having been an administrator in a rural school division for at least three years. I require this because I feel this would authenticate the data better and provide for a wider range of experiences. As well, I anticipate that with at least three years of experience, the participants' confidence level will enhance their ability to articulate their experiences in this kind of forum. Last, and more specifically, I want the participants to have an understanding of the role that the local community plays in their administrative mandate. After receiving notifications of interest, I will email the consent forms to principals for written and informed consent. After receiving the consent to participate forms, I will contact the participants by phone to initiate the first interview meeting at which time I will once again go through the consent form to ensure all participants are aware of the study parameters and their ability to withdraw from the project at any time by contacting the researcher by phone, email, or mail. There are no special characteristics of the participants that make them especially vulnerable or that require special measures.

4. **Informed Consent:** Will consent **in writing** be obtained? If so, attach a copy of the consent form. (see guidelines on informed consent). If written consent is not to be obtained, indicate why not and the manner by which subjects' consent (verbally) or assent to participate in the study will be obtained. How will the nature of the study and subjects' participation in the study be explained to them **before** they agree to participate. How will consent be obtained from guardians of subjects from vulnerable populations? If confidential records will be consulted, indicate the nature of the records, and how subjects' consent is to be obtained. If it is essential to the research, indicate why subjects are not to be made aware of their records being consulted.
Consent in writing to conduct research will be gathered from the superintendent of one rural school division, and consent in writing to participate in the study will be gathered from the participants. Letters are attached.
5. **Deception:** Deception refers to the deliberate withholding of essential information or the provision of deliberately misleading information about the research or its purposes. If the research involves deception, the researcher must provide detailed information on the extent and nature of deception and why the research could not be conducted without it. This description must be sufficient to justify a waiver of informed consent.
This study involves no deception as described above.
6. **Feedback/Debriefing:** Describe the feedback that will be given to subjects about the research after they have completed their participation. How will the feedback be provided and by whom? If feedback will not be given, please explain why feedback is not planned. If deception is employed, debriefing is mandatory. Describe in detail the nature of the post-deception feedback, and when and how it will be given.

The feedback will be in the form of the transcriptions from the audio-recorded interviews of the individual interview related to the submitted case study, as per interview protocols attached. I will send transcriptions to each participant by email so that they may add, change, or delete information as they deem appropriate. In addition, participants will be able to access a copy of the results upon completion of the study by signing a section on the consent form. Participants will also be informed that the findings of this study may be used for presentation and publication purposes.

7. **Risks and Benefits:** Is there any risk to the subjects, or to a third party? If yes, provide a description of the risks and the counterbalancing benefits of the proposed study. Indicate the precautions taken by the researcher under these circumstances.

There are no risks to the participants or to a third party.

8. **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Describe the procedures for preserving anonymity and confidentiality. If confidentiality is not an issue in this research, please explain why. Will confidential records be consulted? If yes, indicate what precautions will be taken to ensure subjects' confidentiality. How will the data be stored to ensure confidentiality? Will the data be destroyed, if so, when?

Because this is a qualitative study based on personal interviews, each participant will identify himself or herself by name directly since I will need to know who they are and how to contact them once they agree to participate in the study. Respondents will be assured through the use of the consent letter that all of their responses will remain anonymous and confidential, and that all identifiers will be stripped from the analysis and dissemination of the results of the study. All participants and/or schools will be designated with pseudonyms. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to conduct a member check of their transcripts, to verify their commentary, make additions, deletions, and to ensure that any potential identifiers are stripped from the commentary. During interview and case study data analysis, all responses will be collated for the purposes of generalization and no one individual will be identifiable or identified in the results. Should any comments suggest the identity of a person, this data will simply not

be used in the results. All results will be reported and/or disseminated in a general format and participants will be notified in the consent form that findings may be presented in workshops, conferences and/or published in journals. All data will be stored in a password-protected computer and/or locked file cabinet in my office at home and will not be made available to anyone except for my advisor who may aid me in the analysis of the research. The data will be destroyed upon final approval of the thesis by Graduate Studies, which is anticipated to be May, 2010. Finally, participants can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty by contacting either me or my advisor at the contact information provided to indicate a desire to withdraw from the study. Should a participant decide to withdraw from the study, all information provided will be stricken from the record and will not be used in the study.

9. **Compensation:** Will subjects be compensated for their participation? Compensation may reasonably provide subjects with assistance to defray the costs associated with study participation.

