

ABSTRACT

High School Teachers' Perceptions of Their Teacher Education Programs and Moral Challenges in Teaching

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Teaching has long been viewed as a moral profession for several reasons: 1) teachers tend to enter the profession motivated by moral reasons; 2) teachers are expected to behave ethically in both their professional and personal lives; and 3) teachers are expected to participate in shaping their students into ethical people. Unlike undergraduate business, engineering, pre-med, and nursing programs, education programs largely do not offer required or elective ethics courses. How, then, are teachers coping with the moral aspects of their profession? This study addresses part of this question. It sought to discover teachers' attitudes toward their preparedness to manage moral challenges in school. This case study was conducted through questionnaires, interviews, and the acquisition of narratives among thirteen participating high school teachers who provided their perspectives on the ethical challenges they have experienced, as well as their experiences in the ethics education provided by their teacher education programs. The data were analyzed by coding for themes, leading to pattern-matching analysis and constant comparative analysis. Seven themes emerged through repeated comments and responses: 1) moral/ethical conduct on the part of teachers seems to be important to

teachers; 2) most moral challenges teachers face result from tension between *the individual* and *the system*; 3) teachers view cheating as the number one moral challenge for their students; 4) teachers use “teachable moments” to help students resolve moral challenges; 5) teachers’ pre-service ethics preparation was not extensive; 6) field experiences may provide the greatest ethical preparation for pre-service teachers; and 7) professional development involving the use of case studies may be an effective means of providing ethics education. The implications of this research are that (1) teachers may think of ethics in relation to rules and laws, (2) teachers seem to have assumed responsibility for the moral development of their student, (3) teachers may benefit from more opportunities to practice making ethics-related decisions in both teacher education programs and professional development, and (4) teacher education programs may be better able to prepare teachers to resolve moral challenges by offering an ethics course, and (5) teachers may benefit from receiving professional development focused on ethics, moral challenges, and moral development.

High School Teachers' Perceptions of Their Teacher Education Programs and Moral
Challenges in Teaching

by

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DEDICATION

To Barrett, Gabriel, Emma, Claire, Oliver, Mom, and Dad

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background

In an era of increasing accountability and limited resources, the complexity of teaching is at an all-time high. The list of duties teachers are required to fulfill continues to grow as teachers are being confronted with more difficult tasks such as data analysis, technology integration, and individualized interventions for increasing numbers of students. Adding to the complexity of teaching is the multitude of decisions teachers must make—decisions that often require teachers to choose between two or more competing interests. While some decisions may come easily to teachers, others inevitably pose moral challenges that require teachers to consider thoughtfully the array of options and weigh the consequences of each. Moral challenges, as understood in this study, are moral decision points that arise in which teachers choose to implement what is perceived as moral/ethical behavior or they do not. However, some teachers may be underprepared for this task because universities tend not to address ethics in their teacher education programs.

Teacher education programs are not alone in this exclusion. In fact, when one really looks for the integration of ethics in the field of education, it doesn't take long to realize it often does not happen. The April 2016 edition of the education journal, *Phi Delta Kappan*, sporting the title "Building a better teacher" on the front cover, made no mention of moral or ethical issues, moral decision-making, or ethical talk anywhere,

choosing instead to focus on metacognition, technology, teacher evaluations, and other aspects of clinical practice. The impression this omission leaves is that it is possible to be a “better teacher” without ethics. Likewise, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation’s (CAEP) most recent adoption of the accreditation standards practically ignored ethics, lumping it in with professional development and never clearly defining it because it cannot be statistically measured (retrieved from <http://caepnet.org/standards/introduction>). Lickona (1993) states, “Teachers typically receive almost no preservice or inservice training in the moral aspects of their craft. Many teachers do not feel comfortable or competent in the values domain” (p. 11). A review of undergraduate education courses titles and descriptions from colleges and universities across the United States conducted by Ream & Glanzer (2007) further revealed a focus on content and practical knowledge with little to no attention paid to ethics.

Yet, teaching is largely viewed as a moral profession because teaching is “fundamentally relational, and relations in turn are fundamentally moral in nature” (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002, p. 8) and “teaching embodies the human endeavor of moving human beings closer to the good” (Hansen, 1998, p. 650). If teaching is viewed as a moral profession, why is this not reflected in the coursework of most teacher education programs? Sanger and Osguthorpe (2013) argue that “teacher education does not simply lack moral language—failing to develop the intuitive moral understandings and motives of candidates—but actively...suppresses that language and development” (p. 46). Furthermore, Sanger and Osguthorpe suggest teachers are not being prepared for the

challenges they will face with regard to the tension between their motivations for going into teaching and the rigidity of the school climate and policies:

The prevailing ideology that focuses narrowly on standardized test scores of core academic subjects presents a daunting challenge for teacher educators who hope to attend to the moral work of teaching in their teacher education practice, even though their teacher candidates might enter their teacher education programs with desires to engage in the moral work of teaching. ... There seems to be an interesting tension between (a) the moral nature of our teacher candidates' reasons for choosing a career in teaching and the purposes they espouse for schooling, and (b) the academic emphasis of the prevailing educational ideology (p. 192).

Thus, there seems to be a disconnect between what teachers, including many teacher educators, believe about the teaching profession—which, many would argue, affects why they go into teaching in the first place—and the subject matter on which teacher education programs tend to focus. Pre-service teachers choose teaching expecting to change lives only to be met with a required course load focused almost solely on content and technique, often disconnected from their sense of purpose or meaning.

One has to wonder if this disconnect has contributed to the turnover rate among new teachers (Block, 2008, p. 416). Employee turnover itself is not necessarily a bad thing, because too little employee turnover can lead to stagnation, whereas a small amount of turnover can replace poor performers with new employees who bring with them innovation and new ideas. However, the high level of turnover in education, which doubles that of engineers and pharmacists, may point to something bigger than poor performance on the part of teachers (Ingersoll & Perda, 2014). Teachers may be leaving their teacher education programs unprepared or underprepared for the moral or ethical aspects of the profession only to be confronted with moral challenges, the existence of which they were largely unaware, leading to demoralization. For example, one of the teachers in this study revealed how she believes she responded incorrectly to a moral

challenge with which she was presented in her first year of teaching. Her principal had listened to her class over the intercom and later told her to sign the observation form he had filled out while listening to her teaching, knowing that the principal was supposed to be present in her classroom at the time the observation was completed. The teacher expressed the regret that she signed it rather than challenging the principal. These are the types of moral challenges teachers must be prepared to resolve.

Context

Both students and teachers are struggling with moral challenges today. What led to the emergence of these challenges is debatable, but the gradual shift from moral formation, which was once a function of public education in the United States, toward a focus on citizenship education and social justice may have played a part. Though it is not explicitly stated in the standards or the curriculum, teachers are generally expected participate in the moral formation of their students through character education, both formal and informal. Yet, as Lickona (1993) states, “Character education is far more complex than teaching math or reading; it requires personal growth as well as skills development. Yet, teachers typically receive almost no pre-service or in-service training in the moral aspects of their craft” (p.11).

Universities need to revisit what pre-service teachers learn in their teacher education programs to address the multitude of moral issues with which students and teachers are struggling. One of the greatest issues with which students struggle is dishonesty—particularly academic dishonesty. According to Slobogin (2002), students view cheating as a necessity in order to succeed in life and many students do not see cheating as wrong. One of the most frequently utilized forms of cheating is plagiarism,

which, according to Koya (2005) and Whitley & Keith-Speigal (2002), continues to present new problems for educators and administrators as technology has made the ideas of others more readily available to students. Violence is also an issue among students, with many of these violent acts taking place on school grounds. Flannery, Wester, & Singer (2004) found a positive correlation between witnessing violent acts at school and a number of emotional and behavioral problems, such as anxiety, depression, and self-destructive and aggressive behavior (p. 561). In fact, students exposed to high levels of violence are more likely to engage in violent behavior themselves.

Substance abuse is also an issue, in spite of a variety of anti-drug programs that exist in public schools. According to Moss, Chen, & Yi (2014), substance abuse that takes place in early adolescence increases the risk for a variety of health problems and psychological issues, such as depression, aggressiveness, delinquency, and poor performance in school (p. 51). A study by Kolodny et al. (2015) found that a “sharp rise” in teen heroin use has also taken place, creating a “public health crisis” that has led to numerous deaths (p. 559). In addition, an opioid epidemic has emerged in the last two decades, with high rates among teenagers in the United States (Compton & Volkow, 2006, p. 104). Technology and social media outlets have also created moral challenges for students, as nearly half of all teens admit to having been on the receiving end of “sexting” messages and encountered cyber-bullying at some point, both of which can eventually put students in physical danger (Tokunaga, 2010).

Like students, teachers face a host of moral challenges. Abuse of the student-teacher relationship has become increasingly problematic due, in part, to the way in which technology has allowed for easier and less formal communication between

teachers and students. Students and teachers may “friend” each other on social media websites, allowing each other access to personal information and photos, which often removes the formal barrier between students and teachers, occasionally leading to an inappropriate relationship.

Although cheating is an act typically attributed to students, teachers are not immune to the temptation to cheat. As the stakes have been raised in standardized testing, so have the number of cases of systematic cheating in school districts across the country. According to Morgan (2016), teachers have been known to erase wrong answers and replace them with correct ones, leading to indictments in Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Houston, and other places (p. 68).

However, most of the moral decision points teachers face are not so newsworthy, as teachers are frequently faced with the decision of whether to go along with state and federal mandates they believe are not in the best interest of their students, such as the narrowing of curriculum, the focus on test-taking strategies at the expense of actual content, and the pressure to focus their efforts on the set of students just below the passing point on state tests, paying less attention to students far above or far below the passing level. Then there is the collegiality issue, in which teachers must decide how to handle a colleague who engages in behavior the teacher perceives as immoral or unethical. This is one of the least clear-cut issues for teachers, as they struggle with a choice between going to the colleague-in-question first, going straight to an administrator, or simply doing nothing at all, which could land the teacher in trouble of her own for engaging in bystander behavior.

Shapira-Lishchinsky (2011) addresses the collegiality dilemma and many other school-related issues in her framework for understanding how moral challenges can be triggered by tensions between ethical dimensions within the school climate, outlining five types of moral challenges that occur as a result of these ethical tensions. The tension that occurs most often, she says, is situated between what she calls *the caring climate*, which promotes attention to individual and social needs, and *the formal climate*, which underscores strict observation of the school rules. Such tension can occur “when a teacher has difficulty in deciding how to best care for a pupil or how to respond to a colleague when they act against the rules” (pp. 648-650). Johnson (2003) refers to this as the tension between “solidarity and authority” (p. 103).

A second type of moral challenge that occurs, according to Shapira-Lishchinsky, is the result of tension between *distributive justice*, in which teachers use principles such as equity to determine whether an outcome is just or unjust, and *school standards*, which are the criteria used by schools in order to make decisions. “In conflicts regarding fairness, teachers must decide which principle of fairness is relevant in each situation—the principle of equal allocation and treatment or the principle of differential allocation and treatment. This is the case when teachers must decide whether to focus on one needy pupil or on all pupils equally” (p. 649).

A third type of moral challenge may arise from tension between *confidentiality*, in which a teacher has been given information by a student in confidence, and *school rules*, which may obligate teachers to report the confided information to administrators and/or the student’s parents. In some cases, according to Shapira-Lishchinsky, teachers know things about their students that even their parents do not know and are uncomfortable

with it, causing teachers to question whether handling these types of situations is included in their role as a teacher, “as such sensitive matters are usually referred to professional therapists” (p. 649).

Shapira-Lishchinsky describes a fourth type of moral dilemma for teachers as a tension between *loyalty to colleagues* and *school norms*.

Teachers sometimes witness a colleague mistreating a pupil, or are informed of such mistreatment that is not in line with school norms, and find it difficult to confront the colleague. Conversely, devoted teachers may be accused by their colleagues of being too soft. The latter situation reveals a paradox—while it is not acceptable to criticize a teacher for persecuting the pupils regarding school norms, it is acceptable to comment adversely on a considerate teacher. (p. 649)

This tension captures the complexity of how teachers relate to one another; the relationship can be one of solidarity or of competition, depending on the norms that exist within the school and whether or not teachers adhere to them or dare to break with the traditional attitudes or approaches to teaching.

The last type of moral challenge in Shapira-Lishchinsky’s framework occurs as a result of the tension between the *educational agenda of the pupil’s family* and the *school’s educational standards*. As a result, “teachers face a dilemma when their perception of the child’s best interest differs from that of the parents” (p. 649). This can manifest itself in several ways. Teachers may become critical of the manner in which parents raise their children, feeling that parents should impose more rules and be more consistent with their children in order to improve their behavior or work ethic at school. In a similar manner, parents may criticize teachers for lacking a clear pedagogical policy as well as for insufficient communication with parents with regard to the values they teach.

These five categories of moral challenges reveal the sheer complexity of the teaching profession, and “the uncertainty and ambiguity that accompany the discussion of ethics in education” (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011, p. 649). Thus, in-depth research is needed regarding how teachers think about and cope with moral challenges in their teaching practice.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this study was simple: teaching is a moral endeavor. Teaching has been considered a moral enterprise throughout history, from Confucius to Comenius, from Moses to Dewey. Teachers largely choose to become teachers for moral reasons, hoping to achieve some desired end that betters individuals and society in some way. Furthermore, teachers are expected to act as moral guides for their students through modeling, enforcement of rules, and character education, and in the United States, teachers are considered public servants.

Sanger & Osguthorpe (2011) are among an increasing number of scholars drawing attention to the divide between educators’ concerns for the moral work of teaching and the absence of explicit attention to it in teacher education programs. As such, they developed a framework for addressing teachers’ beliefs relevant to the moral work of teaching within the context of pre-service teacher education. The first category of teachers’ beliefs associated with the moral work of teaching is *psychological beliefs*. These beliefs “are those regarding the features of our moral psychology, or how we function and develop as moral beings” (p. 574). This is important because it may help pre-service teachers to understand their views regarding the “causal connection between the moral character of a teacher and the moral development of a student,” and provides

rich opportunities for these teacher educators to guide their students in carrying out extensive research on “modeling, the psychological mechanisms behind it, and how our understanding can be applied in classrooms to support positive moral functioning and development” (p. 574).

Sanger & Osguthorpe offer a second set of beliefs associated with the moral work of teaching, which they refer to as *moral beliefs*. These are the beliefs regarding the nature of morality (i.e. what is good, right, and virtuous), and what is of moral value and why (p. 574). Sanger & Osguthorpe provide several examples of what they mean here, articulating discussions they have had with pre-service teachers, hearing them claim

‘morality is just a matter of opinion,’ or rhetorical questions like ‘who are we to tell other cultures what they should do?’ as well as various expressions of anxieties over the significance of clashes between the moral norms that students experience at home and those that teachers might wish to support in their classrooms (p. 574).

These examples of teachers’ moral beliefs, Sanger & Osguthorpe insist, must be addressed within the context of teacher education.

In a later work, Sanger & Osguthorpe (2013) describe teaching as “unavoidably moral,” stating that anyone who teaches in a classroom engages in “teaching morally” (p.3). Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik (1990) argue that teaching has “moral dimensions” because “the teacher’s first responsibilities are to those being taught” (p. xii). Tom (1984) points to “the unequal power relationship between teacher and student” and the control teachers exercise over developing their students in “desirable directions” as evidence of the moral nature of the teaching profession (p. 76, 80). Buzzelli & Johnston (2002) echo Tom, pointing out that teaching involves “changing people” through the “positing of certain goals and ends,” which are “based on questions of value and worth, making them

moral judgments” (p. 9). Block (2008) insists that ethics are at the center of everything that occurs in the classroom. “Teaching is a relationship founded on such ethics, and the satisfactions of teaching are realized in the achievement of that ethical stance” (p. 422).

Hansen (1998) refers to teaching as “moving human beings closer to the good,” which is a task that is “infused with intellectual and moral promise” (p. 650). Mackenzie & Mackenzie (2010) focus on moral dilemmas in teaching, stating that these dilemmas are inevitable in the profession and teachers need to be able to “cope with ethical challenges” that arise (p. vii). While all of the above literature is relevant to the idea that teaching is a moral undertaking, this study is mainly focused on how teachers successfully resolve moral challenges. Teaching is at its very core a moral undertaking, as teachers enter the profession hoping to achieve some desired end in their students, are expected to conduct themselves in a moral manner within the community, teach students how to think and behave in a moral way, and resolve moral challenges that require them to make decisions about moral matters.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to describe the perceptions and attitudes of teachers toward the pre-service education they received in preparation for successfully resolving moral challenges and helping students to successfully resolve moral challenges of their own. With increasing concerns regarding unethical behavior by both teachers and students, greater attention should be focused upon teacher education programs and whether or not they are preparing teachers to successfully resolve the moral challenges that exist in the teaching profession and to assist their students in resolving their own moral challenges.

Unlike nursing, pre-med, law, and engineering students, pre-service teachers do not take ethics courses as part of their degree program. There simply has not been enough research on how this affects teachers and students. Researchers need to be taking a closer look at the moral challenges teachers are facing to determine if these issues are already being addressed by teacher education programs. Furthermore, teachers need the opportunity to provide input regarding their preparedness for resolving moral challenges in teaching to further shed light on if, and to what extent, an increased focus on ethics in teacher education programs is necessary.

However, the solution to the ethics dilemma is not clear-cut. Adding an additional course onto the existing course load in teacher education programs may make graduating in 4 years a challenge for some pre-service teachers. Further research is needed to discover if, and to what degree, teachers think they were prepared to manage moral challenges in teaching. Before adding ethics courses or integrating ethics into current courses, we need to know if there is even a need for such action.

This study was aimed at discovering what teachers think about the moral challenges they encounter in teaching and about the training they received in preparation for these moral challenges in hopes of providing valuable information for teacher education programs and school administrators as they continue to determine how best to prepare teachers for such aspects of the teaching profession.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question: What are high school teachers' attitudes toward their preparedness to resolve moral challenges?

A. What types of moral challenges do high school teachers encounter in schools?

- B. How do high school teachers view the ethical responsibilities of their profession?
- C. What types of moral challenges do high school teachers see their students encountering?
- D. How responsible do high school teachers think they are for helping their students resolve their moral challenges?
- E. What type of ethics education did teachers receive in their teacher education programs?
- F. How prepared did teachers think they were to resolve moral challenges as a result of their teacher education programs?
- G. What types of ethics education would teachers like to receive as part of their ongoing professional development?

Overview of the Study

The research was conducted in a large suburban school district in central Texas that provided a fairly diverse population for the study. A random purposeful sampling strategy was employed to select thirteen participants from the entire body of certified teachers in the school district's only high school. The participants at the research site provided specific information about the extent to which teachers are prepared to resolve moral challenges as a result of their teacher education programs. The researcher utilized questionnaires containing Likert-type items, conducted semi-structured interviews, and collected teacher narratives in order to assemble detailed information about participants' ethics education experience in their teacher education programs and the extent to which teachers think they were prepared for (1) resolving moral challenges in teaching, and (2) aiding their students in resolving their own moral challenges.

This qualitative study employed a case study design, the purpose of which, as defined by Yin (2014), is to provide an explanation as to how or why some condition came to occur. The central phenomenon of this study—the teacher’s perception of preparedness to successfully resolve moral challenges—was best addressed by the case study design. Data analysis included the transcription of interviews, organization of questionnaire data, and analysis of teacher narratives for themes. Open coding was utilized, which, according to Creswell (2007), is the coding of data for major categories of information. Axial coding emerged from open coding, allowing the researcher to identify a focal category and core phenomenon, at which point sub-categories emerged around this central phenomenon.

A pattern-matching analysis process was utilized, which led to constant comparative analysis, involving the continuous analysis of data in comparison to emerging categories (Creswell, 2007). Reducing data to a small set of themes that portrayed teachers’ ethics education experiences in their teacher education program and the moral challenges they have experienced within the profession informed the research questions outlined in this case study.

Significance of the Study

Given the moral and ethical issues plaguing both students and teachers today, the time was right for a fresh assessment of teacher education programs, specifically how teachers are prepared for (1) the moral challenges they will encounter in their practice, and (2) their roles in helping their students to resolve their own moral challenges. This study is important because it offers insight into whether or not teachers are graduating from their teacher education programs prepared for the moral challenges they will likely

encounter as part of their teaching practice. Several studies (Santoro, 2011; Strauss, 2015; Stengel & Casey, 2013) directly link teachers' preparedness to resolve moral challenges with teacher attrition, demonstrating that a large number of teachers leave the profession when they feel overwhelmed by these challenges. This issue needed to be analyzed from the teacher's perspective in order to provide teacher educators and administrators with information that helps them determine how to move forward.

This study is important for several reasons. First, it provides insight on the various ways in which teachers define this aspect—the moral aspect—of their profession, which, in turn, largely affects how teachers approach the task of resolving moral challenges. Furthermore, this study offers insight into teachers' attitudes toward the importance of ethics education for teachers, their particular experiences in ethics education in their teacher education programs, and their attitudes toward the ethics education they received in their teacher education programs. This provides a clearer picture of what is working in teacher education programs and where there is room for improvement.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Although this study provides valuable information that may be beneficial to teacher education programs and to teachers themselves, it is not without limitations. A limitation is defined as any aspect of this study over which the researcher has no control and that may negatively affect the generalizability of the results. For instance, participants may have been unwilling to disclose unfavorable data due to the fact that the researcher was personally acquainted with the school's principal if they believed their jobs could be negatively impacted. Thus, a limitation of the study was that the

researcher's relationship to one of the administrators of the organization could have hindered a true representation of the data.

In addition, researcher bias is an area of weakness in utilizing a case study approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher possesses bias in the form of excitement and passion for the subject matter due, in part, to her own experiences as a new teacher. In my teacher education program, I received very little in the way of preparation or training for the ethical challenges she would face in the profession, which became abundantly clear during that first difficult year as a teacher. The researcher was frustrated early on after being handed a scope and sequence that allowed for very little creativity. She had no idea what to do when a parent came up to the school and yelled at her in front of the entire class. The researcher often wondered if a more thorough and holistic approach to ethics in her teacher education program would have better prepared her for the ethical challenges of her teaching career.

In spite of its limitations, there were no known physical, psychological, or sociological risks associated with this study. The privacy of the participants in the study was guarded with great care. Only the researcher had access to any specific participant information. All participation was voluntary and the subjects were permitted to withdraw from the study at any time. A detailed description of the central purpose of the research, as well as the data collection procedures, were provided to all participants at the beginning of the study. All data was held in the strictest confidence.