Participants will not be compensated for their participation.

Appendix C
Consent to Conduct Research (Superintendent)
(To be placed on U of M Letterhead)

LETTER OF CONSENT FOR SUPERINTENDENT

Research Project Title: Values and Ethics in the Decision-Making of Rural Manitoba School Principals

Researcher: Chris Hicks

Sponsoring Institution: University of Manitoba

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Dawn C. Wallin, Faculty of Education wallind@ms.umanitoba.ca

Date: January 1, 2011

Dear Superintendent:

I am a Masters student working on my thesis entitled, Values and Ethics in the Decision-Making of Rural Manitoba School Administrators. The purpose of this study is to examine the nature and role of values and ethics in the decision-making of rural Manitoba school principals. To that end, I would like to interview four principals who represent the various school levels found in most rural school divisions: elementary, middle, secondary and comprehensive (K-12) once your permission has been granted. Below is a Research Project Consent Form that provides the information for participants about the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection, and the strategies used to ensure confidentiality.

Your signature on the Superintendent's Consent Form will authorize your approval for these principals to participate in the study. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dear Study Participant:

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what student and teacher participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this study is to examine the nature and role of values and ethics in the decision-making of rural Manitoba school principals.

Procedures to be Used: After signed permission to conduct research has been granted by the superintendent, I will submit letters of invitation to participate to all principals who work within the division and who represent elementary, middle, secondary and comprehensive schools. I will accept the first positive response from principals in each school level who meet the criteria of having been an administrator in a rural school division for at least three years. After receiving notifications of interest, I will email the consent forms to principals for written and informed consent. The method of inquiry in this study will be an interview around a participant-generated case study which is based on an ethical dilemma in which they found themselves as principal of a rural Manitoba school. It is anticipated that the interview will take approximately one hour, for each participant. I will audio-tape and transcribe the initial interview session. Principals will be provided the interview questions one week prior to the interviews either through email or regular mail so that they may think through the questions before we meet.

Risks/Benefits of Participants: There are no risks involved in participating in this research. Principals' identities and their schools' identities will be kept confidential both during the project itself and afterwards in any published reports (see also the comment on "confidentiality" below). There are no benefits to participants in this study other than participants clarifying their own thinking about the topic.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: All responses will remain anonymous and confidential, and all identifiers will be stripped from the analysis and dissemination of the results of the study. All participants and/or schools will be designated with pseudonyms. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to conduct a member check of their transcripts, to verify their commentary, make additions, deletions, and to ensure that any potential identifiers are stripped from the commentary. During interview and case study data analysis, all responses will be collated for the purposes of generalization and no one individual will be identifiable or identified in the results. Should any comments suggest the identity of a person, this data will simply not be used in the results. All results will be reported and/or disseminated in a general format and findings may be presented in workshops, conferences and/or published in journals. All data will be stored in a password-protected computer and/or locked file cabinet in my office at home and will not be made available to anyone except for my advisor who may aid me in the analysis of the research. The data will be destroyed upon final approval of the thesis by Graduate Studies, which is anticipated to be May, 2010. Finally, participants can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty by contacting either me or my advisor at the contact information provided below to indicate a desire to withdraw from the study. Should a participant decide to withdraw from the study, all information provided will be stricken from the record and will not be used in the study.

Feedback About the Study: Principals will be given the opportunity to check the transcripts of both the initial interview and the case study debriefing session and add/delete or augment information given. Participants will be given two weeks to review the transcripts/findings. If I as the researcher do not hear from them after two weeks, I will assume that they are satisfied with the content of the transcripts/findings and I will begin analysis of the data. When this research project is over, individual participants will be able to access the completed thesis at the University of Manitoba library, or they can sign at the bottom of this consent form with contact information to receive a summary of the study results. The final research information may be used for presentation and publication purposes. However in all cases, no information that could identify participants, the school or school division would be utilized.

Credit or Remuneration: Participants will not be compensated for their participation in this study.

Participant's signature below indicates that they have understood to their satisfaction the information regarding participation. In no way does this letter or their signature waive their legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions without prejudice or consequence. Their continued participation should be as informed as their initial consent, so they should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout the study. In doing so, please contact me:

Principal Researcher: Chris Hicks
Telephone Number: 204-758-3562
E-mail Address: hickscw@mymts.net

OR

Research Supervisor: Dr. Dawn Wallin
Telephone Number: 204-474-6069
E-mail Address: wallind@ms.umanitoba.ca

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris Hicks

**Master's Thesis Research Project
Superintendent's Consent Form**

Research Project Title: Values and Ethics in the Decision-Making of Rural Manitoba School Principals

Dear Researcher:

I hereby give permission for the research study entitled, *Values and Ethics in the Decision-Making of Rural Manitoba School Principals* to be conducted with principals of (CASE STUDY SCHOOL DIVISION) during the months of January 2011 to May 2011. I understand that Chris Hicks will be interviewing four school principals as a means of data collection, and that a summary of findings will be distributed to participants once the study is complete. I understand that my signature below indicates that I have understood to my satisfaction the information regarding participation. In no way does this letter or my signature waive my legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. I am free to withdraw my consent from the study at any time, and I am free to ask for clarification or new information throughout the study.

Superintendent's Signature

Date

I would like to receive a summary copy of the results of this study. To that end, my contact email for receipt of an electronic copy is included below.

Email Address: _____

Appendix D
Invitation to Participate (Principals)

(To be placed on U of M Letterhead)

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE – PRINCIPALS

Research Project Title: Values and Ethics in the Decision-Making of Rural Manitoba School Principals

Researcher: Chris Hicks

Sponsoring Institution: University of Manitoba

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Dawn Wallin, Faculty of Education wallind@ms.umanitoba.ca

Date: January 1, 2011

(Principal)
(School)
(Address)

Dear Principal:

I am writing to invite you to take part in a research study I will be conducting. I am a Masters student working on my thesis entitled, *Values and Ethics in the Decision-Making of Rural Manitoba School Principals*. I have been granted consent from the Superintendent to research values-based decision-making of rural school principals within your school division. In particular, I am interested in examining the ways in which you use values and ethics in your administrative decision-making. A letter of invitation to participate in this study has been emailed to all principals within your school division.

If you agree to participate in this study, I would like to conduct one semi-structured interview with you based on a situation in which you had to make an administrative decision that placed you into what you would consider to be an ethical dilemma. This interview should take one hour. During our time together, I will be asking you questions related to the following:

- 1) What are the primary values that underlie how you make decisions in your administrative duties?
- 2) From where did you acquire this sense of the values, and/or how did they develop?
- 3) Describe the process(es)/protocols you follow in making administrative decisions. Consider: policy (school and board), law, community norms, participatory decision-making, etc.
- 4) In what ways do you believe your school practices (processes, protocols, programs, initiatives, etc) are aligned with your values? What decisions have you made in relation to any of these that demonstrate your values-in-use? In what ways do any of these conflict with your own values, and how do you deal with this conflict?
- 5) In what ways do you either encourage, or deal with, diversity or difference in values within your school? What decisions or processes do you initiate to deal with such differences?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will receive specific interview questions one week prior to the interview via email.

The interviews will be recorded using an audio tape recorder. All efforts will be made to ensure your anonymity and confidentiality. Your name or that of your school or school division will not be used in any written reports. The copy of the written interviews that I will transcribe will be kept in a password protected computer and locked filing cabinet in my home throughout the study and will only be seen by me and my thesis advisor. After final

acceptance of my thesis by Graduate Studies, anticipated to be May, 2011, all tapes and transcripts will be destroyed.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There are no risks or compensation associated with this study. You can withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty by contacting either me or my advisor at the contact information provided. Simply call me or send me an email stating your request to withdraw. Upon notification, all your data will be destroyed and stricken from this study.

The first four principals who meet the participation requirements (one each from an elementary, middle, secondary and comprehensive school who have three years or more of principal experience) and who contact me will be interviewed for this research study. If you would like to participate, or have any other questions or concerns, please contact me at 204-758-3562, or send an email to hickscw@mymts.net

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Chris Hicks

Appendix E
Consent to Participate (Principals)
(To be placed on U of M Letterhead)

LETTER OF CONSENT FOR PRINCIPALS

Research Project Title: VALUES AND ETHICS IN THE DECISION-MAKING OF RURAL SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Researcher: Chris Hicks

Sponsoring Institution: University of Manitoba

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Dawn C. Wallin, Faculty of Education wallind@ms.umanitoba.ca

Date: January 1, 2011

Dear Principal:

I am a Masters student working on my thesis entitled, **Values and Ethics in the Decision-Making of Rural School Principals**. The purpose of this study is to examine the nature and role of values and ethics in the decision-making of rural Manitoba school principals. I have received permission from the superintendent to engage in this research project within your school division. To that end, I would like to interview four principals who represent the various school levels found in most rural school divisions: elementary, middle, secondary and comprehensive (K-12) and who have three years or more principal experience. Below is a Research Project Consent Form that provides the information for participants about the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection, and the strategies used to ensure confidentiality.