Definition of Terms

1. *Moral challenge*: a choice to implement perceived good and bad or right and wrong behavior (Sucher, 2007, p. 22). The study frequently refers to teachers'

ability to “manage” moral challenges, which, in hindsight, was a poor wording decision, but must be utilized in this study to reflect the wording in the questionnaire and interview questions. A better word choice would have been “successfully resolve” as it implies the teacher weighed her options and chose to implement the choice she deemed morally right. For example, Ms. Rose, a participant in this study, experienced a moral challenge when a fellow teacher talked to her about specifics of the state standardized test, which was strictly forbidden. Ms. Rose had a decision to make—should she report this teacher, which she perceived as the moral thing to do, or should she choose loyalty to a colleague over her perception of what was the right thing to do and withhold this information from her administrators? Ms. Rose chose to report the teacher, thereby successfully resolving this moral challenge.

2. *Pre-service teacher*: a college student involved in a teacher education program that includes school-based field experience (retrieved from <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/preservice-teacher/23305>).
3. *Teacher education program*: a college or university program that prepares pre-service teachers for the teaching profession through coursework, field experiences, and certification (Kennedy, 1999, 54).
4. *Alternative certification program*: a teacher certification program that awards a teaching certificate through a process other than—and typically much shorter than—a traditional university teacher education program (retrieved from <http://www.teaching-certification.com/alternative-teaching-certification.html>).

5. *Moral formation*: systematic, often academic, formulation of rules of conduct in the context of a given tradition (Santrock, 2005, p. 442; Hugen & Scales, 2002, p. 122).
6. *Informal moral education*: attempts by teachers to provide students with the intellectual resources enabling them to make informed and responsible judgments about matters of moral importance; moral education that occurs unprompted by administrative decree and for which no curriculum is utilized (Wilson, 1998, p. 42; <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/informal?s=t>).
7. *Morals/ethics*: a field of study seeking principles to help people deal with the hard questions that arise for human beings; used interchangeably in this study with the word “morals” because the definitions in *Webster’s Dictionary* are virtually identical (Giovacco-Johnson, 2011, p. 449; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethics?src=search-dict-box>).

Summary

Mounting concerns regarding unethical behavior by both teachers and students warrant increased attention upon teacher education programs and whether or not they are (1) preparing teachers to make moral decisions, and (2) preparing teachers to act as moral guides for their students. Morality and ethics continue to remain largely unaddressed in teacher education programs, but with teacher turnover rates at such high levels, teacher educators and administrators need to examine the moral challenges teachers are resolving as part and parcel of the profession in order to determine how to better prepare teachers for these challenges going forward. While teacher education cannot assure ethical behavior, it can assure that future teachers think about it and reflect upon their own moral

motivations and beliefs. In Chapter Two, the researcher reviews the literature on the history of moral formation in United States schools as well as current and potential approaches to ethics education in teacher education programs.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Efforts to improve student achievement have led to much research on various aspects of teaching since the mid-1900s. Much of the research points to the complexity of teaching, as teachers must assume various roles in fulfillment of their duties—facilitator, entertainer, planner, liaison, informer, assessor, preparer, discipliner, protector—and the list goes on (Valli & Buese, 2007; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Nelson & Harper, 2006; Chang, 2009). These roles come with a host of decisions that teachers must make, often in the spur of the moment, to address issues that quite frequently leave teachers with more questions than answers, and many of these issues are moral in nature. In addition, teachers often assume the role of moral guides for their students, looking for opportunities to informally slip in moral lessons and advice. The purpose of this case study was to describe the perceptions and attitudes of teachers toward the pre-service education they received in preparation for successfully resolving moral challenges and helping students to successfully resolve moral challenges of their own.

While this study is not about formal character education in its entirety, participating teachers' responses touched on aspects of character/virtue education and warrant inclusion here as well.

In this chapter, the researcher highlights major moral challenges faced by both students and teachers in the U.S. today. Then, the researcher provides a brief history of moral formation in U.S. schools, beginning with a shift in focus at colleges and

universities that filtered down to public schools. Next, the researcher describes possible approaches to tackling ethics education in teacher education programs, followed by a brief overview of dissertations and theses pertaining to ethics education for pre-service teachers and moral challenges in teaching. The theoretical framework guiding this study is then discussed at length, followed by a brief summary of this chapter and a preview of chapter three.

Moral Challenges in Education

According to Ream & Glanzer (2007), teacher education programs are less likely to offer ethics courses than other professional degree programs, such as business, nursing, social work, communication, engineering, and computer science (p. 272). This is rather troubling considering the relational nature of teaching, involving relationship formation between teacher and student, teacher and parent, teacher and colleague, and teacher and administrator. This potential gap in teacher education may have contributed to a host of moral issues that plague contemporary students and teachers. Since this study focuses on how teachers make moral decisions and how they try to help their students make moral decisions, it is important to understand the kinds of moral decision points with which teachers and students are being confronted.

Moral Challenges Plaguing Students Today

Moral challenges abound among young people in the United States today, leading many to scrutinize students' exposure, or lack thereof, to moral formation in schools. Barnwell (2016) points to the 2012 Josephson Report Card on the Ethics of American

Youth as proof of the prevalence of these issues among young people in the U.S. The study demonstrates that 57 percent of teens believe that

...successful people do what they have to do to win, even if it involves cheating. Twenty-four percent believe it is okay to threaten or hit someone when angry. Thirty-one percent believe physical violence is a big problem in their schools. Fifty-two percent reported cheating at least once on an exam. Forty-nine percent of students reported being bullied or harassed in a manner that seriously upset them. (Barnwell, p. 4)

Not included in the Josephson study are issues of substance abuse and misuse of technology, problems which similar studies find to be all too prevalent among young people and certainly warrant inclusion here (Delmonico, 2008; Wang, Iannotti, & Luk, 2012). Thus, according to major studies on moral problems among youth in the U.S., young people are severely struggling with issues of honesty, violence, harassment, substance abuse and technology misuse. While some of these issues have been problematic in the past, others, such as harassment, have taken on new forms through social media, offering a new medium through which bullying can take place.

Several studies highlight the fact that students are struggling with honesty in large numbers—academic honesty, in particular. A 2002 story by CNN highlighted a survey by Rutgers’ Management Education Center in which 75 percent of the 4500 high school students surveyed admitted to engaging in serious cheating. Most disturbingly, as the CNN story points out, a large number of students do not see cheating as wrong, and, in fact, many see it as a necessity in order to succeed in life. ““What’s important is getting ahead,”” says one high school student.

The better grades you have, the better school you get into, the better you’re going to do in life. And if you learn to cut corners to do that, you’re going to be saving yourself time and energy. In the real world, that’s what’s going to be going on. The better you do, that’s what shows. It’s not how moral you were in getting there. (Slobogin, 2002, para. 3)

One aspect of cheating that continues to present problems for teachers is plagiarism. Koya (2005) notes that the extent to which students plagiarize is “frightening” and that there has been a “noticeable spike” in the number of students engaging in plagiarism (p. 14). Whitley & Keith-Speigal (2002) believe the current level of plagiarism will have far-reaching effects, not just for education, but for society as a whole:

Students who cheat in college frequently go on to cheat in graduate and professional school and to engage in unethical business practice. Because having successfully cheated at the undergraduate and graduate levels can make it easier to cheat in one’s professional career, failure to deal adequately with academic dishonesty and educate students about the consequences of their behavior constitutes a disservice not only to the academic community but to society in general. (p. 5)

Thus, as Whitley & Keith-Speigal suggest, successful cheating may lead to more cheating.

Violence is also an issue among children and teens, and these violent acts frequently take place in school. Flannery, Wester, & Singer (2004) state that almost 90% of elementary and high school students have witnessed another student being threatened at school, and 25% reported having seen another person beaten up at school. They go on to report that witnessing violent acts at school is “related to a number of emotional and behavioral problems, such as posttraumatic stress, anxiety, anger, depression, dissociation, and self-destructive and aggressive behavior” (p. 561). A 2012 study of students in grades 7 through 12 revealed that 15.6% of the students had carried weapons in the previous 30 days (Wang, Iannotti, & Luk, 2012, p. 528). Flannery, Wester, and Singer (2004) suggest that violence leads to more violence, finding a positive correlation between adolescents who reported attacking another person with a knife or shooting at

someone and their exposure to high levels of violence. In other words, the more violence young people witness, the more likely they are to engage in violent acts themselves.

Substance abuse is another behavior with which students are struggling. Wang, Iannotti, & Luk (2012) found that of the young people in grades 7 through 12 who were surveyed, 37.2% had used cigarettes, alcohol, and/or marijuana in the past 30 days.

Patrick & Schulenberg (2014) reported that alcohol use typically begins and increases during adolescence and young adulthood. According to their survey, 27% of 8th graders, 50% of 10th graders, and 64% of 12th graders admitted to having used alcohol in the previous 12 months. In addition, 4% of 8th graders, 14% of 10th graders, and 25% of 12th graders stated they had been drunk at least once in the previous month (p. 193).

However, alcohol is only one of the substances to which students may be exposed. A study by Conway, et al. (2013) found that out of the 24.6% of adolescents who reported having tried illicit drugs, 49.8% had used alcohol, 28% had used marijuana, 6.6% had used amphetamines, and anywhere from 2.6% to 5.9% had misused medications, such as oxycodone and cough medicine (p. 716). A study by Kolodny, et al. (2015) concluded that a “sharp rise” in teen heroin use has taken place as well, creating a “public health crisis” that is “exacerbating morbidity and mortality” (p. 559). Moss, Chen, & Yi (2014) point out that substance abuse that takes place in early adolescence increases the risk for a variety of health problems, and has also been linked to issues of self-esteem, depression, antisocial behavior, rebelliousness, aggressiveness, crime, delinquency, truancy, and poor performance in school (p. 51). Thus, substance abuse in young people can lead to a host of other issues that affect students long after they are out of school.

Another area in which students are morally challenged is in their use of technology, and this is a fairly recent development. Palfrey and Gasser (2008) acknowledge that these young people are different from earlier generations of students; they are “digital natives”—students who have grown up with technology.

They study, work, write, and interact with each other in ways that are very different from the ways that you did growing up. They read blogs rather than newspapers. They often meet each other online before they meet in person... They get their music online—often for free, illegally—rather than buying it in record stores. They’re more likely to send an instant message (IM) than to pick up the telephone to arrange a date later in the afternoon... Major aspects of their lives—social interactions, friendships, civic activities—are mediated by digital technologies. And they’ve never known any other way of life. (p. 2)

A 2013 Pew survey confirms Palfrey and Gasser’s assertions. Of 1,102 teens ages 12-17 surveyed, 58% of 12-year-olds and 84% of 17-year-olds have cell phones. Of those owning cell phones, 50% send at least fifty text messages per day and a third send more than one hundred per day (Madden, 2013). These numbers have undoubtedly continued to rise since the publication of this study.

A dangerous behavior among teens that came with the advent of new technology is “sexting,” which refers to “the practice of sending sexually explicit material including language or images to another person’s cell phone” (Korenis and Billick, 2014, p. 98). A study by Delmonico (2008) reported that nearly 20% of teens have engaged in “sexting,” and over 40% reported having been on the receiving end of such messages. These statistics are indicative of a larger problem. A study by Temple (2012) found that teens who engage in sexting are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors as well. This can lead to many other issues, such as pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases

(STDs), making this teen technological trend something that must be addressed sooner rather than later.

Based on several research studies, Palfrey and Gasser (2008) underscore how important it is for parents and teachers to talk to young people about their online activities. “The more often ‘significant adults’ talk to young people about their experiences online (and occasionally monitor what they are doing), the less likely the youth are to engage in risky behavior” (p. 161). They go on to say that teens who do not have some sort of adult intervention are four times more likely to agree to meet up with someone they met online, which is an incalculable risk to their safety, and further underscores the importance of adult guidance of young people’s technology use.

Cyber-bullying is another way in which technology leads to moral challenges for students. Some students engage in “cyber bullying,” in which they target another student to harass via social media. According to Patchin & Hinduja (2006), cyber-bullying differs from traditional bullying in that cyberbullies are able to carry the bullying beyond the school building and follow the targeted students to their homes. A study by Tokunaga (2010) found that up to 40% of children and teens will encounter or have encountered some form of cyber-bullying, with junior high school age children (approximately ages 12 to 14) being most susceptible to victimization (p. 283). Being a victim of cyber-bullying can lead to a multitude of issues, including psychosocial problems, declining academic performance, and trouble at home, making it a cause of concern for parents, teachers, and administrators.

Moral Challenges Plaguing Teachers Today

Like students, teachers face moral issues of their own. The most severe of these issues is the abuse of the teacher-student relationship. The increase in availability and use of technology has made communication between teachers and students more readily available outside of school, which has led to an apparent increase in impropriety between the two groups. Numerous cases of teachers having intimate physical relationships with one or more of their students come to light each year. The U.S. Department of Education refers to this as “educator sexual misconduct,” which they define as “behavior by an educator at a student and intended to sexually arouse or titillate the educator or the child.” According to a major 2004 study sanctioned by the U.S. Department of Education, nearly 10 percent of U.S. public school students have been targeted with unwanted sexual attention by a school employee (Retrieved from <http://www.wrightslaw.com/pubs/sex.misconduct.doe.2004.pdf>). Walz (2010) reports that approximately 400 teachers are charged with having a sexual relationship with their students each year in the U.S. Knoll (2010) notes that, in spite of frequent assumptions by the public that most of the offending teachers are male, females are just as likely to engage in an intimate physical relationship with one or more students (p. 372).

Teachers’ use of technology—particularly social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram—can lead to other issues as well. Carter, Foulger, and Ewbank (2008) point out that teachers may be “reprimanded for what school districts consider ‘inappropriate activity.’ The content on these questionable pages includes candid photos, racy or suggestive song lyrics, and references to sex or to alcohol or drug use” (p. 683). In addition, posts in which teachers vent “about personal frustrations at

work” have caused problems, which, in combination with the other inappropriate uses of social networking, have led some school districts to take “a range of disciplinary actions, including dismissal, against what they consider to be questionable uses of social networking sites by teachers” (p. 683). Professional organizations, such as the Association of Texas Professional Educators, have even gotten involved by publishing guidelines for “teachers’ participation in social networking sites” in an attempt to manage this growing problem (p. 684).

Another moral issue with which teachers may struggle is academic honesty. In the previous section, the researcher discussed the types of cheating in which students engage and the sobering fact that many see it as a necessity to succeed. As it happens, teachers are not immune to this kind of thinking. As the stakes have been raised in standardized testing, so has the temptation of teachers to cheat. One of the most well-known cheating scandals occurred in Atlanta public schools, leading to the indictment of 35 employees in 2013, including the district’s superintendent. Teachers were accused of “participating in a scheme consisting of artificially raising test scores, at times by erasing wrong answers and replacing them with correct ones” (Morgan, 2016, p. 69). This was not an isolated incident, however, as similar cases of systematic cheating were discovered in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Houston, and other places. With 20 states rewarding schools on the basis of exemplary or improved student performance, 32 states sanctioning schools due to poor performance, and several states looking to follow in California’s footsteps by adopting policies providing merit pay based on student performance on state-wide assessments, pressure continues to mount for teachers to produce superior student test scores (Jacob & Levitt, 2003, p. 843).

While becoming intimately involved with students or cheating on state tests are issues in which there is a clear right choice and wrong choice (both are illegal according to U.S. law), the majority of moral challenges teachers face may be of a different nature. A 2015 *Washington Post* article highlighted a commencement speech given by researcher and author, Richard Rothstein, to graduates of the Bank Street Graduate School of Education in New York. In his speech, Rothstein shed light on some of the moral challenges the graduates would likely face as teachers. He points to the narrowing of curriculum in which subjects that are not a part of state tests are excluded or diminished in favor of more attention to state-tested subjects, like math, science, and language arts; the large amount of special attention paid to students just below the passing point on state tests, robbing attention from students who are far below or far above passing; teaching that focuses not on critical thinking, but on “trivial aspects of test-taking, or guessing strategies;” and low-scoring students who have behavioral issues being “opportunistically suspended just before testing day,” leading to this question: “When a teacher is enrolled in a corrupt system, where fulfillment of her legal and organizational responsibilities requires her to harm her students, when does she owe it to herself and to her students to refuse?” (Strauss, 2015, para. 25).

As Rothstein states, the majority of moral challenges teachers face may not be clear cut; rather, teachers can be faced with choices that set federal, state, or district policies against what teachers believe may actually be best for students. In fact, moral challenges are so common among teachers that a multitude of articles have been and continue to be published revolving around them. For example, Santoro (2011) provides a narrative of a teacher named Stephanie who was faced with the dilemma of how to make

AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) according to NCLB (No Child Left Behind) standards without sacrificing what she considered to be good teaching. Stephanie described her dilemma thus:

I said to myself, this is not what I signed up for anymore...At one point in a faculty meeting I remember saying to my colleagues, 'What would happen if we didn't give the test?' These were things we talked about at the beginning: we talked about how to make people understand—how to show people that this was the antithesis of what we know, from our considerable experience in education, is desirable. (p. 16)

Hayes (2009) points to some of the other moral challenges teachers face, like how to help male students improve without negatively affecting female students' achievement, whether or not to raise a student athlete's failing grade so he would be eligible to play in the football game that week, and whether to handle a difficult student by allowing him to skate through as long as he didn't disturb anyone or to try to get the student to do the work so he could legitimately pass the class. Other moral challenges involve issues with fellow teachers, like how to proceed when a teacher thinks a colleague is not behaving in an ethical manner. What makes moral challenges like these so interesting is that it is virtually impossible to please all parties involved in them; no matter what the teacher decides to do, it is likely that someone will be unhappy with the decision. Teachers are quite often burdened with making decisions that will anger either students, parents, colleagues, or administrators, any of whom could provide enough pushback for a teacher to receive disciplinary action or even lose her/his job, leading teachers to weigh the benefits against the consequences of these decisions.

Another moral challenge confronting teachers revolves around the moral guidance of students. A study by Milson (2003) found that although teachers have a high level of self-efficacy, they are largely reserved about their ability to contribute to the moral

development of their students. There may be several reasons for this. For one thing, some parents do not want the school to have any part in educating their children in moral matters, preferring to take on this part of their upbringing themselves, in order to prevent the transmission of values to which they are opposed. Another is the sheer lack of time available in the typical school day. The pressures of standardized testing and Adequate Yearly Progress have led to a hyper-focus on preparing students to meet these national standards, leaving little room in the school day for attention to moral matters.

A Brief History of Moral Formation and Character Education in U.S. Schools

At one time, moral formation was one of the assumed functions of public education. Students memorized catechisms, read Bible stories, and learned history through a biblical lens. Likewise, normal schools, the first teachers colleges, included moral education as part of their curriculum for teacher education. Fast-forward to today and one sees a very different picture. According to Nord (2010), textbooks and curricula in schools are determined to a great extent by how scholars in colleges and universities understand the academic disciplines. Thus, any attempt to trace the shift in focus of K-12 schooling in the U.S. must begin with a look at higher education.

According to Bok (1990), little attention is currently paid directly to moral concerns in higher education as a whole. However, this was not always the case. The concept of *paideia* outlined in Plato's *Republic* provides a vision of education of which the main purpose is the shaping of students' character. Tarnas (1991) explains that "the classical Greek system of education and training, which came to include...ethics and philosophy [was] the complete pedagogical course of study necessary to produce a well-rounded, fully educated citizen" (pp. 29-30). The primary goal in the pursuit of

knowledge for Plato was to move humankind closer to perfection. The early church fathers took Plato's concept of *paideia* a step further, combining it with Biblical revelation to create Christian *paideia*. Clement of Alexandria referred to this as *paidagogos*, blending Hellenistic learning and cultural patterns with Christian theological thought and a sacramental way of life, considering all secular subjects to be "ladders to the sky."

In the medieval period, monastic schools and the earliest universities arose along with a renewed emphasis on broad learning. This period saw the development of the seven liberal arts—the trivium and quadrivium—which included grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. These subjects became the core of post-secondary education, the aim of which was to restore God's image in humanity. Hugh of St. Victor believed that the Fall of humankind damaged humanity's relationship to God, our understanding of the world, and our bodies, insisting that learning could lessen some of these consequences and bring humanity closer to God (Graves, 1996, p. 137). In essence, education was viewed as having redemptive value.

Originally, the early universities in the United States continued in this tradition of faith. Harvard University was founded in 1636 by the Puritans, and its primary purpose was the training of clergy. Yale, too, began as a religious institution, which, as with Harvard, had as one of its formal goals "ensuring that students know God and Jesus Christ" (Marsden, 1996, p. 61). The same was true for the majority of the early colleges and universities in the United States, most of which existed for the sole purpose of training clergy. In 1852, John Henry Newman, a Catholic cardinal and Oxford intellectual, produced a book entitled *The Idea of a University*. In it, he made the case for

theology as a component of the curriculum offered in colleges and universities, arguing that “since universities claim to teach universal knowledge and theology was a branch of knowledge it did not make sense to exclude theology from the main business of the university” (Marsden, 1996, p. 410). At about the time Newman wrote his book, normal schools began to develop in the United States, the purpose of which was the education of teachers. Among the many subjects studied in normal schools was the study of “Mental and Moral Science,” which initially focused mainly on Protestant centric morals and values, later shifting to a more broad overview of Christian ethics in order to accommodate the growing number of Catholics entering into the United States (Ogren, 1995, p. 8).

According to Marsden (1994) brought an unprecedented shift in the role of religious education in colleges and universities in the United States. At Harvard, the beginning of the end for religion came with the advent of a new moral philosophy. The questioning of religious dogma led to a broad focus on virtue and its ability to produce good citizens. Far less divisive than the sectarian ideals under which Harvard had been founded, moral philosophy and ethics courses began to replace theology and Bible classes. Religion at Yale, on the other hand, was replaced by *positivism*—the idea that true science trumped religious beliefs—and the notion that the truth could only be found through empirical investigation.

Unlike Harvard and Yale, the University of California at Berkeley began as a pluralist institution, boasting a free religious spirit aimed at meeting the needs of all religions. As such, the shift away from religious doctrine was an easy and essentially painless transition for Berkeley, which was already halfway there upon its founding. For

Johns Hopkins University, the erosion of religion was the result of a laser-like focus upon professionalization. Johns Hopkins was the first to center its institution upon graduate and professional education, which was to be free from religious ideals and practices in order to allow for the unbridled scientific search for knowledge; thus Johns Hopkins came to be defined by its new professional scientific pursuits in which religion had no part, and one by one the other higher education institutions in the U.S. followed (Marsden, 1996, p. 153). As such, colleges and universities today seem to have given up on such moral questions as the purpose of life (Kromnan, 2008).

Moral formation through a focus on the Christian religion was also a central feature of pre-college schooling upon the country's founding. In fact, one of the overwhelming purposes of colonial education was to create a society whose members were literate enough to read the Bible. As Milson, Bohan, Glanzer, & Null (2010) point out, "The famous Massachusetts Education Laws of 1647 declared that every community of 50 households needed to collect money and hire a teacher, because it was the chief project of that 'ould deluder Satan to keep men from the knowledge of ye Scriptures'" (p. 1).

Colonial education had a strong moral component that was woven intermittently throughout the curriculum. According to McClellan (1999), primers—books containing "simple verses, songs, and stories designed to teach...the virtues of Christian living"—were used to teach children the alphabet and literacy skills (p. 6). One of the most commonly used schoolbooks in this time period was the *New England Primer*, which contained various religious readings that children were often expected to memorize, such as the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the books of the Bible, as well as various

catechisms. In his 1708 “Essay Upon the Good Education of Children,” Cotton Mather made the case for a curriculum centered on the scriptures, in which children are taught the history of the Bible, biblical principles, biblical commandments, and how to read the Bible (Milson, Bohan, Glanzer, & Null, 2010, p.19). In fact, formal education in the colonies went “well beyond the rote learning of simple pieties,” teaching students how to interpret scripture, understand theology, and “apply knowledge of the liberal arts to the great moral, religious, and social questions of the day” (McClellan, 1999, p. 6).

Writing in 1749, Benjamin Franklin crafted his own list for what students should be made to study from which Bible-reading and religious instruction was largely absent. Franklin did emphasize morality and a focus on virtues such as temperance, order, frugality, industry, and perseverance. Franklin asserted that the purpose of education is to impress upon young people a desire and an ability “to serve Mankind, one’s Country, Friends and Family...[this] should indeed be the great Aim and End of all Learning” (Milson, Bohan, Glanzer, & Null, 2010, p. 39).

Sectarian religious instruction remained in schools as long as the schools were locally controlled. However, the common school movement of the 1830s resulted in a sizeable shift toward broad moral formation. Known as the father of the common school movement and, subsequently, public education, Horace Mann took the lead in establishing state-supported schools that were nonsectarian, believing that the narrowness of religious sectarianism undermined the cause of education. Nord (2010) writes,

Mann wanted no theology or religious indoctrination in his schools, but he did want Bible reading. Like most everyone, he believed that morality required a religious foundation: the Bible. But the Bible should ‘speak for itself.’ Teachers were to provide no divisive doctrinal gloss. Students should be free to interpret it as they will (p. 63).

Thus, Mann had no desire to see moral matters stricken from school curricula, believing that “the germs of morality must be planted in the moral nature of children at an early period of their life” (McClellan, 1999, p. 18). Rather, he believed students should be taught moral principles that were *common* to all sects of Christianity and Judaism.

However, the use of the Protestant Bible and an obvious slant toward Protestantism in common schools created an educational divide between Protestants and Catholics, leading Catholics to form their own parochial schools rather than sending their children to common schools. According to McClellan (1999), bishops from across the United States met in Baltimore at the First Plenary Council in 1852, resolving that “parishes should create their own schools” to provide Catholic families with an alternative to common schooling (p. 39). Something had to be done to prevent a unified school system. As Nord (2010) points out,

In a religiously pluralistic culture, peace is achieved by eliminating what is divisive from public institutions, and religion was clearly divisive. But the goal wasn't simply eliminating what was divisive, it was teaching what we had in common; and in an increasingly pluralistic and individualistic frontier society the need for a shared ideology was deeply felt (p. 64).

Americanism provided that unifying ideology. Starting in the mid-to-late 1800s, public schools began to devote themselves to the Americanization of students, partly in response to growing waves of immigrants entering into the United States. As Sidney Hook (1947) points out, public schools provided common ground for the “shared human values which must underlie all differences within a democratic culture if it is to survive. Where churches and sects and nations divide...the schools can unite by becoming the temples and laboratories of a common democratic faith” (p. 608).

According to Lickona (1993), “In the 20th century, the consensus supporting character education began to crumble under the blows of several powerful forces,” the first of which was the introduction of scientific naturalism and, more specifically, Darwin’s theory of evolution, into mainstream American thought (p. 6). Nord chronicles the gradual shift in the content of school textbooks, noting how the advent of naturalism and positivism taking hold in colleges and universities trickled down to the textbooks which began to use science to explain nature and creation.

Theology disappeared from later books though God often maintained a presence as the guarantor of virtue; indeed, religion became largely a matter of ethics. By the second half of the century, the virtues most often praised were the economic virtues of industry and frugality, and they often connected virtue with success. (p. 64)

The effect of positivism on character education, according to Lickona (1993), was that morality became “relativized and privatized” and was “made to seem a matter of personal ‘value judgment,’ not a subject for public debate and transmission through the schools” (p. 6).

Nord also points to the creation of high schools as further driving schools away from a focus on moral formation. High schools began at the close of the 1800s partly for the purpose of creating an educated workforce. After several reports came out suggesting American goods and services were subpar to that of European countries, a shift away from a more classical curriculum toward vocational education began. In 1917, Congress passed the Smith-Hughes Act, the first in a series of government actions in support of vocational education.

Lickona (1993) also credits “a worldwide rise in personalism” for the decline of character education, stating that this new personalism

celebrated the worth, autonomy, and subjectivity of the person, emphasizing individual rights and freedom over responsibility. Personalism rightly protested societal oppression and injustice, but it also delegitimized moral authority, eroded belief in objective moral norms, turned people inward toward self-fulfillment, weakened social commitments (for example, to marriage and parenting), and fueled the socially destabilizing sexual revolution (p. 6).

In addition to personalism, Lickona points to the “rapidly intensifying pluralism of American society (Whose values should we teach?) and the increasing secularization of the public arena (Won’t moral education violate the separation of church and state?)” as catalysts for the diminishment of character education in America’s schools, referring to them as “barriers to achieving the moral consensus indispensable for character education in the public schools,” causing public schools to retreat “from their once central role as moral and character educators” (p. 6).

Publication of the education report *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 and the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 further shifted the focus in American schools’ toward academics. The No Child Left Behind Act has tied standardized test scores to dollars by placing serious sanctions on schools that do not make Adequate Yearly Progress, putting pressure on school administrators—pressure that has trickled down to teachers, who must produce good test scores from their students or find themselves under serious scrutiny. This has led to a hyper-focus on tested subjects and building students’ test-taking skills. According to a special 2014 report by the American Federation of Teachers, students in the testing grades can spend up to 110 hours per year doing test education, which includes taking practice tests and learning test-taking strategies (Nelson, 2014, p. 3). That equates to almost one full month of the school year spent learning how to take tests! The remainder of the school year is largely filled with direct teaching of the

content of the tested subjects. With test education consuming so much of the school year, there is little time to engage with students on moral matters.

Higher education, some would argue, has become simply an extension of K-12 education, largely focusing on marketability and education for employment. Higher education has shifted away from Plato's concept of *paideia* and the shaping of a well-rounded human toward economic and vocational concerns. Very few colleges and universities require all students to take any courses in moral formation or ethics. Some students will take ethics courses that focus specifically on their field of study, such as law or medicine. However, the focus of these courses tends to be purely legal, informing students of what they are and are not permitted to do in their profession within the confines of U.S. law (Sommers, 1993, p. 3). Rarely do these courses venture into morality and the tension between right and wrong, which may at times conflict with U.S. law. In particular, teacher education programs may not be providing teachers with the preparation they need to resolve the moral challenges in teaching or assist students in resolving moral challenges of their own.

Current Status of Ethics in Teacher Education

Out of all of the programs offered at universities, one could argue that there are three main professional programs that educate students for a specific type of employment: law, medicine, and education. Ethics courses are a requirement in most, if not all, law and medicine programs. In contrast, finding even one ethics course in a teacher education program is like finding a needle in a haystack. A search of the catalogs of the universities in the Big 12 conference, many of which are in the area known as "the Bible belt," yielded no specific education courses on ethics. This was true for even faith-

based universities such as Texas Christian University and Southern Methodist University. While ethics were mentioned in a few course descriptions, they were referred to mostly in the context of legal issues and were lumped in with foundations of education, like at Oklahoma University and Kansas State, or professional practice seminars, like at Oklahoma State and Texas Christian University.

In a study of 156 colleges and universities in the CCCU (Council for Christian Colleges & Universities), Ream & Glanzer (2007) found that out of the education, business, nursing, social work, communication, engineering, and computer science majors, education majors were the least likely to have optional or required ethics courses (p. 272). Ream & Glanzer point out that even as attention toward ethics within professional disciplines has increased, the field of education has not followed suit. They find the absence of courses on ethics in teacher education programs troubling, insisting that ethics courses “help students to understand and clarify ethical frameworks, assumptions, motivations, and reasoning” (p. 285).

When questioned about ethics in teacher education programs, administrators often make the claim that ethics are integrated into required education courses. Ream & Glanzer (2007) reviewed the education curricula of 156 Christian colleges and universities, finding no evidence of an integrated ethics component, even in course descriptions in which the language of ethics could have appeared, such as courses on classroom management or multicultural education. In fact, it appears to Ream & Glanzer that these course descriptions purposefully “avoid framing any of these issues in specifically moral ways,” adding further suspicion to claims that ethics are integrated into the curriculum (p. 284). Ream & Glanzer point out that courses where ethics could be

incorporated currently focus more on “procedures for maintaining discipline than personal or corporate character” (p. 282).

Furthermore, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), the current national teacher education program accreditation organization, has practically omitted the topic of morals/ethics in its most recent adoption of accreditation standards.

Standard #9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice. The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner (retrieved from <http://caepnet.org>).

In essence, ethical practice is thrown in with professional development and is never defined or described, presumably because “ethical practice” cannot be statistically measured. The *CAEP Accreditation Standards and Recommendations* go on to say:

Research has not empirically established a particular set of non-academic qualities that teachers should possess. There are numerous studies that list different characteristics, sometimes referring to similar characteristics by different labels. Furthermore, there does not seem to be a clear measure for these non-academic qualities (retrieved from <http://caepnet.org>).

CAEP’s decision to avoid discussing teacher ethics is regrettable, as teaching is a complex profession in which teachers can find themselves in situations where an understanding of ethics would be quite beneficial. As stated earlier, teachers face a wide range of moral challenges, the majority of which are not clear cut issues of legality, but multi-layered problems in which one or more of the persons involved may be negatively affected no matter what the teacher’s decision. The moral challenges outlined in this study—those faced by students and teachers—certainly underscore the need for an ethics component to teacher education, both within teacher education programs and teachers’ ongoing professional development.

Possible Approaches to Ethics in Teacher Education Programs

Some researchers and practitioners who recognize that there may be room for improvement in ethics education for teachers have outlined a variety of possible approaches to providing this important guidance. While teacher education cannot assure moral behavior, it can assure that future teachers think about it—why it is important, potential implementation in the classroom, etc.

Reflection

Several sources suggest ethics in teacher education programs should revolve around critical reflection by teacher candidates on their own unexamined assumptions (Banks et al., 2005; Hammerness et al., 2005; Johnson & Reiman, 2007; Richardson & Placier, 2001; Schussler et al., 2010). Mayes (2001) and Sockett (2006) note that education students begin their teacher education programs with a complex value system in place, and so it is necessary for teacher candidates to reflect on how this system shapes their responses to a variety of moral challenges in school. Schussler et al. (2010) refer to the assumptions within this complex value system as “moral dispositions,” stating that, “because teachers make hundreds of decisions daily that are packed with assumptions about the purposes of education and how students should be educated, their dispositions act as a value-laden guide that frames their thinking and actions” (p. 353). Schussler et al. recommend that teacher education programs be saturated with opportunities for teacher candidates to engage in critical reflection, stating, “For candidates to use multiple perspectives to reflect on teaching situations and achieve parity in focusing on students and the self requires time and sequential scaffolding across a program” (p. 361). Students would begin in their teacher education programs with a focus on the self, working to

understand their own moral values and cultural identities, and then gradually move their focus outward as they analyze the contexts of different teaching situations.

Mahoney (2009) argues for a reflective approach as well, stating, “teachers’ ethical understanding is inadequate for our times” (p. 985). Mahoney believes “there is good reason to suppose that increasing levels of ethical understanding might yield a number of benefits” in education, and that what teachers need is a “reflective critical space,” where they may foster “ethical literacy” (p. 984). This ethical literacy, Mahoney asserts, helps teachers to understand what is at stake in a decision and to recognize what kind of values are involved, which “might help teachers to feel more confident, less confused, more focused in how they articulate their dilemmas and clear about what is involved in teaching value perspectives to children” (p. 988).

Langlois & Lapointe (2010) recommend a three-stage approach to critical reflection, which they refer to as “TERA—Trajectory: Ethics, Responsibility and Authenticity” (p. 149). This ethics education program begins with knowledge, in which teacher candidates undertake ethical reflection, asking questions such as “Am I aware of the ethics conveyed within my organization?” and “Am I able to identify situations of injustice, equity or inhumanity?” (p. 151). The second stage of the process is self-reflection, which leads teacher candidates to focus on their own moral dimensions, beliefs, principles, and standards to determine how these affect the way they think about and approach teaching. The final stage, action, is where stages one and two are implemented “as a complete ethical process, . . . taking into consideration all of the possible negative and positive consequences in the decision-making process” (p. 151). Langlois & Lapointe insist that ethics can be learned, and that, as they work through

these stages, teacher candidates can cultivate an increased understanding of the ethical stakes encompassed in their teaching practices and grow their ethical awareness.

Teacher Narratives

An alternate method for integrating an ethics component into teacher education programs is the narrative approach. According to Korthagen (2004), this approach is based on the premise that “the ways in which teachers think about education is embedded in the stories they tell each other and themselves” (p. 81). This story-based approach to ethics education may be ideal for helping to prepare teachers for the complex moral challenges they may face. While a narrative approach to ethics does exist in some schools of education, undergraduate students in teacher education programs likely do not receive this experience as part of their required (or even elective) course load, typically reserving this exercise for masters or even doctoral degrees in education. This is regrettable, as teaching narratives can provide a glimpse into the world of teaching and the moral challenges teachers may encounter in their practice. Schwarz (1999) heralds teacher narratives as the “approach that seems most promising” for enabling ethical practice in education. “Narrative,” Schwarz states, “helps teacher candidates connect personal experiences, feelings, and ideas to significant educational issues in ways that transcend college lectures or lists of effective teaching behaviors” (p. 27).

Teacher narratives can take several forms, including novels and films, as well as teaching cases. For example, in 2007, Paramount Pictures’ produced a film, *The Freedom Writers*, based on the best-selling book *The Freedom Writers Diary*, which tells the story of Erin Gruwell (played by Hilary Swank), a young white teacher starting her teaching career at a low-income high-minority high school. The movie chronicles the many moral

challenges Gruwell faced within her first year, such as racism among different student ethnicities and the various moral codes held by these ethnicities that were in stark contrast to the moral code enforced by the school. The story demonstrates how Gruwell was able to break down the barriers among the students, and between herself and her students, by implementing a daily journal in which students began to open up to her and provide her with a snapshot of their lives. The movie also portrays a challenging moment in which Gruwell must make a choice between her students and her husband, shedding light on how a teaching career may impact teachers' personal lives. Other popular teacher narrative movies include *Stand and Deliver* (1988), *The Dead Poets Society* (1989), *Dangerous Minds* (1995), *Mr. Holland's Opus* (1995), *The Emperor's Club* (2002), and *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003).

Teaching cases are a form of teacher narrative that provide a glimpse into the world of teaching, typically focusing on one particular moral challenge a teacher has encountered. For example, in the book *All New Real-Life Case Studies for Teachers* (Hayes, 2009), there are cases about a teacher's struggle to help his male students improve their math scores without negatively affecting the female students' achievement, and another teacher's moral decision point involving whether or not to raise a student's failing grade so he would be eligible to participate in the football game that week. Likewise, there are cases that underscore how No Child Left Behind requirements have forced teachers to practically ignore certain subjects, such as art, and highlight the difficulties regarding Gifted & Talented (GT) students and the challenges they present to teachers. Lyons (1990) describes a situation in which a teacher was unsure how to manage a student who was "bright, but easily out of control" (p. 164). The teacher

recognized that he could take a “real low course and allow [the student] to sort of skate through and not learn and accomplish anything but not disturb [the other students]...” or the teacher could “try and get [the student] to do something and to work through the year so he passes” (p. 164). Often, the most powerful and effective teaching cases are those that are told by teachers themselves.

The broad range of issues presented in teaching narratives are likely to occur for many teachers in the future, and resources such as these provide teachers with awareness of the possible moral challenges they will face and can prepare them for how to deal with these challenges. The very presence of teaching narratives and the sheer volume of these sources speak to the fact that moral challenges exist in the teaching profession and that they occur with frequency.

Ethics Courses

Several sources suggest that integrating ethics throughout teacher education courses is not sufficient. Bruneau (1998) calls for a separate course on ethics and ethics-related problems in teacher education programs, lamenting that current programs rarely give in-depth treatment to ethical conflicts in teaching. Ethics, Bruneau says,

requires more in education than sporadically drawing teachers’ attention to moral problems in education. An alternative conception of the study of ethics in education would have student teachers and teacher educators thoroughly examining education policies, procedures, and protocols, many of which have ethical implications. (p. 254)

Furthermore, Bruneau argues that teacher educators should acknowledge the “pervasively ethical character” of the curriculum and of many school practices, planning for very careful analysis of them. The point of a course on ethics, Bruneau says, is

to make future teachers better service providers. The better a teacher is in reasoning and acting on ethical matters, and the more principled in his or her personal dispositions, habits, and attitudes, the more likely such a teacher's students will grow in moral maturity. (p. 254)

Thus, a teacher's ethical preparedness for the classroom may have an enormous impact on the success of students both inside and outside of the classroom.

Weber (1999) appears to favor ethics courses for teachers as well, stating that "in view of the teacher's involvement in character education and his/her role as a model for children and young people, requiring an appropriate course in ethics would not be unreasonable" (p. 88). This course, he goes on to say, "should be more fundamental than a discussion of ethical codes for teachers. It should provide the foundation for thinking ethically and for engaging in moral discourse as the occasion arises through the college experience" (p. 88). Weber suggests pairing the ethics course with service learning, which would advance education students' content knowledge while simultaneously actively engaging students "in life situations relevant to their formal study, offering opportunities for commitment to the community and emphasizing civic responsibility" (p. 89). However, adding additional courses to already jam-packed program requirements can be challenging, which is perhaps why most colleges and universities have not done so. The ethics course would need to either replace a course that is currently required, or the ethics course would need to be added on to the list of required education courses, making education programs more costly, likely requiring more money and time from students. In summary, an ethics course does not provide an easy solution, and more research is needed to determine how best to integrate ethics into teacher education programs.

Other Research on Ethics in Teacher Education

In addition to published research, a range of theses and dissertations have been written with regard to ethics in teacher education and the moral challenges teachers may encounter in the teaching profession. These studies cover many aspects of ethics education in teacher education programs, from investigating teachers' attitudes toward their responsibility as moral educators to those exploring the connection between pre-service ethics education and teachers' moral efficacy. Studies have included a range of diverse samples and have had mixed results.

A number of studies focused on the effect of using teaching cases in teacher education to provide insight into some of the moral challenges teachers face. West (2003) examined a case-based approach in teacher education and its effect on education students' moral reasoning, stating that one of the main purposes of case-based instruction is to help pre-service teachers learn to think like a teacher. West found that in spite of the fact "that most students began the semester identifying primarily with the student or family rather than the teacher," as the semester came to a close, "students began to 'see' the teachers' point of view as well" (p. 162). Similarly, Gartland (2003) used a pre-test/post-test method to determine if case-based instruction influences pre-service teachers' moral reasoning, finding that "participants gained substantially in terms of moral reasoning from pre- to post-test" and began to think more complexly in terms of solutions to moral challenges (p. 77). Salopek (2013) conducted a study of a major university's teacher education program, finding that "ethics instruction was inconsistently integrated into the teacher education curriculum and weighted towards a legal orientation of ethics rather than a value orientation" (p. 149).

Several studies examined if and/or how ethics education is taking place in teacher education programs. For instance, Wakefield (1996) wrote a dissertation to describe the state of moral education methods instruction in U.S. teacher education programs. The study exposed inconsistencies between support for moral education methods instruction and the actual act of instruction. “Heads of pre-service teacher education programs tended to support the notion of moral education methods instruction, but fewer reported significant direct instruction to meet that end” (pp. 87-88).

Puri (2009) conducted a study examining the impact of teacher education programs on teachers’ moral literacy development and teacher identity formation. Puri found that pre-service teachers “have limited experiences in the classroom” and that “as a result of this very few have experienced what they would consider an ethical or moral dilemma” (p. 107). Furthermore, Puri discovered that pre-service teachers “had a difficult time articulating their ethical beliefs,” likely because they are “more concerned with the ‘how’ and ‘what’ associated with becoming teachers and entering the field of education” (p. 109). These findings are consistent with other studies of teacher education programs, in which the focus is almost solely on content and pedagogy, with ethics being nearly absent or omitted entirely from the curriculum.