Your signature on the Consent Form will authorize your approval for participation in this study.

Dear Study Participant:

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what student and teacher participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this study is to examine the nature and role of values and ethics in the decision-making of rural Manitoba school principals.

Procedures to be Used: After receiving signed permission to conduct this research from the superintendent, I have submitted letters of invitation to participate to all principals who work within the division and who represent elementary, middle, secondary and comprehensive schools. I will accept the first positive response from principals in each school level who meet the criteria of having been a principal in a rural school division for at least three years. After receiving notifications of interest, I will email the consent forms to principals for written and informed consent. The method of inquiry in this study is an interview around an ethical dilemma in which you found yourself as principal of a rural Manitoba school. It is anticipated that the interview will take approximately one hour. I will audio-tape and transcribe the interview. The time and location of the interview will be arranged at your convenience. You will be provided the interview questions one week prior to the interviews either through email or regular mail so that you may think through the questions before we meet.

Risks/Benefits of Participants: There are no risks involved in participating in this research. Principals' identities and their schools' identities will be kept confidential both during the project itself and afterwards in any published reports (see also the comment on "confidentiality" below). There are no benefits to participants in this study other than participants clarifying their own thinking about the topic.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: All responses will remain anonymous and confidential, and all identifiers will be stripped from the analysis and dissemination of the results of the study. All participants and/or schools will be

designated with pseudonyms. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to conduct a member check of their transcripts, to verify their commentary, make additions, deletions, and to ensure that any potential identifiers are stripped from the commentary. During interview and case study data analysis, all responses will be collated for the purposes of generalization and no one individual will be identifiable or identified in the results. Should any comments suggest the identity of a person, this data will simply not be used in the results. All results will be reported and/or disseminated in a general format and findings may be presented in workshops, conferences and/or published in journals. All data will be stored in a password-protected computer and/or locked file cabinet in my office at home and will not be made available to anyone except for my advisor who may aid me in the analysis of the research. The data will be destroyed upon final approval of the thesis by Graduate Studies, which is anticipated to be May, 2010. Finally, participants can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty by contacting either me or my advisor at the contact information provided to indicate a desire to withdraw from the study. Should a participant decide to withdraw from the study, all information provided will be stricken from the record and will not be used in the study.

Feedback About the Study: Principals will be given the opportunity to check the transcripts of both the interview to add/delete or augment information given. Participants will be given two weeks to review the transcripts/findings. If I as the researcher do not hear from them after two weeks, I will assume that they are satisfied with the content of the transcripts/findings and will proceed to analysis of the data. When this research project is over, individual participants will be able to access the completed thesis at the University of Manitoba library, or they can sign at the bottom of this consent form with contact information to receive a summary of the study results. The final research information may be used for presentation and publication purposes. However in all cases, no information that could identify participants, the school or school division would be utilized.

Credit or Remuneration: Participants will not be compensated for their participation in this study.

Your signature below indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation. In no way does this letter or your signature waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout the study. In doing so, please contact me:

Principal Researcher: Chris Hicks
 Telephone Number: 204-758-3562
 E-mail Address: hickscw@mymts.net

OR

Research Supervisor: Dr. Dawn Wallin
 Telephone Number: 204-474-6069
 E-mail Address: wallind@ms.umanitoba.ca

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris Hicks

 Principal's Signature

 Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

I would like to receive a summary copy of the results of this study. To that end, my contact email for receipt of an electronic copy is included below.

Email Address: _____

Appendix F
Ethics Approval




CTC Building
208 - 194 Dufoe Road
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
Fax (204) 269-7173
www.umanitoba.ca/research

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

January 4, 2011

TO: Chris Hicks (Advisor D. Wallin)
Principal Investigator

FROM: Stan Straw, Chair 
Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

Re: Protocol #E2010:135
"Values and Ethics in the Decision-making of Rural Manitoba School Principals"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- If you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to the Office of Research Services, fax 261-0325 - please include the name of the funding agency and your UM Project number. This must be faxed before your account can be accessed.
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors_ethics_human_REB_forms_guidelines.html) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.