Bowden (2010) explored how educators can best serve their students in their roles as moral agents in a public school environment that may be indifferent or even hostile to discussions of ethics or morality. Bowden suggests that

educators with a deep sense of faith must both strive to function within the liminality [of public schools]...and to root [themselves] deeply in their own faith, from which [they] will gain the strength to live within the necessary tension evoked by teaching in a secular institution. (p. iii)

Other dissertations focused on teachers' attitudes toward their role as moral guides. A study by Wells (1998) found that teachers seem to agree that they "should be engaged in the moral development of their students" (p. 246). However, there was "a considerable lack of agreement among subjects about what the teacher's role should be as a moral educator" (p. 246). Bickham (2006) conducted a narrative inquiry of teachers' views on the moral nature of teaching, working under the assumption "that teaching is an inherently moral act because the practice, by definition works for the betterment of students through learning" (p. vi). The study found that "teachers' personal practical knowledge [develops] not only through personal experience and reflection but also within a knowledge community, where ideas and experiences [are] shared" (p. vi). In other words, collaboration among teachers may prove just as important as personal experiences and reflection in the quest to embrace the moral nature of teaching and increase practical knowledge. At the close of his study, Bickham calls for teacher education programs "to encourage their students, i.e. teacher candidates, to begin to develop a personal teaching philosophy in order to more explicitly acknowledge and embrace the moral nature of their pedagogical practices" (p. vii). Fahrig-Pendse's 2011 study resulted in findings similar to Bickham's, exploring the way in which teachers think about the moral element of their practices and the way in which moral challenges are visible in their classrooms. The study found that "individual teachers involved in justifying moral decisions and wrestling with ethical challenges remained ignorant of their colleague's struggles as they lacked a forum to productively discuss these issues" (p. 144). This finding is consistent with Bickham's study, emphasizing the importance of collaboration among teachers as a

means of sharing personal experiences, helping them to embrace the moral nature of the profession.

In this study, the researcher worked with current classroom teachers to discover the nature of the moral challenges they have encountered in the profession as well as their attitudes toward the ethics education they experienced in their teacher education programs. While Puri (2009) and Salopek (2013) investigated ethics education in teacher education programs, they neglected to examine teachers' *attitudes* toward the ethics education they received in their teacher education programs in an attempt to gauge their level of satisfaction in their preparedness for the moral challenges they encounter in the teaching profession. Wakefield's (1996) study explored the importance of ethics in teacher education programs from the point of view of administrators, so it was missing the perspectives of current teachers, which the researcher addressed in this study. While Bickham (2006), Fahrig-Pendse (2011), and Wells (1998) explored what teachers think of the moral nature of teaching and their role as moral guides, they neglected to examine how teachers' personal understandings of the moral nature of the teaching profession affect how they approach this aspect of their work—a task undertaken by the researcher in this study. This is important because it provides insight into how teachers define this aspect of their profession and sheds light on ways this can be addressed teacher education programs. This study explored high school teachers' attitudes toward their preparedness to resolve moral challenges in teaching.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is simple: teaching is a moral endeavor. . In his book, *Exploring the Moral Heart of Teaching*, Hansen states, “Teaching is a moral and intellectual practice with a rich tradition” (p.1). Teaching is often viewed as a moral profession for several reasons: 1) teachers tend to enter the profession motivated by moral reasons (Hansen, 1998); 2) teachers are expected to behave ethically in both their professional and personal lives (Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe, & Sanger, 2009; Mackenzie & Mackenzie, 2010); and 3) teachers are expected to participate in shaping their students into ethical people (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002; Tom, 1984). See Figure 2.1.

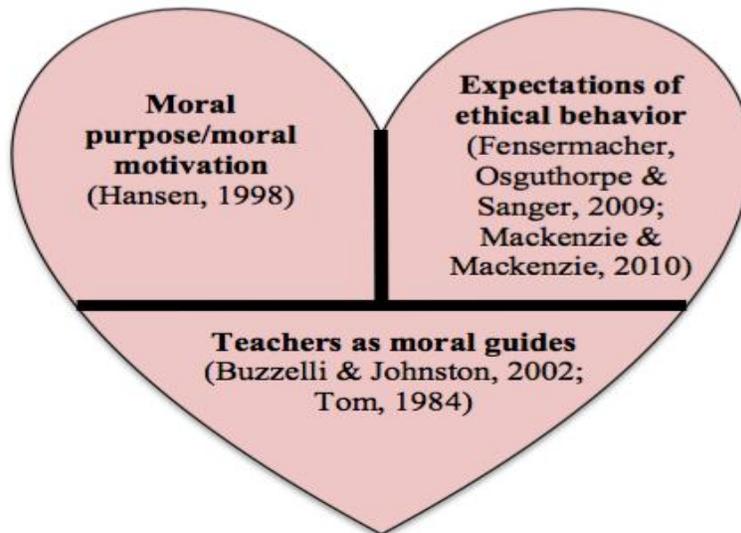


Figure 2.1. The Moral Heart of Teaching. The theoretical framework guiding this study.

Sanger & Osguthorpe (2013) have published at length to demonstrate that teaching is “unavoidably moral,” stating, “Anyone teaching in a classroom, to varying degrees and with different levels of success, engages in teaching morally” (p. 3).

Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe, & Sanger (2009) add that “to teach morally is to teach in a

manner that accords with notions of what is good or right. That is, to conduct oneself in a way that has moral value” (p. 8). Goodlad, Soder, and Sirotnik (1990) argue that “teaching the young has moral dimensions...[because] the teacher’s first responsibilities are to those being taught. And teaching the young in schools adds dimensions to this moral responsibility, which teachers share with parents” (p. xii).

Tom (1984) takes it a step further, stating that teaching is a moral endeavor because of “the unequal power relationship between teacher and student” (p. 76). The relationship between teacher and student “entails giving the teacher control over developing the student in desirable directions...[and] by accepting this obligation to foster these desirable outcomes the teacher assumes moral responsibility for the student” (p. 80). Furthermore, Tom suggests that teaching is a moral endeavor because curriculum development has

a sizeable moral component. Key to this moral component is the fact that planning a curriculum inevitably entails selecting some objectives (or content) instead of other objectives (or content)...A curriculum plan, therefore, must contain a conception of desirable ends. (p. 95)

In short, the curriculum is the result of careful planning based on the outcome the curriculum designers hope to achieve in students, rather than random selection of content.

Buzzelli & Johnston (2002) echo Tom, pointing out that teaching is “fundamentally relational, and relations in turn are fundamentally moral in nature” (p. 8), and that

teaching involves changing people...Any educational endeavor includes the positing of certain goals and ends. These ends involve making decisions about what others should know and should become; such judgments, in turn, are based on questions of value and worth, making them moral judgments. (p. 9)

It is to these goals and ends that Hansen (1998) refers when he states that

teaching embodies the human endeavor of moving human beings closer to the good, or, posed differently, closer to rather than farther from the prospect of a flourishing life... Teaching constitutes an end in its own right, one infused with intellectual and moral promise. (p. 650)

Sockett (1993) asserts that there are many facets to teaching that contribute to its moral nature, stating that the moral foundations of teaching are manifested in

four dimensions of professionalism—community, knowledge, accountability, and ideals. The teacher is a member of a professional *community* that provides a framework of relationships and understandings within which a career can be developed and a life composed. The teacher's *knowledge* ... is moral [containing] moral language, based in virtues... Additionally, the individual teacher and the professional community have to face professional moral *accountability* to individuals and to the public. Finally, a professional cannot comprehend his or her moral role without seeing the interplay between practice and *ideals* (of service) and ultimate purposes. (pp. ix-x)

Mackenzie & Mackenzie (2010) draw attention to the moral nature of teaching with a focus on ethical challenges in the profession.

Teachers and school leaders cannot escape the need to cope with ethical challenges. They are simply an inevitable part of the professional lives we lead. No one who works in a school gets through a year without confronting difficult choices between right and wrong, dealing with a colleague or student who has acted irresponsibly, or feeling the temptation to bend the rules or the law for some perceived higher purpose. (p. vii)

Mackenzie & Mackenzie go on to say that teachers “have little formal education for these challenges,” but that it is in practice that teachers can develop ethical sensitivity.

Teaching is at its very core a moral undertaking, as teachers enter the profession hoping to achieve some desired end in their students, are expected to conduct themselves in a moral manner within the community, teach students how to think and behave in a moral way, and resolve moral challenges requiring them to make decisions about moral matters. It is on high school teachers' attitudes toward their preparedness to resolve moral challenges in teaching that this study focused.

Summary

With increasing concerns regarding unethical behavior by both teachers and students, increasing attention may be focused upon teacher education programs and whether or not they are preparing teachers to resolve moral challenges. Ethics seems to be largely absent from teacher education programs in the United States. This comes as a result of a shift in American higher education toward the beginning of the 20th century away from religious content, which resonated through normal schools and teachers colleges and then filtered down to K-12 education. With teachers now entering the classroom with little to no ethics education, teacher educators and administrators need to take a closer look at the moral challenges teachers are facing in their profession to determine how to go about preparing new teachers for these experiences.

This study explored high school teachers' attitudes toward their preparedness to resolve moral challenges in teaching. Through their input, participating teachers helped to bridge the gap in the research regarding how teachers' understanding of the moral nature of teaching affects the way they approach resolving moral challenges, the importance of ethics education in teacher education programs, how teacher education programs do or do not prepare teachers for the moral challenges they face, and what ethics education teachers would like to see included in continuing professional development. In Chapter Three, the researcher reviews the methodology of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This study examined teachers' attitudes toward their preparedness to resolve moral challenges in teaching. With an increase in access to technology over the past few decades has come increased temptation to engage in unethical behavior for both teachers and students. As a result, increasing attention must be focused upon teacher education programs and whether or not they are preparing teachers to resolve these challenges. With teachers now entering the classroom with seemingly little to no ethics education, teacher educators and administrators need to take a closer look at the moral challenges teachers are facing in their profession.

The purpose of this case study was to describe the perceptions and attitudes of teachers toward the pre-service education they received in preparation for successfully resolving moral challenges and helping students to successfully resolve moral challenges of their own. In order to meet the aim of this study, the researcher gathered teachers' perspectives on the moral challenges they have experienced as well as their experiences in ethics education provided by their teacher education programs. The research methodology used in the study is reported in this chapter. The categories of research design, population and sample, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness are used to describe the methodology that was employed. The research question guiding this study was: What are high school teachers' attitudes toward their preparedness to resolve

moral challenges? The research took place after the researcher received permission from both the Institutional Review Board and the cooperating campus.

Research Design

The research questions for this study were developed from ideas found in Mackenzie & Mackenzie (2010), who state that ethical challenges are inevitable in teaching and suggest that teachers need to be able to cope with them if they are to be successful in teaching (p. vii). The following questions were examined through the course of the study:

Primary research question: What are high school teachers' attitudes toward their preparedness to successfully resolve moral challenges?

- A. What types of moral challenges do high school teachers encounter in schools?
- B. How do high school teachers view the ethical responsibilities of their profession?
- C. What types of moral challenges do high school teachers see their students encountering?
- D. How responsible do high school teachers think they are for helping their students resolve their moral challenges?
- E. What type of ethics education did teachers receive in their teacher education programs?
- F. How prepared did teachers think they were to resolve moral challenges as a result of their teacher education programs?
- G. What type of ethics education would teachers like to receive as part of their ongoing professional development?

Qualitative research was ideal for this study, because it allowed the researcher to discover insights into real-life events as they were experienced by the participants. Qualitative research “attempts not only to understand the world, but also understand it through the eyes of participants whose world it is” (Wilson, 1998, p. 1). A case study design was utilized for this study. Case study research has grown exponentially over the past thirty years, especially when compared to other forms of study such as survey research, experimental designs, and random assignment research (Yin, 2014). Case study research has been utilized in a broad range of fields, including education. Case study research is popular in the field of education because it allows the researcher to focus on practical issues and contains procedures for safeguarding against threats to validity and investigating rival explanations (Yin, 2014).

In selecting case study research as the procedure best suited for this study, three criteria were examined: (1) the type of research question posed, (2) the extent of control the researcher would have over behavioral occurrences, and (3) the degree of focus on contemporary events (Yin, 2014). The most important element in determining a research method is to define the type of research question being pursued. The central research question in this study was: What are teachers’ attitudes toward their preparedness to successfully resolve moral challenges? In other words, this study examined *how prepared* teachers thought they were to resolve moral challenges in teaching. In addition, this study investigated a contemporary topic in the field of education which was examined through interviews of participants and analysis of teacher narratives, a task for which the case study method provided the ideal framework.

Advantages of Case Study Research

Case study research provided a distinct advantage in comparison to other methods because of its emphasis on a broad scope of evidence ranging from questionnaires and interviews to documents and artifacts (Yin, 2014). The researcher chose a case study approach because she wanted to know more about a real-world case by utilizing multiple sources of evidence in the hopes that the data converged in a triangulated manner. The case study design provided a complete method of research, including a theoretical design, data collection strategies, and unique methods of data analysis (Yin, 2014). The researcher selected a case study design in order to acquire the perspectives of various participants regarding how prepared they felt they were to resolve moral challenges in school. The central phenomenon of this study—moral challenges faced by high school teachers—was best addressed by the case study design. This approach allowed the researcher to explore a bounded system over time through multiple sources of data collection (Yin, 2014). According to Yin, there are several types of case studies that can be carried out. This study utilized a descriptive multiple case study design in which each high school teacher at a suburban high school in central Texas served as a separate case. An analysis of the efficacy of teacher education programs with regard to preparing teachers to resolve moral challenges adds value to the existing body of research and provides relevant data.

Population and Sample

A high school situated in a suburban school district in Central Texas was chosen as the site to fulfill the data collection process in order to answer the research question at hand. The faculty of this school were accessible, willing to provide useful information,

and served a fairly diverse population due to the area's changing demographics. Furthermore, the school district was similar to a large number of school districts located in the area, sharing many of the same characteristics regarding size, funding, and clientele, providing a glimpse into what high school teachers in other central Texas school districts may have experienced. However, this district has a long history of receiving the coveted "Exemplary" rating assigned to schools based on their students' state standardized testing outcomes. A random purposeful sampling strategy was employed to randomly select thirteen participants from the entire body of certified high school teachers in the participating school district. As described by Creswell (2007), "Random purposeful sampling adds credibility to [the] sample when [the] potential purposeful sample is too large" (p. 127). In an attempt to recruit participants from varying disciplines, the researcher utilized the faculty list on the school website to create a spreadsheet organizing teachers by discipline. The researcher then assigned each teacher a number and used an online random number generator to randomly select at least one participating teacher from each discipline. The researcher initially contacted each potential participant by email. Potential participants who did not respond within three days were emailed a second time. Potential participants who did not respond to the second email within three days were removed as potential participants and another teacher in the discipline was randomly selected and contacted by email. Teachers who were selected were asked to participate on a volunteer basis only and were made aware that participation was not required and non-participation in no way affected their employment at the school district.

Since teachers' participation was completely voluntary, the participating teachers' attitudes toward moral challenges may have rested on extreme ends of the positive or negative spectrum. In other words, teachers may have volunteered for the study because they had something they wanted to say about moral challenges in school. Some teachers who chose not to volunteer for the study may have done so because they did not have strong opinions about moral challenges in school, which might have affected the results of the study. However, the potential participants at the school district provided specific information about the extent to which teachers are prepared to successfully resolve moral challenges in school.

The researcher's strategy was to focus solely on the participating high school as the site for the study, but to collect copious data about each participant's experiences with moral challenges in school and ethics education in their teacher education programs, how their teacher education programs prepared them to resolve moral challenges in schools, and the ethics education teachers would like to see as part of their ongoing professional development. Extended time with fewer respondents lent depth to the research project. The time spent with the participating teachers from the school district provided ample opportunity to identify themes and patterns during data analysis. The cases yielded a thick description of teachers' attitudes toward the moral challenges they face and the ethics education in their teacher education programs whereupon a saturation of data and confirmation of themes were obtained.

Data Collection

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire requesting teachers' opinions and attitudes, interviews about teachers' experiences, and collection of teacher narratives about moral challenges they faced in teaching. The researcher began the data collection process by distributing Likert-type questionnaires to all thirteen participants in order to acquire some basic information about teachers' backgrounds (i.e. teacher certification program type, number of years in the teaching field, etc.), as well as to gain a basic understanding of teachers' perceptions of preparedness to resolve moral challenges as a result of their teacher education program. The researcher also conducted semi-structured interviews with seven of the thirteen participants in order to gain detailed information about teachers' experiences with moral challenges and their ethics education experiences in their teacher education programs. Third, the researcher collected narratives from the seven interview participants in order to create more detailed descriptions of the types of moral challenges teachers face and how teachers respond to these challenges.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire protocol (see Appendix A) was used to gather feedback from case study participants, which shed further light on the research questions at hand. Participants were presented with a series of statements to which they would respond, choosing the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. The statements were crafted by the researcher and were based upon data collected in a previous study conducted by the researcher (Pollard & Talbert, 2017).

While collecting data from participants in the former study, which involved interviews with public school teachers, the researcher included the following interview

questions: (1) Some people say teaching is a moral profession. Do you agree? Why or why not? (2) What role should teacher education programs play in preparing teachers for the moral aspects of the profession? The researcher was able to organize participants' responses into three categories: (1) teaching students to be moral; (2) making difficult choices; (3) the ethics of high-stakes testing.

The researcher utilized these three categories to design questions to elicit information from participants regarding their perspectives on the importance of ethics education in teacher education programs and ongoing professional development. Specific questions regarding teachers' ethics education in their teacher education programs and the degree to which they felt this education had been helpful in resolving moral challenges was used to identify themes that emerged from the responses given by participants.

The questionnaire was pilot-tested by three doctoral students in education, who read through each question and provided feedback regarding their clarity. This led to wording changes, such as substituting the word "training" with "education" (i.e. ethics *education* as opposed to ethics *training*). Pilot testing also led to the narrowing of some questions that were too broad, such as changing "My teacher education program provided me with the tools to respond to the moral challenges I have faced as a teacher," to "My teacher education program taught me that the ability to make ethical decisions is a necessary teacher skill." After all of the changes were applied in the questionnaire, the three education students read through the questionnaire again to ensure each statement was clear and correctly crafted to be understood as having the intended meaning by participants. Once the process was complete, the questionnaire was distributed to

participants. (See Appendix A) This was the first step in the data collection process and was followed by the interview process.

Interviews

Following completion of the questionnaire, the investigator conducted two separate semi-structured interviews with seven participants to gain descriptions of teachers' ethics education experiences in their teacher education programs, teachers' experiences helping students to resolve their own moral challenges, teachers' views of their role in helping students resolve moral challenges, and the ethics education teachers would like to receive in ongoing professional development. The participants were chosen on a volunteer basis. The interviews took place within one to four weeks after the questionnaire was submitted. The questions explored elements of teachers' experiences resolving moral challenges and teachers' exposure to ethics education in their teacher education program. An interview protocol (see Appendix B) was used to keep the information gathered in a chronological and organized fashion. The interview protocol consisted of nine questions with an anticipated interview time of no longer than thirty minutes. A quiet meeting place on the participant's campus was used for these one-to-one interviews. The first interview began with open-ended questions that were a narrowing of the central question of the research project. The second interview consisted of open-ended questions tailored to each participant based on their responses to the questions in the first interview, in order to clarify and expand on their previous answers. All interviews were conducted within a thirty-minute frame. The researcher chose to interview seven participants to yield thick, descriptive data that confirmed certain themes and generated a saturation of data.

Within a general framework of questions created before each interview, the structured nature of the protocol allowed for consistent questions among the interview sessions. However, latitude was given, particularly in the second interview, to allow participants to expand upon their answers or elaborate on an issue not specifically set forth by an interview question if the researcher deemed it pertinent to the study. This allowance for flexibility was somewhat unstructured, but it also worked to give the interview participants some measure of control over the interview process. These interviews were recorded so that exact quotes could be garnered at a later time.

The interviews occurred during the faculty member's conference period or after school. The interviews were recorded using the voice memo feature on a smartphone, but the researcher also took field notes as the interviews occurred. The researcher began each interview by stating the purpose of the study, emphasizing the voluntary nature of each subject's participation. The researcher then read the questions in sequential order and provided the participants with ample time to thoroughly respond. When necessary, follow-up questions were posed to clarify responses or to provide additional details regarding the subject's perspective. Interviews of participants occurred with the goal of gaining information regarding teachers' experiences resolving moral challenges in school as well as teachers' opinions regarding how well their teacher education program prepared them to resolve moral challenges. These semi-structured interviews were guided by the research question as well as the theoretical framework of the study. The interviews resulted in obtaining both depth and breadth of data.

Narratives

Narratives were collected from the seven interview participants in order to document themes regarding the types of moral challenges teachers face and how teachers resolve moral challenges. According to Schwarz (1999), narratives help teacher candidates to “connect personal experiences, feelings, and ideas to significant educational issues,” and may provide important data not provided by the questionnaires or interviews (p.2). The researcher requested that participants write and submit a narrative recounting a particular moral challenge s/he had faced in teaching. The request was made at the conclusion of the participant’s first interview, and the recruiting for narratives was closed once the number of participants willing to write narratives reached seven. As the narratives were collected, the files were placed in a locked filing cabinet.

Data Analysis

Data analysis continued throughout the data collection period and included the transcription of interviews, utilization of teacher narratives, and organization of questionnaire data. These items were labeled and organized by participant pseudonym and placed in a locked filing cabinet. The unit of analysis for this study was teachers, with each teacher being a separate case. With regard to the teacher narratives, themes and codes were recorded as they began to emerge. The researcher utilized open coding which, according to Creswell (2007), is coding data for major categories of information. Axial coding began to emerge from the open coding, allowing the researcher to identify a focal category and core phenomenon, at which point sub-categories began to emerge around the central phenomenon.

The researcher believes that the multiple sources of data collection and tools provided an in-depth and complete case study and assisted in triangulation of data. After each interview, field notes and recordings were analyzed for important elements. By pinpointing key words and phrases and reflecting on the perspectives of the teachers interviewed, the researcher found that significant concepts emerged, and preliminary categories of data were created. In-depth descriptions of teachers' experiences resolving moral challenges as well as teachers' understanding of their preparedness to resolve these challenges were crucial.

As interviews or questionnaires were conducted in the field, the data were analyzed to discover emerging categories. Field notes, interview transcripts, and other documents were scrutinized to generate categories. Interviews and teacher narratives were continuously analyzed until the categories of data became saturated. This procedure of taking information gathered from the data collection process and comparing it to emerging categories is known as constant comparative analysis (Creswell, 2007). Reducing the data to a small set of themes that portrayed teachers' experiences dealing with moral challenges and ethics education in teacher education programs allowed the findings to inform the research questions outlined in this case study.

The researcher utilized a pattern-matching analysis process which, according to Yin (2014), is one of the most desirable techniques for data analysis and which involves the comparison of an empirically based pattern found within this case study with a predicted pattern made before the data was collected. The predicted pattern was based on recommendations obtained from knowledge of prior studies conducted on ethics education in teacher education programs. In a multiple case study, cross-case analysis

adds strength and allows for more robust findings as opposed to focusing on a single case, because, according to Yin (2014), this method treats each individual case as a separate study. Thus, after analyzing the data for themes, the researcher sought to identify themes that transcended the case and could be analyzed across all cases. According to Merriam (1998), cross-case analysis allows the researcher to conceptualize data from all cases and provide an integrated framework for conducting a detailed examination of the results. Information gathered from the questionnaires, interviews, and narratives was analyzed using a simple word table in which data from each case were organized by uniform categories (Yin, 2014). A qualitative analysis of the word tables allowed the researcher to draw cross-case conclusions about the participating teachers, particularly with regard to their perceptions and attitudes toward how well their pre-service education prepared them to successfully resolve moral challenges and aid their students in successfully resolving moral challenges as well.

Table 3.1

Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

Traditional Criteria for Judging Quantitative Research	Alternative Criteria for Judging Qualitative Research
internal validity	credibility
external validity	transferability
reliability	dependability
objectivity	confirmability

To meet the criterion of credibility, the researcher continuously engaged in member checking to ensure the information the researcher gathered from each participant was consistent with the participant’s intended meaning. To lend credence to transferability, the researcher thoroughly described the research context and the

assumptions that were central to the research so as to provide enough detail to allow another person who reads this study to determine the transferability of the results to another context. In order to foster dependability, the researcher observed and reported on changes that occurred within the research context as the study was being conducted, offering explanations of how these changes may have affected the way the researcher approached the study. Finally, to ensure confirmability, the researcher documented the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study, using member checking to ensure the conclusions drawn were not a result of personal bias, but a reflection of the participants' beliefs.

Procedures for confirming the quality of the data included triangulation through multiple and varied sources that provided corresponding evidence. In addition, peer review offered an external review of the research method and provided clarity regarding researcher bias. Two scholars—one current doctoral student and one former doctoral student—assisted in this process by reading through the data, highlighting items they believed to be themes, and sharing this information with the researcher. The researcher then compared the results of this analysis by the peer reviewers with her own analysis to check for consistency and confirmation in thematic analysis.

Researcher Background and Bias

Denzin & Lincoln (1994) acknowledge that the case study approach contains weaknesses in the areas of bias, credibility of the researcher, and the reluctance of participants to provide true and accurate responses. The researcher may possess bias due to personal feelings of unpreparedness for resolving moral challenges in the researcher's first teaching assignment. The researcher feels as though her own teacher education

program provided very little in the way of ethics education. The researcher's first year as a public school teacher was rather difficult, leading to a perception of being unprepared for some of the challenges faced by the researcher and causing the researcher to question whether or not she was meant to be an elementary school teacher at all. Perhaps a more thorough and holistic approach in the researcher's teacher education program would have provided more confidence as a teacher during that first year.

This experience led the researcher to focus on ethics as an area of interest and research because of its importance in helping both future teachers and students define themselves and articulate their moral code. Ethics can be a controversial topic, as it is often tied with religious beliefs, which it is widely believed have no place in the public school classroom. However, there seems to be agreement among students, parents, administrators, and the general public that teachers should be ethical people, conducting themselves with the utmost moral character. But the researcher is convinced that there are some education policies either at the federal level or state level that create moral challenges for teachers because teachers are required to engage in practices with which they do not agree. Furthermore, the researcher believes some teachers even see some of these practices as being harmful to students either short term or long term. For instance, the sheer amount of time spent preparing students to take standardized tests—which does not prepare students in any way, shape, or form for life as an adult— may be better spent on tasks that will lead students to become lifelong learners. Now, as a teacher educator, the question of how teachers are or are not being prepared to resolve moral challenges is extremely important so teacher education programs can determine how to move forward in this area.

Ethical Considerations

In addition to describing possibilities of researcher bias, other ethical considerations must be looked into. There were no known physical, psychological, or sociological risks associated with this case study. All data were kept completely confidential and anonymously coded to ensure the privacy of all participants. Names of participants were kept confidential and were not cited in this study and will not be cited in possible future publications unless the participants have given explicit, written consent. To maintain confidentiality, teacher names listed on any field notes, interview logs, or questionnaires were replaced with pseudonyms. The pseudonyms will also be used in any publications or presentations completed in relation to this research project unless the participant has given explicit, written consent. All print documents will be shredded and audio/visual/electronic data will be erased or deleted upon completion of the study. Until that time, the data will be maintained in a locked facility under the researcher's supervision.

All participants in the study were over eighteen years of age and thus there were no minors participating in the study. It is important to note that the participants were free to withdraw voluntarily at any time from the study, and a detailed description of the central purpose of the research, as well as the data collection procedures, were provided to all participants at the beginning of the study. The interview sessions, questionnaires, and teacher narratives were voluntary, with no penalties for not participating. All potential respondents were informed that no form of reward or sanction would be attached to participation in the study. Potential rewards and sanctions would only have worked to skew the data. The privacy of the participants in the study was guarded with

great care. Only the researcher had access to any specific participant information. All data were held in the strictest confidence.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the methodology that was employed during this research study. The research design, population and sample, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and trustworthiness were all discussed. Through the use of questionnaires, interviews, and narratives, the researcher aimed to discover teachers' thoughts about the moral challenges they face in teaching, the training they received in preparation for these moral challenges, and their views of their role in guiding their students through their own moral challenges. In Chapter Four, the researcher discusses the findings of the study

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Findings

As discussed in Chapter One of this paper, teaching is often referred to as a moral/ethical profession, and there are a few of reasons why this is the case. First, teachers tend to enter the teaching profession motivated by moral reasons, like bettering childrens' lives or improving society (Hansen, 1998). Second, teachers are expected to behave morally in both their professional and personal lives (Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe, & Sanger, 2009; Mackenzie & Mackenzie, 2010). Third, teachers are expected to participate in shaping their students into ethical people, providing students with a set of classroom rules designed to evoke good behavior from students and providing positive and negative reinforcement for behavior in order to urge students to make better choices (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002; Tom, 1984). Furthermore, students may come to teachers with their own moral challenges in hopes of receiving advice or direction for how to respond to them. Yet, teachers receive little preparation in their teacher education programs for resolving moral challenges. Thus, even though teaching is widely viewed as a moral profession, teacher education programs do not offer required or elective ethics courses, unlike other programs, such as nursing, pre-med, law, and engineering (Ream & Glanzer, 2007, p. 272).

There is simply not enough research available to determine if this lack of attention to ethics has been detrimental to teachers, students, or education as a whole. However, to begin to get a handle on this issue, researchers and teacher educators must work with

teachers to understand the moral challenges confronting teachers as well as gain teachers' perspectives on how well they were prepared to resolve them. The purpose of this case study was to describe the perceptions and attitudes of teachers toward the pre-service education they received in preparation for successfully resolving moral challenges and helping students to successfully resolve moral challenges of their own. The researcher worked with high school teachers in a central Texas suburban school to gain a greater depth of understanding regarding moral challenges teachers face—both their own and the moral challenges their students confront—and teachers' views of how well their teacher education programs prepared them to resolve these moral challenges. Results from the study are discussed in this chapter. The specific questions addressed within the study follow.

Research Questions

The questions the researcher addressed throughout the study were:

What are high school teachers' attitudes toward their preparedness to successfully resolve moral challenges?

- A. What types of moral challenges do high school teachers encounter in schools?
- B. How do high school teachers view the ethical responsibilities of their profession?
- C. What types of moral challenges do high school teachers see their students encountering?
- D. How responsible do high school teachers think they are for helping their students resolve their moral challenges?
- E. What type of ethics education did teachers receive in their teacher education programs?

- F. How prepared did teachers think they were to resolve moral challenges as a result of their teacher education programs?
- G. What types of ethics education would teachers like to receive as part of their ongoing professional development?

Methodology

This research was conducted at a Central Texas high school during the last four weeks of the school year. The researcher utilized a random purposeful sampling strategy to select participants, choosing participants from the entire list of high school teachers classified by discipline. The sample was comprised of 13 high school teachers representing various content areas, grade levels, and years of experience (See Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Participating High School Teachers: Education Experience

Teacher #	Years in Edu.	Grade Level(s)	Subject	Sex/Gender
Ms. Mayfield	17	11	Social Studies	F
Ms. Hamilton	32	11, 12	Government and Economics	F
Ms. Stone	29	11	English	F
Ms. Moore	22	10, 11, 12	Spanish	F
Ms. Harmon	4	9	English	F
Mr. Klum	21	10, 11	Geometry	M
Mr. Barnes	10	9, 10, 11, 12	Art	M
Mr. Ramsey	9	9, 10, 11, 12	Math/Sp.Ed.	M
Mr. Ivy	12	9, 10, 11, 12	Music	M
Ms. Booth	6	11, 12	Chemistry	F
Mr. Keith	31	9, 10, 11, 12	Science/Coach	M
Ms. Page	12	11	U.S. History	F
Ms. Rose	18	9	Biology	F

The researcher selected thirteen participants to allow for the collection of a thorough yet manageable amount of data. Participants were selected through random purposeful sampling. Seven out of thirteen participants were interviewed and provided narratives of moral challenges they had encountered in teaching.

The seven teachers who provided interviews were Ms. Mayfield, Ms. Hamilton, Ms. Stone, Ms. Moore, Mr. Keith, Ms. Page, and Ms. Rose. Each had unique and insightful experiences and understandings that contributed greatly to this study. Ms. Mayfield was very proud of her 17 years of social studies teaching experience and spoke enthusiastically in her interview about an anti-bullying club she founded at her school. The issue of bullying was and continues to be of great importance to her. Ms. Hamilton, a government and economics teacher of 32 years, chose to conduct her first interview in the teacher's lounge because, according to her, it had been quite a day and she desperately needed a cup of coffee. In other words, it was a typical day in the life of a teacher. Ms. Stone, an English teacher of 29 years, told many stories in both of her interviews. She even admitted during one interview that she is "a storyteller by nature" and that really came out in the way she answered the interview questions. She had a story for nearly every point she made. Ms. Moore, a Spanish teacher of 22 years experience, talked a lot about encounters with former students. It was obvious throughout the interviews that seeing and hearing from former students about how they are doing and what they are accomplishing is very important to her. Mr. Keith, a science teacher and coach of 31 years, was very open in his interview. Some interviewees paused frequently to ensure they worded things in a certain way, but not Coach Keith. He spoke with seemingly no fear of being misunderstood or judged. As a coach, he was able to provide a unique

perspective in this study. Ms. Page, a U.S. history teacher of 12 years, displayed a lot of pride in her school and her district. She brought up the district's reputation as a high-performing district on the state standardized test several times throughout the interviews. She seemed proud to be a part of that. Ms. Rose, a biology teacher of 18 years experience, seemed very concerned with social media. Social media was mentioned in her answers to almost every question. Her concern with the permanence of what students put on social media really came through in her interviews.

Upon analyzing the two completed interviews from each of the seven interview participants, the researcher determined that data saturation had been achieved, as participating teachers began repeating concepts and ideas they had previously discussed. Participation in the study was voluntary and a certification of informed consent was required from each participating teacher. During the study, the researcher used questionnaires, interviews, and teacher narratives to collect data from the participants. Data were sorted, coded, and analyzed for themes. The researcher then analyzed the data across cases using cross-case analysis and presented it a case study.

Questionnaire, Interview, and Narrative Findings

The data collection process began with questionnaires distributed to thirteen participants. These questionnaires consisted of Likert-type items that allowed the researcher to broadly determine teachers' attitudes toward their role in resolving moral challenges, assisting in the moral development of their students, and the preparation they received in their teacher education programs for carrying out these roles. The questionnaire data is reported in *Appendix D*. The questionnaire data allowed the researcher to craft interview questions that would allow participants to elaborate on their

questionnaire answers and emerging themes. Two separate interviews were conducted with seven of the participants in order to acquire descriptive data to support the questionnaire data.

After analyzing the data through constant comparative analysis and pattern-matching analysis, the researcher found that themes began to emerge from the data. Cross-case analysis was conducted to discover themes that transcended individual cases. Multiple data collection techniques were utilized for purposes of triangulation and to confirm findings through a saturation of data. According to Yin (2014), once a case study's findings are confirmed by more than a single source of evidence, triangulation has occurred.

Seven themes emerged through repeated comments and responses throughout the questionnaires, interviews, and narratives:

1. Moral/Ethical conduct on the part of teachers seems to be important to teachers.
2. Most moral challenges teachers face may result from a tension between *the individual* and *the system*.
3. Teachers view cheating as the number one moral challenge for students.
4. Teachers use “teachable moments” to help students resolve moral challenges, demonstrating that teachers have a sense of responsibility for helping students to successfully navigate moral challenges.
5. Teachers’ pre-service ethics training may not have been extensive.
6. Field experiences may provide the greatest ethical preparation for pre-service teachers.

7. Professional development involving the use of case studies may be an effective means of providing ethics education to teachers.

Following is the elaboration of these results.

Moral/Ethical Conduct on the Part of Teachers Seems to Be Important to Teachers

One of the aims of this study was to determine how teachers view the ethical responsibilities of their profession. In Chapter Two, the researcher outlined the aspects of teaching that make it a moral profession: 1) teachers tend to be motivated by moral reasons, such as making a difference in children’s lives or changing society for the better (Hansen, 1998; Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013); 2) teachers are expected to behave morally and ethically in both their professional and personal lives (Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe, & Sanger, 2009); and 3) teachers are expected to participate in shaping their students into moral people (Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990). Survey data from this study supports the importance teachers place on moral conduct on the part of teachers. See (Figure 4.1).

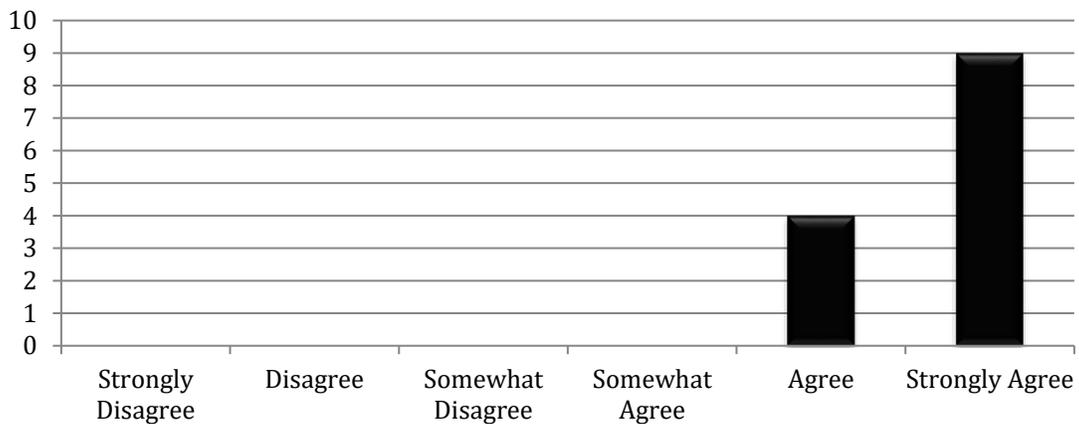


Figure 4.1. Belief that teachers should possess high moral character. Question wording: Teachers must be of high moral character.

In addition, participating teachers consistently made connections between number two and number three in their interviews. To these teachers, the moral behavior of the teacher is intertwined with the shaping of their students into moral people.

Ms. Moore stated that behaving ethically is the most important thing a teacher can do, saying,

First of all, you're in a profession where you have to be a wonderful example to the kids that you're teaching. You have to follow the rules because you're being the example for a whole lot of young lives that are moving up.

This teacher seems to believe her moral behavior may have a long-term impact on her students. Her thinking may have been influenced by personal experience, as she later mentioned a letter she had received from a former student that read: "I have to tell you I never liked Spanish and I was really annoyed at all the homework Spanish we had. However, I can't tell you how much you impacted all of our lives. And I took it to heart so much because you were a good role model—you cared." Having been told by a student that she had impacted his life likely impressed upon this teacher the long-term effects of her moral behavior on her students. To her, this note was proof that her decision to behave morally mattered.

Ms. Mayfield made similar connections, implying that it is through moral behavior of teachers that students learn how to cope with life.

I think it's really important because you're setting an example for the leaders of our future. You teach the kids how to deal with daily lives when they're ethical. Sometimes these kids don't have a good role model at home and the teacher becomes the role model.

Mr. Keith—a coach—put it in similar terms, saying, "We're teaching the future, so we hope that by the way we speak and carry ourselves that we're setting a good model for the future leaders of America or the future non-leaders of America." Interestingly, these

teachers' responses had a very futuristic tone, talking about "young lives moving up" in the world and students as "the leaders of our future." There is a very real sense that teachers believe their own moral decisions may have a sizable impact, far beyond that of the lives of their students and their students' families.

Similarly, Ms. Stone made a connection between moral conduct of teachers and shaping students into moral individuals, saying,

I would say ethics are extremely important because we know that the best way to teach any student is always to model, so if we have an expectation of our students to eventually become these productive strong citizens, then if we don't have that same level of accountability for ourselves to be ethical and moral individuals with strong characters and a strong work ethic, then how can we expect that of our students?

This teacher couched the connection between teacher ethics and student behavior in terms of expectations, pointing out the irresponsibility in holding students to greater expectations than those to which teachers hold themselves. Ms. Stone went on to provide a salient example of what she meant here, stating, "We tell our students all the time not to copy someone else's work and call it their own. We say 'that's plagiarism' while at the same time photocopying everything that's not nailed down, regardless of copyright laws." She called for consistency in the way values are emphasized and rules are enforced in schools, stressing that teachers have their own moral pitfalls.

It is clear from these teachers' statements that they think they have a very real responsibility to conduct themselves in a moral manner, as do people in many other professions. The motivation to act ethically seems to be deep with teachers, because their concern appears to be as much (if not more) for their students' well-being than their own.

Two other participants expressed the importance of the moral behavior of teachers in terms of duties and expectations. Ms. Page indicated that it is just expected that

teachers will be moral, stating, “I believe that people send their children to school not to be corrupted, not to watch TV all day. I think that as public servants, we have an ethical duty to our clientele.” Ms. Rose made similar remarks, saying, “We’re held to a higher standard, not only by our administration but our community and the kids and their parents. I think it’s kind’ve expected out of our profession. I think it’s part and parcel of being a teacher.” Thus, it’s important for teachers to be ethical people of good moral character because it’s what is expected of them.

Teachers’ Moral Challenges Often Result From Tension Between the Individual and the System

Moral challenges in teaching are unavoidable, according to Mackenzie & Mackenzie (2010), who refer to moral challenges as “an inevitable part” of the professional lives teachers lead. In fact, in spite of the fact that on the questionnaire only slightly more than half of the study’s participants admitted to experiencing moral challenges, each interview participant was able to provide a narrative of at least one moral challenge they had encountered as a teacher, lending support to Mackenzie & Mackenzie’s claim (See Figure 4.2).

One of the aims of this study was to determine what types of moral challenges teachers have encountered. In Chapter One, the researcher described five categories of tensions that can lead to moral challenges in school settings, according to Shapira-Lishchinsky (2011), who claims that most of these challenges result from the tension between *the caring climate*, which promotes attention to individual and social needs, and *the formal climate*, which underscores strict observation of the school rules.

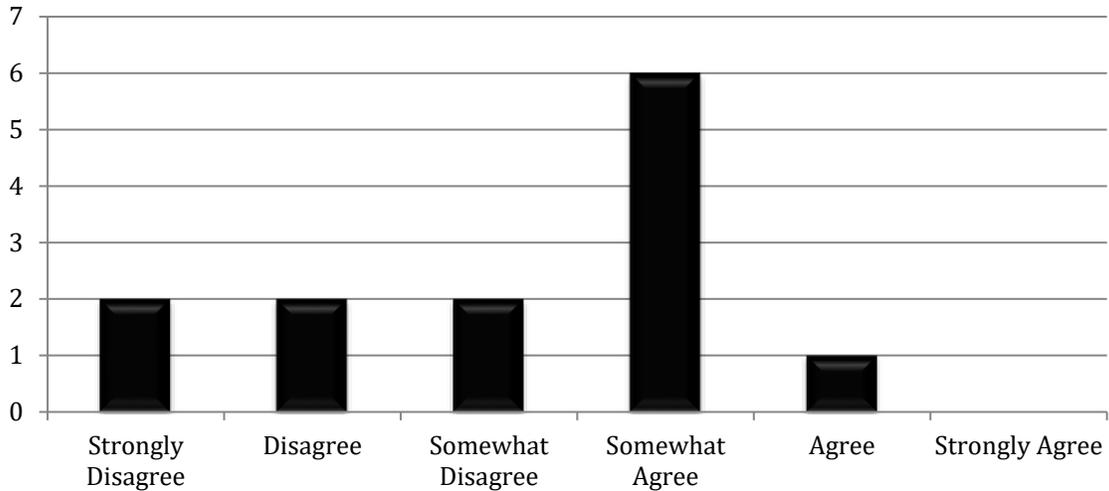


Figure 4.2. Experience confronting moral challenges. Question wording: I have been confronted with school-related decisions in which one of the options before me was unethical.

In essence, *the individual vs. the system* is the tension that is experienced most frequently in school settings. The narratives provided by participating teachers underscore this argument, with all seven teacher narratives addressing moral challenges undergirded by this tension. Ms. Hamilton’s moral challenge revolved around a common practice at her school—a practice she believed was not in the best interest of her students.

When I did my student teaching, the “No Pass No Play” rule came in and it’s funny because there were some practices back then like point-borrowing that the teacher used that later became an issue for me. It was to help student athletes be eligible to play. For example, he’s got a 68, so I’ll just borrow 2 points from next time. I was taught this by my supervising teacher and I remember saying, “You can do that?!?” So he’s making a 68, give him a 70 and then next time take 2 points off of what he earns. I went on to graduate and began teaching in the same district. They were doing point borrowing at my school too, and I remember my first year when I was faced with the point-borrowing thing. I had a football player who was just below passing and I didn’t feel right about borrowing points from a test he hadn’t even taken yet, so I made him take the test again. I wanted him to do it the hard way. I really thought the football coach would come find me and demand that I pass him, but nothing ever came of it. Point-borrowing was a common practice, but it wasn’t seen as unethical because you kept track of it, you documented everything. It was a verbal agreement with the kid that they were ok with.

True to Shapira-Lishchinsky's framework, this moral challenge involved a tension between what she felt was best for the student—*the individual*—and a common school practice, *the system*. In Ms. Hamilton's case, individual needs won out, as she chose to have the student re-take the exam because she believed this was better for the student than engaging in the school's practice of point-borrowing.

Ms. Mayfield's moral challenge involved a conflict between her and an administrator over a grade she had given to a student of importance to the administrator.

When I first started teaching, there was a very important figure, and I was teaching his daughter, and she was failing. And this is when they changed the law to where the principal couldn't go in and change the grade. And the principal came to me and asked me to go change the grade and I refused. They removed the student and put her under another teacher—a coach—and he passed her. Not many people knew about it. I refused to change her grade because she didn't do the work and so I had nothing to base my grade on. There's a difference in helping a student that's struggling and one that just all out refuses to do anything, 'cause I work with both. I think I'm the only teacher who refused to change her grade. You kind've lose respect [for other teachers]. I was always brought up [being taught] your ethics matter, you can't take anything else with you but your character and that's what matters here on earth. You take it with you when you go.

The individual—the teacher who believed the principal did not have the authority to change the student's grade—prevailed in Ms. Mayfield's moral challenge, while *the system*, in which the principal attempted to pressure her to make an exception for this student by changing her grade, was subordinated.

Ms. Stone experienced a similar tension between *individual beliefs* and *the system* when an administrator failed to properly assess her performance.

This happened within my first year of teaching. We had for the first time in the state of Texas an appraisal system that was very much based upon criteria, but it was also tied to the career ladder. For me, that didn't have an impact because I was such a young teacher just in my first year of teaching. This was before P-DAS. This was the Texas Teacher Appraisal System, so TTAS is how we referred to it. And TTAS was, again, tied to the career ladder, and so if you had a certain

number of exceptional qualities within the classroom, then you could potentially earn more money. Interestingly enough, that didn't really begin to take effect for several years into your career; it was not for new teachers. However, it was a building process toward that, and I distinctly remember working in a district not far from here where sometimes you would hear the intercom come on as though [the administrators] were listening to you but not really present in your classroom to see what was going on, and then you would hear it click off and I'll just never forget that I was supposed to have a certain number of observations in which my appraiser came in and observed what was going on in my class, looked at not only the lesson but the classroom management which I know goes hand-in-hand. And then we would have a conference about it and I would sign off on it and he would give me the feedback that I needed. I remember one day he walked in and handed me my evaluation and said, 'I need you to sign off on this,' and I think that because I was such a young teacher—I'm 22 barely [at the time]—I felt compelled to go ahead and sign it but that truthfully has been one of those things that when I do file back in all the experiences I have had, I think you know what was not in accordance with the process and I should have spoken up and I didn't. And again, I think it was because as a young teacher, you're on a probationary contract and the district doesn't have to say anything except "We don't need you next year," and so I was sort've in that mindset. I was 22 and it was intimidating; I just went along with it, and I really regret that because it wasn't a fair assessment of what I was actually doing in the classroom.

The system prevailed in this moral challenge, as Ms. Stone's fear that she could lose her job caused her to cave to the pressure to please her boss rather than insisting that the administrator adhere to the proper teacher evaluation procedures by being physically present in her classroom to evaluate her. Ms. Mayfield's and Ms. Stone's moral challenges represent Shapira-Lishchinsky's *individual vs. the system* framework in a different way than the other moral challenges, because the administrators in these two scenarios were actually participating in or advocating for practices that were against the rules of *the system*. However, the reason these moral challenges fit into the *individual vs. the system* framework is because *the system* placed the administrators above the teachers, conferring on them the authority to hire and fire—an authority that teachers certainly take into account when determining whether or not they will go against the administrator's wishes. The system consists of more than just rules and requirements; it consists of a

power structure that gives administrators authority over the teachers. Taken together, these two moral challenges paint a rather disturbing picture of administrators abusing their authority by asking teachers to participate in unethical practices. With two of seven participating teachers' narratives revealing unethical practices on the part of administrators, one has to wonder if there is an ethics issue in K-12 administration. The irony here is that administrators are more likely to have had ethics courses than teachers, because ethics courses are typically reserved for education students at the masters and doctoral level. But perhaps the ethics education issue extends beyond undergraduate programs to all levels of higher education.

Ms. Rose experienced a moral challenge with a colleague; however, this one involved a fellow teacher rather than an administrator.

There was a moment early in my career where a teacher was talking about the TAKS test—now it's STAAR—and I was faced with, "Should I go and tell because she was talking about it? Or should I just let it go because she's my friend?" What do you do? She was talking about the TAKS in very specific terms to me and other teachers, saying, "Can you believe they asked this question?" and "I saw the kids were all answering this way and I know we taught them differently" and things like that. It was very specific—things that were talked about—that cannot be discussed.

Once again, a tension between the *individual* and the *system* was at the heart of this decision point. Would Ms. Rose be looked at as disloyal and untrustworthy to her colleagues if she were to report this teacher (individual)? Would she be reprimanded or possibly fired for not reporting the teacher to the testing coordinator (the system)? She went on to discuss her response to the situation, saying,

I felt like I had to report it, because my certificate was on the line, too. If I knew about it and I didn't report it and someone else did and said I was there too, then that could have put my job in jeopardy. It wasn't easy. I reported it to the testing coordinator who then had to report it to admin. I knew the hierarchy and who to report things like this

to because we had a training about what to look for, what to do and what not to do during testing, and point people that we were directed to go to.

Ms. Moore revealed a moral challenge she had experienced that may also be situated within *the individual vs. the system* category of school-related tensions:

In my teaching career, I ran into some issues really just out of ignorance. I had two kiddos I fully trusted—they were both great kids—and I teach all great kids because of what I teach, Pre-AP/AP kids, but one had a splitting headache and he got migraines a lot, and he said, “Can I have an Advil?” and I said, “I don’t give you Advil.” And this other kid that I also knew to be a great kid said, “I have some Advil” and pulled out a thing of Advil. And I didn’t think two things about it, I mean I really didn’t. But I obviously did because I said, “I don’t want to be a part of this,” so obviously deep down in my soul I thought something about that, which of course is totally against the law, but I don’t think that I was ever really trained on that, I don’t think I ever was. And here I am, I’m a mom. I know most of the kids in this school. I’ve given those kids Advil at my house when they don’t feel well, and so I overlooked it and the kid went and took his Advil. I mean I saw it, I knew he wasn’t pulling out something odd, but he went and took his Advil and he came back and another teacher had seen him at the drinking fountain, asked him what he was taking. And he’s the one who told me; the other teacher never came into play, but it was only at that point that I thought, “That wasn’t right. I shouldn’t have let him do that.” And then it just escalated from there. I went in and I self-reported and told, “This is what happened in my classroom today” and they were incredibly supportive of me, but it was something that had to be handled.

This narrative provides a prime example of the split-second decisions involved in teaching, particularly when it comes to the tension between personal beliefs about what is best for the student and school rules to which the teacher must adhere. On one hand, Ms. Moore wanted the student to feel better, allowing him to accept medicine offered by a fellow student; on the other hand, passing medicine around was against school rules, as students were expected to turn in all medications to the nurse so s/he could be the one to administer them to the student. Johnson (2003) refers to these moments as “critical incidents,” arguing that they force teachers to reflect upon clashing values in the school’s educational process (p.790).

Ms. Page described the following as a moral challenge she experienced on a regular basis until she did something about it herself:

I have this challenge every single year. I have students who have not passed the end-of-course (EOC) exams. They are allowed one test and I have coached them on the test—not during the test, of course, but I have prepared them. I teach a class called Academic Intervention for end-of-course recovery for English and so I teach them released tests. I go over editing, I teach them skills, I have them write essays. And then if they still don't pass, they are allowed to send an essay to the committee. Well, I decided that the research paper was really not an ethical way to evaluate them because that's not what the EOC is asking if they can do. The state of Texas doesn't want to know if you can write a research paper; they want to know if you can communicate effectively in your own words. So, I revamped the requirements and I submitted that to the committee to see if they would think it's ok to have the students write a persuasive, a narrative, an expository, and then one other essay of their choice, which is a lot more work, but it truly reflects if a student just has a testing anxiety or if they truly lack the skills to get a high school diploma. The committee didn't approve my idea, though, so students still have to write the research paper. It's just not right because it's not truly authentic, number one. Number two, students don't write it when I'm staring at them. The essays I proposed would have been done in class in front of me. I think they're letting Google or Wikipedia do most of the work but not giving them credit for the information. I know what my students are capable of, and when I see these big words, it's a red flag to me that they're not coming up with this stuff on their own.

Ms. Page's moral challenge also appears to fit within the tension between the *individual* and *the system*, because Ms. Page felt students (the individuals) were not best served by the end-of-course recovery system that was in place, so she attempted to change it but was unsuccessful.

Coach Keith provided a different perspective regarding moral challenges he has experienced. He wasn't able to point to one incident, but rather a situation that seems to have occurred continuously throughout his time as a teacher.

Sometimes I have passed kids who maybe shouldn't have earned that passing grade. Usually, the ones that I do that for are the good kids and they're usually ones that turn in assignments, that keep up. Test grades maybe hurt their overall averages and they might have a 65 average for the whole grading period because of a couple of test scores. But they're there every day, they participate, they're never a discipline problem, they're never disrespectful. I kind've look at the whole picture and the fact that I teach physics, so I'm thinking, "In 10 years, is it really gonna matter whether they learned this chapter

of physics or are they going to be able to move on?” Somebody else from the outside might say, “You’re passing a kid who shouldn’t be passed.” It’s case-by-case, individual-by-individual, sometimes six weeks to six weeks. “How did you work for me this six weeks?” I always go back to the fact that I am the teacher of record and, therefore, I can do what I want to do. I can make that decision. I don’t think I do it for social reasons. I don’t think I do it as a social promotion, because I don’t always believe in social promotion, especially at the younger ages where you have to have this foundation of knowledge, but in a class like physics, if they’re there every day, they’re learning something. So, based on their work ethic, I take that into consideration. I’ll fail a kid if they just don’t do anything. I can’t in good conscience pass somebody who does nothing for me.

This response is notable for a couple of reasons. First, it deals with the tension between the *individual*, the student, and *the system*, the grading system that requires a grade of 70 percent or higher to be considered passing. Second, it’s related to a moral challenge discussed in Chapter Two in the section on teacher lore, involving a teacher being pressured by a coach to raise the grade of a student athlete so the student would be eligible to compete in the games. Mr. Keith may, in fact, have had to approach other teachers on behalf of student athletes in the past to ask for a passing grade, thus affecting the way in which he assigns grades himself. He calculates each student’s grade and, if the student isn’t passing, he takes other things into consideration, such as attendance and effort in hopes of being able to justify raising the student’s grade to passing. While the coach labeled this issue as a moral challenge for him, it seemed like he was pretty set in this way of assessing students, especially after 31 years in teaching.

It is interesting to note the variance among the critical incidents within these teacher narratives. Some moral challenges occurred as a direct resulting of systematic school policies and procedures with which teachers struggled, while others resulted from noncompliance with these systematic policies and procedures on the part of an authority or colleague. The one constant in these narratives is *the system*, which is not surprising in

a country where the education system is under constant scrutiny and consistently a top five issue for politicians hoping to gain public favor.

Teachers View Cheating as the Number One Moral Challenge for Students

One of the questions the researcher sought to answer with this study was “What types of moral challenges do high school teachers see their students encountering?” In Chapter Two of this study, the researcher discussed various moral challenges with which students struggle, including cheating, violence, bullying, drug use, and misuse of technology. A Rutgers’ Management Education Center survey suggested cheating may be the main issue facing the greatest number of young people today, with 75 percent of the 4500 high school students studied admitting to engaging in serious cheating (Slobogin, 2002). The current study lends support to this finding, as all of the teachers indicated their agreement on the questionnaire that students face moral challenges, and the teachers interviewed repeatedly named cheating as a big problem for their students (See Figure 4.3).

Ms. Mayfield expressed her belief that cheating has become a mindless behavior for students and she believes that cheating in school can have a long-lasting effect on students, saying,

Cheating on a test, they don’t think anything about it. I think it leads later to cheating in society. And to the extreme, they could really get into a lot of trouble—it could upset a marriage later by not being faithful. I mean all these things matter, in my opinion.

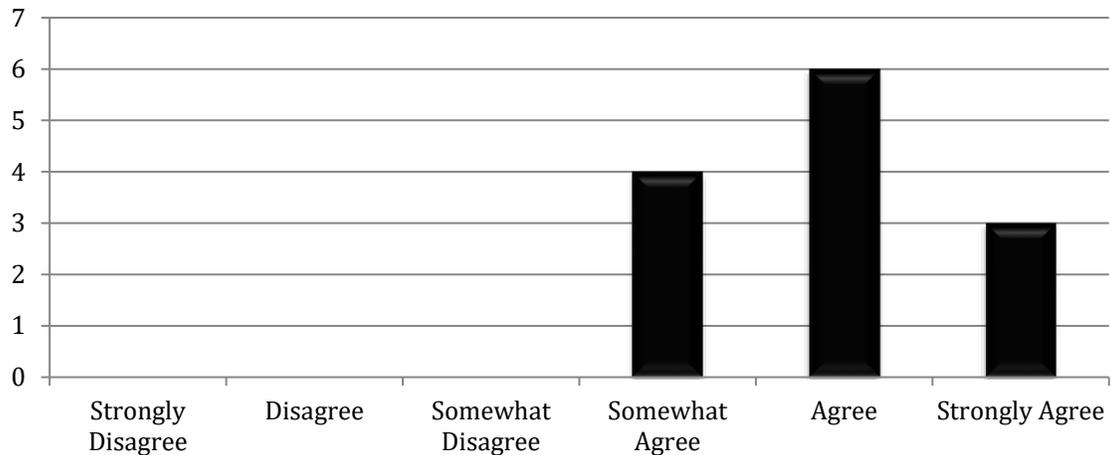


Figure 4.3. Views of whether or not students face moral challenges. Question wording: I believe my students are confronted with ethical challenges of their own in school.

This teacher’s argument is not without merit, as Whitley & Keith-Speigal (2002) suggest that students who cheat successfully are likely to continue engaging in the practice throughout their academic career and beyond, because “having successfully cheated at the undergraduate and graduate levels can make it easier to cheat in one’s professional career” (p.5).

Mr. Keith has found this to be true in his own time as a teacher, saying,

Today’s kids are much more apt to cheat and I think technology has made them really good cheaters to the point where I can’t catch them. It is frustrating as a teacher, because I would have never thought of cheating. I don’t think today’s kids as a whole are as conscious of doing independent work and they don’t even feel bad about it. And some of them that are really good at it will look you in the eyes and not blink and say, “No, I didn’t cheat.” And I hear kids that I’ve taught go off to college and say, “Yeah, it happens in college too.” It is an issue now that was not nearly the issue that it was 30 years ago when I started.

Plagiarism also came up several times in the context of cheating. Ms. Stone seemed to struggle with trying to determine how much fault should lie with the students with regard to plagiarism. On the one hand, she acknowledged that some students plagiarize for the convenience of it, saying, “We do a lot of research. We see a lot of

other people's ideas and sometimes they want to take the convenient way—the easy way to get a product done—so they will copy and paste.” On the other hand, she appeared to believe students may be plagiarizing accidentally, saying,

You know, I think one of the biggest things is a lot of students don't understand the difference between demonstrating what they know on their own independently and what they can do collaboratively with other people. They oftentimes don't see that we have an expectation that in certain settings it's all on [them] and they can't cheat. They can't use somebody else's ideas and thoughts and claim them as their own. Now sometimes plagiarism at this stage of the game happens inadvertently just because [they] haven't had enough practice at developing paraphrasing skills and documenting, so I've learned to recognize that and sometimes give [them] the benefit of the doubt.

Ms. Stone may, in fact, have a point. Whitley & Keith-Speigal (2002) suggest that education institutions are not properly handling academic dishonesty among students, saying schools' “failure to deal adequately with academic dishonesty and educate students about the consequences of their behavior constitutes a disservice not only to the academic community but to society in general” (p.5). The insight provided by this teacher may point to the need for a change in how K-12 schools address student plagiarism, including how students are informed about plagiarism and how teachers teach their students to conduct research.

Ms. Hamilton pointed to plagiarism as an issue as well, implying that her students recognize how easy it is to plagiarize and, as a result, frequently question her about their sources and written reports.

They do have questions a lot of times, asking “Is this ok? Is this source ok? Do I document where I came across this?” I've had to tell a couple of them that if they come across a question and they don't find the answer in their book or they can't draw a conclusion on their own, to Google the question and find it. I don't feel that's cheating or unethical because I would do that if I couldn't find some information or draw a conclusion or make a connection that I was being asked to make on my own. I would look for hints. It's available and if you use it, that's not

the same to me as being in class in a controlled situation and they're using their phone. So that's come up about plagiarism and I've been asked a lot.

This is a very interesting statement, especially when laid alongside Ms. Mayfield's statement that students don't think anything about cheating—that it's become almost an unconscious thing—because the two statements are rather contradictory. It's interesting to note that the teacher who believes her students would cheat in a heartbeat teaches social studies, while the teacher who finds herself bombarded with plagiarism questions from her students is an English teacher, a class in which students typically write a lot of papers and believe their papers may be scrutinized more closely than papers written for other courses or subjects. It's quite possible that students' mindfulness of plagiarism varies based upon the class setting they're in. In fact, this phenomenon by itself would make an interesting study.

Ms. Moore admitted that student cheating is a huge issue—so massive, in fact, that she has had to alter the way in which she assigns work to students. She also seems to think that the type of cheating in which her students engage is unique to foreign language courses.

The cheating is a big one. I mean that may be the biggest one for us. I tell you what I see here a whole lot is Google Translate and online translators and things like that that they can cheat off of in these upper level Spanish classes. They're supposed to be writing something in Spanish and, truly, for upper level Spanish, we have decided we give them nothing to take home anymore, because it's either an online translator, or it's a grandma who speaks Spanish, or a best friend that's in Spanish 5, and it's not their own work. And we, the other teacher and I, have been teaching long enough that we know exactly what you can say and what you can't say and what words you're gonna know and what grammar concepts you're gonna know. It's a very big ethical challenge and it's something we face year after year after year, and no matter how much we drill it in, we get at least one or two papers all the time where I can tell it's not their writing, because I know what they know.

In addition to dealing with the ramifications of Google Translate, Ms. Moore also pointed to something else that happens in her classroom—parents assisting their students in escaping exams—and she implied this behavior should be in the same category as cheating.

I've also had kids that actually have realized that there's a test and come in and been horrified because they forgot the test, and next thing I know mom is calling to get them out of school for a doctor's appointment or something. So obviously, a text has occurred between walking in and saying, "Oh my gosh! I forgot we had that test today!" and getting to their seat and all of the sudden getting a phone call. The parents want them to get into the school they want to get into.

This statement by Ms. Moore brings out a much larger issue and may, in fact, point to the reason many students cheat—parental pressure. Parents have ambitions for their children, and these ambitions are sometimes much higher than those of the child. As a result, some parents take an extremely active role in their student's academic lives, which may place unintended pressure on the student. According to Lanthrop and Foss (2005), "parents who want their children to be successful in school can place so much pressure on the kids that they resort to cheating" (p. 237). Or perhaps, the parents are cheaters as well. This brings up a rather interesting idea; students are getting the impression that cheating is not wrong from somewhere—could it be from their parents? It may be time to look a little more deeply into where students have acquired this distorted view of cheating.

The 2004 Report Card from the Josephson Institute of Ethics supports the teacher's assertion that parents facilitate some of the cheating. Of the 24,763 high school students surveyed, 91 percent expressed the belief that their parents would rather they cheat than get bad grades. Furthermore, only 6 percent of the students surveyed said they believe their parents want them to do the moral thing, no matter the cost (Lanthrop and Foss, 2005, p. 236). Essentially, students seem to be under the impression that cheating

would incur less punishment from their parents than getting a poor grade. While Ms. Rose and Ms. Page both referred to behavior on social media as being the greatest moral challenge for students today, it is evident from what the other participating teachers said about cheating that it is a complex issue that may need to be more thoroughly addressed in K-12 schools and beyond.

Teachers Use “Teachable Moments” to Help Students Resolve Moral Challenges

Throughout the data collection process, participating teachers indicated that they feel responsible for helping their students navigate the moral challenges they encounter, including the temptation to cheat. How does this sense of responsibility manifest itself as these teachers carry out their duties in school? The teacher participants consistently referred to occasions when they took advantage of what are often referred to in education as “teachable moments.” These are the unscripted lessons that occur when an opportunity presents itself either through some occurrence or question. Ms. Mayfield talked about how students will sometimes come to her for advice and, when they do, she uses those opportunities to teach “lifelong lessons.”

I’m one of the many adults [students] interact with over the course of the day—sometimes even more so than their parents—because life gets so busy and, as a result, I take it upon myself to make sure that I’m teaching those lifelong lessons. I had a student just this week come and talk to me about his girlfriend and how his girlfriend did not talk with respect to his mother and that bothered him because of his family background. We had a talk and he said, “I can’t take this anymore.” And we discussed, “Are you ready to break up?” and he said, “Well I don’t know that I want to do that.” So I suggested, “Just take a little bit of time, just tell her you want to go out with your friends or something. If it works out, it works out. If not, you have laid a boundary and a foundation down for which way you’re going.”

Rather than shying away from having this discussion, this teacher chose to take time out of her undoubtedly busy schedule to help her student make sense of an issue he was

trying to manage and model the decision-making process to prepare him for resolving future problems he may encounter.

Ms. Moore alluded to the fact that she occasionally leads whole class discussions to guide students through moral issues they may be facing, saying

Even things like texting and driving, which they all know is wrong—we do have talks about those things. I have asked and probably 80% of them do text and drive, which of course is against the law now, so we'll see if that changes it. But I think it's a fast-paced world and they have a lot of issues out there.

Texting and driving has absolutely nothing to do with teaching Spanish, which is this teacher's subject area, and yet, she has stated here that she uses class time to discuss texting and driving as well as other moral issues with students. This underscores an idea that came out in the questionnaire—that teachers feel responsible for helping their students navigate moral challenges (See Figure 4.4).

Ms. Page insisted that assisting students in solving their moral challenges cannot be done without first building relationships with them.

I think that building relationships with them is very important and, once we do, they often tell me things that are ethical challenges for them: birth control, pregnancy, cheating, all kinds of stuff. They tell me and I try to answer them like I would my own child and ask them questions to guide them in the right way. One example would be student told me, "Oh, Ms. Page, I think I might be pregnant. Can you get me a Sprite?" I was like, "Ok, but we're gonna talk about this." This was a few years ago at a different high school. And so I got her a Sprite and then the next week or two weeks later, she comes to me and goes, "Ok, I'm definitely not pregnant, but could I get a Sprite anyway?" And I said, "We'll go to the lounge and I'll get you one and we'll talk." I asked her, "How do you feel about the fact that you're not pregnant?" and she said, "Oh, I'm so relieved." So I asked her, "What can you do to keep yourself from being in this situation—scared, nervous, a wreck—again?" And I forget the answer she gave me, but it wasn't abstinence or birth control or anything like that. And I was like, "Oh my gosh. She doesn't even know how to not get into this situation. She doesn't even know." She got an earful from me. She knew after I got done with her.

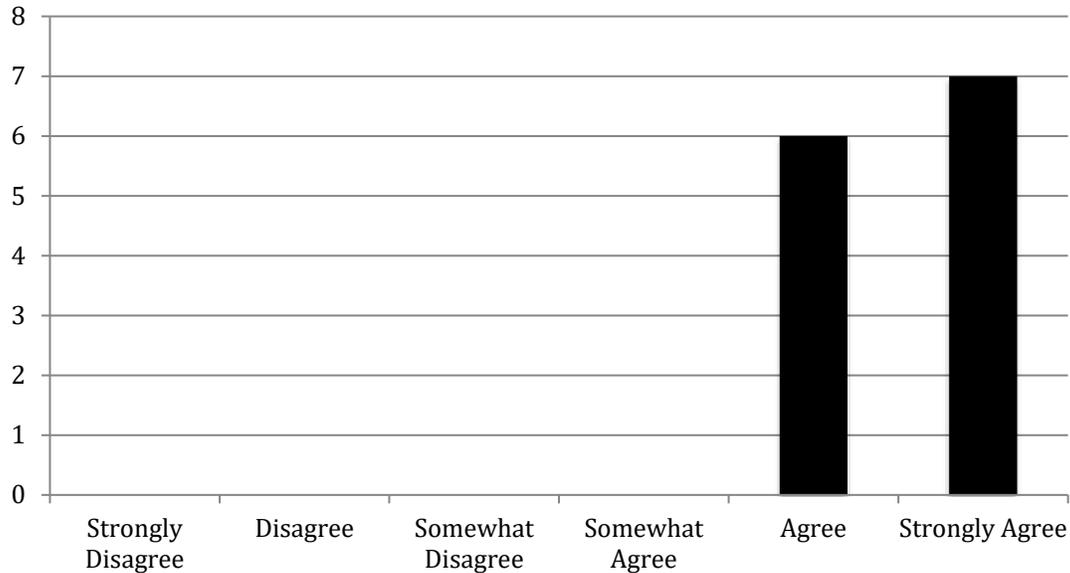


Figure 4.4. Perceptions of responsibility for assisting students in resolving moral challenges. Question wording: It is my responsibility as a teacher to help my students manage the ethical challenges they face.

It was Ms. Page’s relationship with this student that opened the door to the morally-centered conversation they would later have. Another teacher, Ms. Rose underscored the importance of relationships as well, saying,

I think that certain teachers are very good at making connections with the kids and building relationships with them. I think I have one of those gifts. Most of my classes are the hard kids that nobody really want to teach and they’re all wonderful for me. I think once you build that rapport with those kids that they’ll listen to you a little bit more. Sometimes a teacher in my position can get across a little bit more of those ethical things and those kids are more likely to listen once that relationship has been built. I think that if you see an opportunity that it’s ok to stop class and talk about it and put a real-world spin on it in how this could affect you and things like that for them. Sometimes there are just days you’ve got to talk about real-world things rather than just your core content.

Many educators would refer to these periods when a teacher stops teaching content to provide moral guidance or life lessons as “teachable moments.” Coach Keith described a similar way in which he imparts tidbits of moral wisdom onto his students during class, saying,

As a teacher, you're only in a classroom with this class for 45 minutes and you've got a certain amount of material you've got to cover and you've got to test. But there's always going to be that 5 or 10 minutes of class where I just like to talk and see what's going on in their lives—talk to them and say, “This is what I would have done. This is what I would do.” And some of it's relationships, and I'm like, “A guy should treat her like a lady. You should be respectful of her.” It's just general conversations that I don't know if I'm doing it intentionally. When you've been teaching for 31 years, you're a teacher. I see moments where I can slide in my two cents worth and sometimes they don't even know I'm trying to teach. We're just talking.

Ms. Stone provided further evidence of how K-12 educators use “teachable moments” to help guide their students through moral challenges, providing students with stories of moral challenges she had experienced as a student.

We talk about how some choices are very difficult, and I'm a storyteller by nature and I think all teachers are. We tell stories to try to prove points. There was this one point this year that I told [the students] about how sometimes it can be really hard when your peers are choosing to do something else—maybe not being overly truthful about a situation—and then it comes down to you and you make that choice. It's hard. And I told them the story of something that happened in 8th grade. Some kids were just mischievous and the teacher held us in the classroom and started going down the roll, saying, “I want someone to tell me the truth.” Well, my maiden name was in the W's and so it got to me and I was like, “You know what, I'm not gonna take the fall. I'm not gonna be penalized for what somebody else did.” So I told. I mean here I am 40 years later since that happened and I can distinctly remember that, and so I share that with my students and I say, “You know what, you can recover from those moments of having to take a stand and you have to do the right thing. We're called on to be responsible citizens.”

Once again, here is a teacher taking time away from subject matter instruction to focus on the moral matters of life. It is clear that teachers truly believe this aspect of their profession is important or they wouldn't do it. With all of the pressure placed on teachers by standardized testing, they are likely to avoid losing any instructional time to frivolity of any kind, demonstrating that teachers view these moral discussions with students as important and having far-reaching implications for them.

Teachers' Pre-service Ethics Training May Not Have Been Extensive

Gathering teachers' personal experiences and determining their attitudes toward their roles as moral guides was only part of the task in this study. The overarching question dealt with how teachers were prepared to resolve moral challenges through their teacher education programs. For this reason, it was necessary to question participants about the ethics training they received in their teacher education programs. Participating teachers were unable to articulate much in the way of ethics instruction in their programs, but it was clear from the variance in their responses on the questionnaire and the examples they articulated that there was inconsistency among their programs regarding the treatment of ethics. See Figure 4.5.

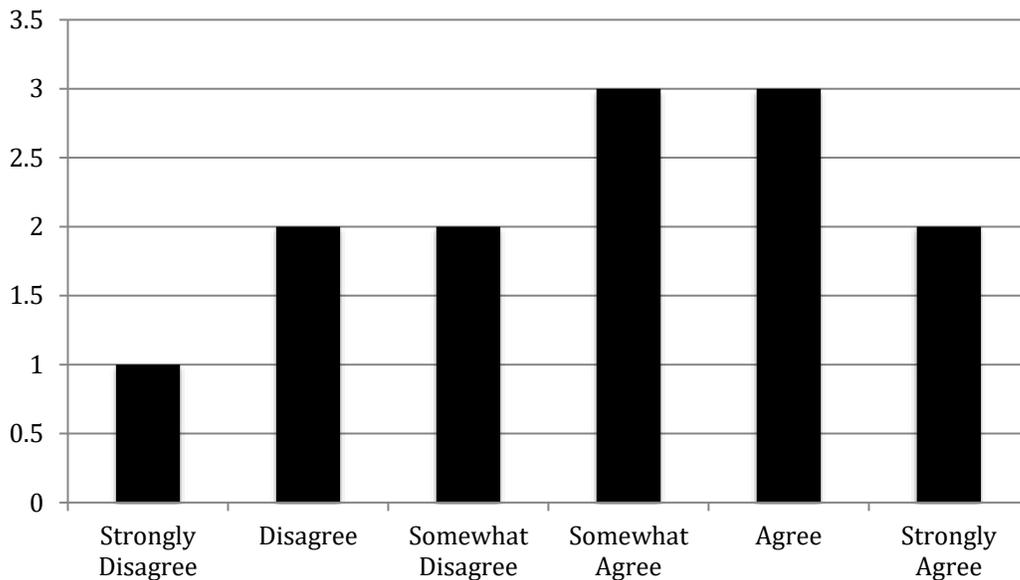


Figure 4.5. Views of whether or not participants' teacher education programs taught them the necessity of being able to make ethical decisions. Question wording: My teacher education program taught me that the ability to make ethical decisions is a necessary teacher skill.

Ms. Stone's only memory of ethics training involved a cautionary word about romantic relationships with students.

I am certain that there was some sort of orientation in which we were told, “Here’s a code of ethics that you have to live by.” I will never forget this—one of my college professors made the statement one day: “There will be a point where you will go into a classroom and, because of your age, you will gravitate more to the students than you will to the other adults. There will be beautiful young girls and there will be handsome young men. It can be a temptation, but never, never, never ruin your career, your lifelong calling, over some high school students.” That’s really about the only thing I can explicitly remember.

The moral issue Ms. Stone’s professor chose to focus on is noteworthy, because she focused on the most high-profile type of unethical teacher behavior. These are the stories about teachers that always make the national news. However, these situations in which teachers engage in romantic relationships with students are infrequent, with teachers likely experiencing other moral challenges, like being pressured by an administrator or a coach to change a student’s grade, with much more frequency. This may be an indication that more common situations like these are not being discussed enough in teacher education programs.

Other participants had difficulty remembering ethics training in their teacher education programs as well. Ms. Hamilton said she felt as though her professors took it for granted that pre-service teachers knew what not to do.

It’s been a really long time. I graduated in 1985, so I don’t know if we really had anything in place. I know we had a lot of discussions, but I feel like they just took it for granted that you know, “Don’t date your students,” “Don’t take money from the club account,” “Don’t lie about hours.” I think they just took it for granted that you knew that, but apparently people didn’t and don’t know that. There wasn’t anything organized, like there wasn’t a specific course, so there may have been a hole there for us.

Some teachers struggled to remember if there any ethics content was present in their programs. Ms. Page admitted that she could remember “None. Zero, honestly. There’s not an ethics part in that, I don’t think. There might be, but I don’t recall from when I took my classes.”

Ms. Moore, who also struggled to remember a focus on ethics in her teacher education program, suggested that ethics may be more inherent than something that can be taught to pre-service teachers.

I really cannot remember. If I did have any ethics, it didn't make an impression, because I don't remember having anything that I could say, "This is ethics." Now, I will say that I tend to be a pretty ethical, guilt-ridden person anyhow, so maybe I thought, "Well of course you don't do that."

Ms. Moore brought up a point with which many in education undoubtedly agree—that ethics are more innate, and taking an ethics course will not make a teacher more thoughtful about ethics. In fact, a study by Klugman & Stump (2006) concluded that ethics courses had no effect on teachers' attitudes or behaviors. Ms. Mayfield made a statement along the same lines, saying,

I don't know that it was my teacher education program that prepared me to face ethical challenges. I think it was life experiences. I think it was upbringing. I think it was my family background that really prepared me for that.

Mr. Keith made a similar statement:

I don't remember a true ethics class based on what I see happening in many situations and have seen personally in situations. I consider myself to be a moral person, but I don't think it was from the education program. I think it was just the way I was brought up and raised myself. I had great parents who taught me right from wrong and I don't think it was so much what I would have learned in a classroom.

Although these participants believed themselves to be moral teachers, they did not place any credit for it on their teacher education programs. Rather, their family received the tribute for giving them a solid moral foundation that carried through to their teaching careers. While it is true that family influence and upbringing have a tremendous influence upon a person's moral code, more research is required to determine if and to what degree

ethics education influences how teachers resolve moral challenges in the workplace or, at the very least, how they think about them.

Reflective Field Experiences May Provide the Greatest Ethical Preparation for Pre-service Teachers

The central phenomenon of this study revolved around teachers' perceptions of preparedness to resolve moral challenges in school, so participating teachers were directly asked about how well they felt their teacher education program prepared them to resolve moral challenges. Teachers are in the perfect position to evaluate a teacher education program because they have been through the program and have experience teaching in schools, providing them with firsthand knowledge of moral challenges in teaching. Participating teachers consistently credited their field experiences for helping to prepare them to resolve moral challenges. Ms. Mayfield stated that her supervising teacher had the greatest effect on her, saying,

Student teaching is what really prepared me, because I got to see what a typical day looks like, the behavior problems and all the planning that goes into it. Actually, I didn't realize until a few years later how many behavior problems there were in the class I student taught. I thought that was the norm until I got my own classroom and they were way better behaved. But I'm sure that experience prepared me more than if all the kids were good.

Ms. Hamilton made a very similar statement, referring to her student teaching experience as what most prepared her to resolve moral challenges, stating,

I think having an internship is what helps the most. We called it student teaching back then but it helped because you were working directly with a teacher and they're the ones that really trained you. You got to see what they went through and how they handled everything. I think that's when I realized how many decisions teachers make in a day's time. It was intense, but I got to practice making decisions on the fly.

Ms. Rose credited the mentor teacher she worked with during her student teaching experience for helping her be more prepared to make moral decisions, saying,

I would say it was my mentor teacher that I was paired with when I first started student teaching. She was very helpful and very wise in her years and the things that she had to offer. She had a little spreadsheet before I even started of buzzwords of what you shouldn't say, what you should say, what topics are not good to talk about. She was also great about being a sounding board for me. I would tell her about a situation I was having and what I was thinking of doing about it and she would tell me how she would handle it if it was her.

For these teachers, the student teaching experience helped shape them into teachers that could react appropriately to moral challenges, because (1) they were able to work directly with an experienced teacher who guided them through their clinical experiences and (2) they got to practice decision-making in a teaching context, helping them to develop the much-needed teacher skill of making some difficult decisions at a moment's notice.

Ms. Page very pointedly stated that clinical experience is the only way to prepare teachers to make moral decisions, stating, "I think the only thing that can prepare you is experience. Truly."

Other participants couched their belief in the power of field experience for preparing pre-service teachers for moral decision-making not in terms of how it helped them but rather in terms of how it can help current pre-service teachers. Ms. Stone expressed how effective she thinks the PDS model is to the education students with whom she works, saying,

I really appreciate the PDS model and it's really interesting to see what we do at [the local university] and what ends up happening at non-PDS schools in other places—just not having the richness of field experience and it was really funny last year, we went to a national conference and we took one of our interns. I think he came back realizing just how much more we do to prepare the students than a lot of other places around the nation.

The PDS (Professional Development School) model to which this teacher referred is essentially a partnership between professional education programs and K-12 schools. This model is believed to improve the quality of teaching and learning. According to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the PDS model was designed to provide clinical preparation for teachers much like the intense clinical preparation medical students receive in their internships (Retrieved from <http://www.ncate.org/ProfessionalDevelopmentSchools/tabid/497/Default.aspx>). Thus, the PDS model provides more time in the real classroom, more time under a supervising teacher, and more time to practice the skills involved in teaching, which this participating teacher believed to be incredibly beneficial to pre-service teachers.

Ms. Moore also gave a lot of credit to the PDS model for helping to prepare teachers to resolve moral challenges, comparing her own limited field experience with the field experience of education students with whom she had worked.

I feel like obviously my teacher education program prepared me somewhat because I've been a halfway successful teacher. I don't really remember my program necessarily, and I will tell you that the teacher education program in this day and age—all the interns that I know—wow, compared to what I went through, I mean I only had a semester of student teaching. I graduated from [the local university] and it's totally changed. Now they start working in schools the first semester of their freshman year so their internship isn't their first experience in a classroom. I think that's been the best change since I went through. They don't have the "deer in the headlights" look I probably had when I student taught. They seem more comfortable. They're more prepared for the issues that come up.

For these two teachers, the PDS model, which puts pre-service teachers in K-12 classrooms much earlier and with much greater frequency, has resulted in a stark contrast between their own perceptions of preparedness to resolve moral challenges and how prepared they perceive their student teachers to be. It is clear from all of the participants'

responses about field experience that they believe the more K-12 classroom experiences a pre-service teacher can have, the better off s/he will be in the long run, particularly regarding moral decision-making.

Professional Development Involving the Use of Case Studies May Be an Effective Means of Providing Ethics Education to Teachers

One of the aims of this study was to determine if teachers felt they could receive any benefit from ethics education in the form of professional development and, if so, to learn what they would find most helpful. Ethics education in the form of professional development may be particularly useful to teachers who may not have had field experiences that prepared them to successfully resolve moral challenges and may also provide teachers insight into new moral challenges that arise due to changes in technology or social norms. All participating teachers agreed to some degree that ethics education in the form of professional development would be appropriate (See Figure 4.6).

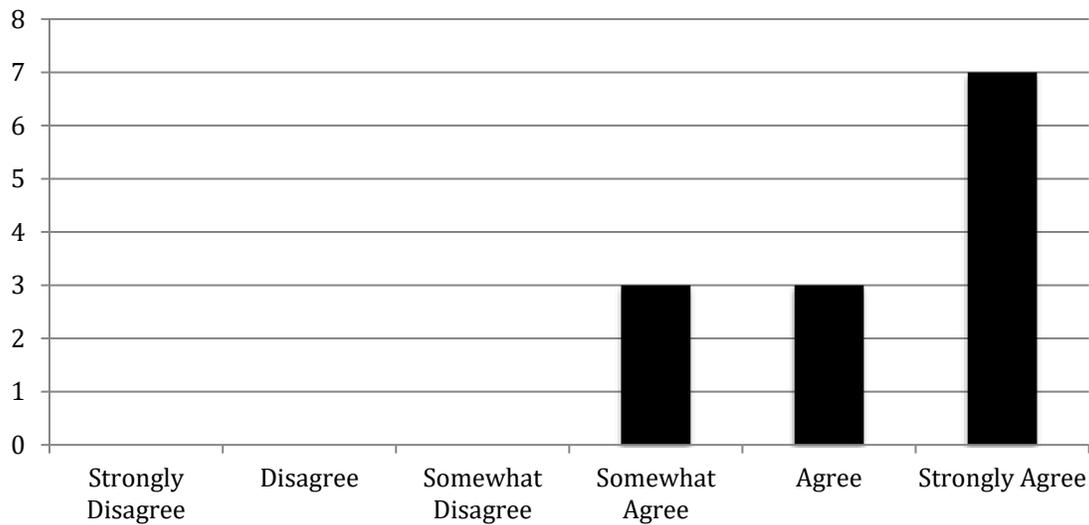


Figure 4.6. Views of whether or not ethics education should be included in ongoing professional development. Question wording: Ethics education should be included in ongoing professional development.

The next task, then, was to determine what teachers might find useful in this regard. Interestingly, 4 out of 7 interviewees mentioned case studies as a viable method for preparing teachers for successfully resolving moral challenges. Ms. Moore focused in on social media as being an area in which case studies would be particularly useful, saying,

I'd love to do more training on social media; like look at scenarios of things that might happen on it and talk about how we might handle it. We had a little bit of training on social media when that came out, and one thing that was said is that we are not allowed to text a student and I went up and I said, "Ok, here I am in trouble again because as the drill team coach, that's how all my girls get in touch with me when they're out at the ballgame." And I can remember our current principal said, "[Ms. Moore], can you show me your phone and you won't be embarrassed at the exchange that's going on between you and the student?" And I said, "Oh, of course. 100%!" And she said, "Then don't worry about it. If you're gonna be embarrassed to show me a text if something comes up, then you've got an issue." I found that so helpful because it helped me to understand that some of these things depend upon the situation.

Ms. Moore's mention of looking at "scenarios" and "situations" was echoed by Coach Keith as well. He talked about how valuable it would be to have experienced teachers guide newer teachers through case studies as well.

To get a group of younger teachers in a room full of older teachers to discuss what's out there, what problems might crop up and how they might handle them, would be good. They would probably rather do that than sit there and be told how or how not to do lesson plans. I think that would be good—let some teachers of 10+ years experience talk to all of the teachers of 0-5 years experience, or whatever range you pick. Provide these mentor teachers with some kind of a curriculum of ethics geared toward "How would you handle these ethical situations?" All the new teachers here already have a mentor so it might be worked in through the mentor program that we currently have.

Ms. Mayfield also discussed case studies as a viable way to carry out ethics education in professional development, stating that she would like to see something similar to what she had seen at the local education service center.

I went to a workshop at [the local education service center] and they had this man get up and he would act like he was the victim. Then he would change his seat and would act like he was the person helping him and then he would act like the victim again. He just went back and forth through this and we had a series of questions we had to go through afterward. We were analyzing what he was doing—what was the trauma that they experienced? What kind of bullying they experienced and how would you help them? So I think you need situations like that that really make a person think about what a person is going through.

Ms. Page echoed Ms. Mayfield’s desire to see professional development revolving around scenarios that are acted out in front of teachers, saying,

We need to see the reality of what we might face. It might be a 10-minute YouTube kind of thing. Or maybe a case study we act out or administrators act out for us. Or maybe one of those trainings that we get by video and then an opportunity to talk with peers.

It is clear from the way these four participants highlighted aspects of case studies as a means of professional development that there may be a place for case studies in professional development and that case studies may have the ability to fill a potential gap in post-baccalaureate ethics education for teachers as well as keep them abreast of relevant issues.

Summary of Findings

The unique position of teachers emerged in these findings, as teachers clearly think there is an expectation that they behave ethically and assist their students in moral development yet receive little in the way of ethics in their teacher education programs. Teachers believe ethical behavior on the part of teachers is of the utmost importance, face moral challenges resulting from the tension between individual/social needs and school rules, view cheating as the number one moral challenge for their students, use “teachable moments” to help students resolve moral challenges, were not provided with extensive ethics education in their pre-service teacher education programs, and believe field

experience to be the greatest source of ethical preparation a pre-service teacher can receive. Taken together, these findings demonstrate how complex the teaching profession really is.

Participating teachers consistently linked ethical behavior on the part of teachers with moral behavior on the part of students, demonstrating the enormous impact teachers believe their behavior can have upon their students. However, participating teachers admitted to either not having had, or not remembering, any ethics preparation in their teacher education program. If teachers truly believe moral behavior on their part can have such a tremendous impact on the moral development of their students, why is there not a greater emphasis on ethics in teacher education programs?

It is clear from the findings that high school students do struggle with moral challenges, the most apparent of which is cheating, according to participating teachers. In order to help guide students through this and other moral challenges, participating teachers have utilized teachable moments, which often take time away from direct instruction or learning activities. This again points to the importance teachers place upon ethics and sheds light upon a possible misalignment between K-12 schools and teacher education programs.

Finally, although the specifics of the moral challenges presented by participating teachers varied, most revolved around the tension between *the individual* and *the system*. In other words, these moral challenges resulted in teachers having to choose between doing what they thought was right for students or themselves and doing what was permissible according to school rules, district rules, state law, or U.S. law. In spite of this

similarity, the way in which teachers handled these challenges varied—in some cases they followed school rules, in others they broke the rules.

This points to another finding of this study provided by participating teachers—that field experience seems to provide the greatest benefit with regard to moral decision-making. The variance in how participating teachers responded to the moral challenges they faced underscores the case-by-case nature of moral challenges; what’s right in one situation may be wrong in another. Thus, perhaps the best way to prepare pre-service teachers to effectively resolve moral challenges is to put them into K-12 schools early and often. These experiences provide education students with opportunities to practice moral decision-making in a real school setting under the guidance of a mentor teacher, who can offer corrective feedback and provide more opportunities for improvement.

However, practice addressing moral challenges doesn’t have to end with pre-service teacher education, as participating teachers felt that ethics education could and should be carried out in the form of professional development using case studies. Providing teachers with scenarios involving moral challenges faced by other teachers and giving them opportunities to consider and discuss how they might respond to such situations may allow teachers to further hone their abilities to successfully resolve ethical challenges.

The goal of this study was to provide valuable input from teachers on moral challenges in K-12 education and discover what teacher education programs do to prepare pre-service teachers for these challenges. Participating teachers offered a wealth of insight that can have a positive impact on teacher education programs, pre-service

teachers, K-12, schools, and students as it leads to a more intentional focus on ethics in all levels of education.

Chapter Five includes the researcher's discussion of the conclusions and implications drawn from the major findings discussed in Chapter Four. Limitations and recommendations for further research are also included.

CHAPTER FIVE

Implications and Recommendations

The purpose of this case study was to describe the perceptions and attitudes of teachers toward the pre-service education they received in preparation for successfully resolving moral challenges and helping students to successfully resolve moral challenges of their own. This study was conducted in order to provide feedback for teacher educators and teacher education program administrators on an aspect of teaching that often goes unnoticed, or sometimes even unaddressed, in teacher education. Previous chapters discussed the multitude of moral challenges faced by both teachers and students and the need for increased attention to ethics in teacher education programs. This chapter focuses on the discussion and implications of such findings, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

This study took place in a central Texas high school situated in a large suburban school district. The population of the school district was fairly diverse, with 43% of the student body representing a minority race or ethnicity. The researcher used a random purposeful sampling method in order to select thirteen teachers representing various disciplines and subject areas within the district's only high school. Participating teachers who signed consent forms and maintained contact with the researcher throughout the entire course of the study were selected to participate. The participating teachers' demographic and professional information were provided in Chapter Four. The

researcher distributed electronic questionnaires to all thirteen participants in the first week of April, 2017. The researcher then conducted two individual interviews with seven participating teachers. The seven interview participants also provided a narrative about a moral challenge they had encountered in teaching. The findings of the data collection process were discussed in Chapter Four.

Research Questions

The following questions were examined throughout the course of the study:

What are high school teachers' attitudes toward their preparedness to successfully resolve moral challenges?

- A. What types of moral challenges do high school teachers encounter in schools?
- B. How do high school teachers view the ethical responsibilities of their profession?
- C. What types of moral challenges do high school teachers see their students encountering?
- D. How responsible do high school teachers think they are for helping their students resolve their moral challenges?
- E. What type of ethics education did teachers receive in their teacher education programs?
- F. How prepared did teachers think they were to resolve moral challenges as a result of their teacher education programs?
- G. What types of ethics education would teachers like to receive as part of their ongoing professional development?

Implications/Recommendations

As established in Chapter Two, teaching is widely perceived as a moral profession for three reasons. First, teachers tend to enter the profession motivated by moral reasons, such as bettering the lives of children or bettering society (Hansen, 1998). Second, teachers are expected to conduct themselves in a moral and ethical manner in both their personal and professional lives (Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe, & Sanger, 2009; Mackenzie & Mackenzie, 2010). Third, among the variety of roles teachers assume is that of the shaping of their students into ethical people (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002; Tom, 1984). In short, teachers must be able to aid their students in resolving moral challenges while successfully resolving their own moral challenges as well. However, these aspects of teaching are sometimes left unaddressed in teacher education programs (Ream & Glanzer, 2007; Puri, 2009; Salopek, 2013; Wakefield, 1996; Bickham, 2006; Fahrig-Pendse, 2011; Wells, 1998). Some of the major findings of this study address these moral aspects of teaching and provide possible methods for addressing ethics in teacher education programs.

After analyzing the data through constant comparative analysis and pattern-matching analysis, themes began to emerge from the data. Cross-case analysis was then conducted to find themes that transcended individual cases. Multiple data collection techniques were utilized for purposes of triangulation and to confirm findings through a saturation of data. According to Yin (2014), once a case study's findings are confirmed by more than a single source of evidence, triangulation has occurred.

The main themes that emerged while analyzing the data were:

1. Moral/ethical conduct on the part of teachers seems to be important to teachers.

2. Most moral challenges teachers face result from a tension between *the individual* and *the system*.
3. Teachers view cheating as the number one moral challenge for students.
4. Teachers use “teachable moments” to help students resolve moral challenges.
5. Teachers’ pre-service ethics preparation was not extensive.
6. Field experiences may provide the greatest ethical preparation for pre-service teachers.
7. Professional development involving the use of case studies may be an effective means of providing ethics education.

These seven themes emerged through repeated comments and responses throughout the questionnaires, interviews, and narratives. These themes were tied back to the research questions and theoretical framework for this study, leading to the conclusions and implications for this study (See Table 5.1).

These themes were helpful in determining teachers’ views of the moral challenges involved in teaching and the extent to which they felt prepared to resolve them as a result of their teacher education programs. The themes, additional findings, and emerging ideas from the study were combined to create the major implications below:

- Teachers tend to think of ethics in relation to rules and laws.
- Teachers seem to have assumed responsibility for the moral development of their students.
- Pre-service teachers may benefit from more opportunities to practice making ethics-related decisions, particularly those involving tension between *the individual* and *the system*.

- Teacher education programs may be better able to prepare teachers to resolve moral challenges by offering an ethics course.
- Teachers may benefit from receiving professional development focused on ethics, moral challenges, and moral development.

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent to the researcher that the participating teachers viewed ethics largely in terms of policy, focusing on school/district rules and/or state/U.S. laws. In other words, they tended to view ethics as a set of “dos and don’ts” given to them by an external authoritative source. In fact, several interview participants seemed to think that teachers need to know more about national and state education laws before entering the classroom. One teacher stated,

It would really help to know the law like the administrators, not to the extent that they have to know it, but I find out things all the time, especially with FERPA when that came through. I would like to be told, “This is the law. This is what you can and cannot do. Don’t disclose these records; keep them private.” I would like to know what the law is and how it applies to me as a teacher. I would also like specific expectations, like a checklist of inappropriate behaviors, especially with social media.

This desire to know more about the law was echoed by another teacher, stating,

I think a refresher course even in staff development before we start school—an hour of just a good refresher and a law update and sort’ve a general “this is our culture; this is what we do and this is what we don’t do” would be really helpful. Then there’s no question, and you have to have those conversations that people are uncomfortable with, like you can’t date your students, you can’t send pictures of yourself to your students, you can’t text about *Real Housewives* with your students; that’s not ok. I think it’s helpful to tell teachers, “This is the line. These are the things that are inappropriate.”

Even in the narratives of moral challenges participants provided, the focus was largely on rules and laws—No Pass No Play rule, rules within the teacher appraisal system, district rules about distribution of medicine to students. Rarely did participants mention moral challenges that did not involve honoring or breaking rules or laws in some way.

Table 5.1: *Matrix of research questions, themes, and theoretical framework*

Research Question	Theme	Theoretical Framework
What types of moral challenges do high school teachers see their students encountering?	Teachers view cheating as the number one moral challenge for students.	Teachers are expected to participate in shaping their students into ethical people (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002; Tom, 1984).
How responsible do high school teachers think they are for helping their students resolve their moral challenges?	Teachers use “teachable moments” to help students resolve moral challenges, demonstrating that teachers have a sense of responsibility for helping students to successfully navigate moral challenges.	Teachers are expected to participate in shaping their students into ethical people (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002; Tom, 1984). Teachers tend to enter the profession motivated by moral reasons (Hansen, 1998).
How do high school teachers view the ethical responsibilities of their profession?	Moral/ethical conduct on the part of teachers seems to be important to teachers.	Teachers are expected to behave ethically in both their professional and personal lives (Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe, & Sanger, 2009; Mackenzie & Mackenzie, 2010).
What types of moral challenges do high school teachers encounter in schools?	Most moral challenges teachers face may result from a tension between <i>the individual</i> and <i>the system</i> .	Teachers are expected to participate in shaping their students into ethical people (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002; Tom, 1984).
What type of ethics education did teachers receive in their teacher education programs?	Teachers’ pre-service ethics training may not have been extensive.	Teachers are expected to participate in shaping their students into ethical people (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002; Tom, 1984).
How prepared did teachers think they were to resolve moral challenges as a result of their teacher education programs?	Field experiences may provide the greatest ethical preparation for pre-service teachers.	
What types of ethics education would teachers like to receive as part of their ongoing professional development?	Professional development involving the use of case studies may be an effective means of providing ethics education to teachers.	

Missing from all but one of the participants' interviews was any mention of an internal moral code. This is not to say that the participants do not possess a moral code but rather to suggest that they may view ethics and morals as entirely separate, with ethics as formal and public, and morals as individual and personal. This may be a reflection of the ethics education taking place in teacher education programs—ethics discussions that focus almost solely on rules and laws and spend little time on pre-service teachers' internal moral understandings. As Ream & Glanzer (2007) pointed out upon their examination of teacher education programs across the country, course descriptions seemed to purposefully “avoid framing [ethical] issues in specifically moral ways” (p. 284). Yet, a teacher's internal moral code is not divorced from how she carries out her professional duties. It influences whether she does just enough work not to be fired or goes above and beyond the call of duty for her students. A teacher's moral code may even determine how she views the teaching profession—is it a job or a calling? Her moral code may also determine how she views her role as a teacher—is she there to teach her students enough material to pass them on to the next grade or is she there to guide her students toward becoming good citizens and, in turn, bettering society? These are the kinds of questions with which pre-service teachers should be encouraged to wrestle and is precisely why Mayes (2001) and Sockett (2006) recommend teacher education programs include opportunities for critical reflection in any treatment of ethics.

Another conclusion reached by the researcher was that teachers seem to think they are responsible for their students' moral development. In spite of their minimal ethics education experiences—either in professional development or in their teacher education programs—the participating teachers provided several indications that their students'

moral fitness was important to them, and it was clear that the teachers had assumed the burden of providing moral guidance to their students.

One way in which participants demonstrated this concern for students was in their desire to lead by example. In Chapter Four, the researcher provided several examples of how participating teachers viewed their role as a moral example, citing participants' assertions that teachers must be "a wonderful example" to the students they teach because these are "the leaders of our future," some students "don't have a good role model at home," and teachers must hold themselves to the same standards to which they hold their students.

Another way in which participating teachers' concern for students' moral development was clear was in their use of "teachable moments" to provide moral guidance. Participating teachers described how they have used conversations with students as opportunities to teach "lifelong lessons," even on issues like "texting and driving," and teachers sometimes "tell stories" of their own experiences to help students understand that there are times when they have to "take a stand and do the right thing." This use of teachable moments demonstrated the level of dedication these participating teachers had for assisting students in their moral development, because instructional time is precious, especially in this day and age when teachers have more at stake in how their students perform on standardized assessments due to merit-based pay and other factors related to job security. In a previous study carried out by the researcher, participating teachers expressed how they dreaded assemblies, class parties, pep rallies, or other special events because these things cut into their teaching time (Pollard & Talbert, 2017). With that in mind, it speaks volumes that participating teachers in this study are willing to

take time away from teaching content to touch on moral matters without even a second thought.

Participating teachers also indicated that being approachable by students is important for providing moral guidance. One teacher pointed out that students she has never even taught have taken to hanging out in her classroom outside of the school day because she has developed a reputation for being trustworthy.

These kids, by midyear, know who's an ethical teacher and who's one they can't trust. And they know they can trust me. They're in and out of my classroom all the time. It's highly important that my students trust me. I would hate to be a teacher they couldn't trust and most of the ones they can't trust they dislike, and I don't want that. I have kids in my class before school that I've never taught; I mean they're constantly in my room and I like that.

This teacher went on to talk about a male student who had recently come to her for advice on how to handle a conflict between his girlfriend and his mother, stressing that her approachability had given her similar opportunities to guide students toward making moral and ethical decisions.

When taken into consideration as a whole—the desire to set a good example for students, the willingness to set instruction aside at times to teach moral lessons, and the intentional efforts to be approachable by students—it is clear that teachers have taken on the role of fostering students' moral development. In fact, helping students develop morally seems to be one of the central roles teachers assume, demonstrating the priority teachers assign to moral formation in comparison to other roles in their profession. In short, the moral formation of their students appears to be important to teachers and they view themselves as vital to the moral formation process, which has caused teachers to take on the role of a moral guide for their students.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter Four, the researcher reworded Shapira-Lishchinsky's (2011) assertion that most moral challenges in school result from the tension between individual/social needs and strict observation of school rules as a tension between *the individual* and *the system*. All seven of the narratives provided by participants in this study revolved around this tension, leading the researcher to draw a similar conclusion to that of Shapira-Lishchinsky about the prevalence of this tension in school. It stands to reason, then, that ethics education in teacher education programs should be geared toward this type of moral challenge as it is the type pre-service teachers will most likely encounter in the profession.

Participating teachers articulated their views on how preparation to resolve this tension ought to be carried out in teacher education programs and, as mentioned in Chapter Four, participants credited their student teaching experiences as having the greatest impact on their preparation to resolve moral challenges. As participants articulated their reasoning, it became obvious that it was in *the doing* that they were able to grow in the area of resolving moral challenges. The act of carrying out a teacher's normal duties, which often involve making split-second decisions throughout the day, gave participating teachers opportunities to practice moral decision-making. While practice is certainly important, it is incomplete unless coupled with reflection upon these experiences. As discussed in Chapter Two of this study, reflection helps teachers understand what is at stake in the decisions they make and to recognize the types of values involved, which "might help teachers to feel more confident, less confused, more focused in how they articulate their dilemmas and clear about what is involved in teaching value perspectives to children" (Mahoney, 2009, p. 988). Thus, another

conclusion reached by the researcher is that pre-service teachers may benefit from more opportunities to practice moral decision-making and critical reflection in their teacher education programs. Ideally, pre-service teachers should have access to on-campus seminars where they can discuss and even conduct research on these moral and ethical issues. While more experience in the field may boost their confidence, their understanding of moral decision-making is fostered through reflection upon their experiences. As tensions between *the individual* and *the system* undergird most moral challenges in schools, it is likely that these are the kinds of moral challenges to which pre-service teachers will most often be able to practice their response.

Several participants also suggested that reading and discussing teaching cases in teacher education courses may further provide pre-service teachers opportunities to practice moral decision-making. In Chapter Three, the researcher discussed using teaching cases as a means of integrating an ethics component into teacher education programs. As stated by Schwarz (1999), teacher narrative “helps teacher candidates connect personal experiences, feelings, and ideas to significant educational issues in ways that transcend college lectures or lists of effective teaching behaviors” and “opens educators to the risk and vulnerability required by ethical practice” (p. 27). One participant argued for the use of teaching cases in this way:

I think teachers need to have situations handed to them—even if it’s in groups—where they have to come up with ideas for how they would deal with the situation. They need simulations and scenarios, things that make them actually think about what’s going on and what they would do.

The implication here is that most of what goes on in teacher education programs does not move pre-service teachers toward thinking about what’s going on in schools, the moral challenges they may face, or how they should respond to these challenges. Another

teacher asserted her belief that studying teaching cases could be very valuable to pre-service teachers, saying, “I think we need to have those deep conversations by looking at case studies and such. That would be really engaging and productive in the long run.” It appears, then, that an increase in opportunities for pre-service teachers to be exposed to, discuss, and respond to teaching cases and other types of teacher narratives could fill in a gap that may exist in some teacher education programs and provide much-needed practice resolving moral challenges, particularly those involving tension between *the individual* and *the system*. Furthermore, several participating teachers suggested case studies would be a beneficial addition to ongoing professional development and thus, in addition to pre-service teachers, may be helpful to current educators in learning how to successfully respond to ethical challenges.

With regard to the amount of field experience, the research indicates some teacher education programs may have improved. At various times throughout the interviews, participating teachers expressed their surprise at how well-rounded and prepared for teaching their student teachers from the local university have been as of late. Participants consistently made statements like, “I always have very professional interns” and “I don’t think they realize how much they’re getting to do that we never did.” One teacher put it thus:

I don’t really remember my program, necessarily, but I will tell you that the teacher program in this day and age—and all the interns that I know—wow, compared to what I went through; I mean I only had one semester of student teaching. I graduated from [the local university] and it’s totally changed. I had sophomores last year and then I had them as juniors as T.A.s [Teachers Assistants] and now next year I’ll have them as interns. They’ve been in and out of my classroom for three years having all kinds of experiences I never had until my first year of teaching.

Another participant lauded the local university's emphasis on field experience as being unusual and a cut above other programs, saying

I really appreciate the PDS model and it's really interesting to see what we do at [the local university] and what ends up happening at PDS schools in other places—just not having that richness of field experience that we have. It was really funny last year—we went to a national conference in March like we do every year. We took one of our interns—he's now a first-year teacher here—he came back from the conference, I think, realizing just how much more we do to prepare the students than a lot of other places around the nation.

These participating teachers seemed highly encouraged by the level of preparation current pre-service teachers are receiving through field experiences, and it is clear from all of the interview participants' statements about field experiences, as reported in Chapter Four, that more field experience is a good thing, particularly when teachers are encouraged to reflect on these experiences.

It wasn't only the amount of field experience participating teachers felt the local university's teacher education program had improved upon. There were other aspects of the program they felt exceeded their own experiences in their programs. One teacher mentioned the way in which the local university's teacher education program had integrated ethics-related topics into the course content, saying

I think they're doing a good job of having those deep rich conversations, just as I have grown more familiar with it at the junior level and senior level. I see that they are embedding those topics within their syllabi and they're talking about a lot of these issues in their courses and preparing students as they get into the actual classroom field experience.

Most of these interview participants had attended the local university and graduated from its teacher education program and were, thus, able to compare the ethics preparation they had received with that of their student teachers. The participants seemed certain that this university's pre-service teachers were receiving more ethics preparation than they had

received by putting them in public school classrooms earlier and embedding ethics-related discussions and activities into course material. It is likely that this university is not the only one to have improved in this area, leading the researcher to conclude that other teacher education programs in the United States have made similar alterations to the ethics preparation they provide pre-service teachers.

However, there is still room for improvement in teacher education programs, even those that have provided teachers with more field experience. One of the conclusions reached in this study is that teachers tend to conflate morals or ethics with rules and laws. While it is true that the two are likely to be aligned most of the time, it is possible for a rule or a law to be immoral or unethical (e.g. Jim Crow laws, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, etc.) Thus, pre-service teachers should be given opportunities to study rules and laws related to teaching and make moral judgments about such decrees. With the “opt out” movement that encourages parents to keep students home on standardized testing days sweeping the nation, perhaps teachers should be encouraged to read and understand how laws like No Child Left Behind apply to them and to reflect on their own views on the morality of such laws. Such learning experiences may prevent teachers from adopting a “go along to get along” mentality that may permit unethical practices to permeate schools. Activities that promote the comparison of laws with personal moral beliefs may encourage teachers to be part of the solution in education rather than part of what many perceive as an ongoing problem.

Another finding of this study is that teachers seem to have assumed responsibility for the moral development of their students. One of the themes that emerged is that teachers are willing to take time out of lectures and other important learning activities to

provide moral guidance to students. Clearly, the moral development of students is important to teachers. Pre-service teachers need to be given opportunities to explore this aspect of their profession in several ways. First, pre-service teachers need to develop an understanding of how people become ethical/moral. Education students should be reading philosophers of virtue, such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Kant. In these readings, students may find personal relevance in what these philosophers wrote about courage, generosity, temperance, and other virtues. According to Sommers, “Once the student becomes engaged with the problem of what kind of person to be, and how to become that kind of person, the problems of ethics become concrete and practice and, for many a student, moral development is thereafter looked on as a natural and even inescapable undertaking” (p. 8).

In addition to reading of the philosophers of virtue, pre-service teachers should be given opportunities to read and hear from real teachers regarding what triggers them to stop lessons and give moral advice so pre-service teachers will know what to look and listen for in class, how teachers impart these moral lessons without causing students to react negatively so pre-service teachers learn how to speak to students about moral matters without causing them to put up barriers and miss out on much-needed guidance, and how teachers provide moral guidance while continuing to maintain a healthy relationship with students so pre-service teachers are able to provide moral guidance without becoming too close to students or pushing them away. Teachers should also be challenged to explore this issue from the parental side, How far should teachers go when it comes to helping their students resolve moral challenges? Where is the line? Is there a line? What moral challenges should be reserved for parents to handle alone with

students? (Ex. If a student comes to a teacher and asks, “I’m pregnant. Should I have an abortion?”) In addition, case studies would be helpful as well—particularly case studies involving moral discussions between teachers and students—so pre-service teachers can see what students might say, what topics might come up, and what might happen depending upon the situation and how the teacher responds.

Another conclusion reached in this study is that pre-service teachers may benefit from more opportunities to practice making ethics-related decisions. Given the fact that several participants suggested the use of case studies for providing such practice, it is only natural to include this suggestion here as well. While it is likely that many teacher education programs are already using case studies in some form or another, these case studies may be focused not on moral challenges but on instructional challenges. Pre-service teachers should be encouraged to read and respond to teaching cases in depth, including summarizing the core issue, analyzing the way in which the teacher in the case responded to the moral challenge, describing how she might respond in the situation, and predicting what the outcome might be based upon her response. Such an activity may help pre-service teachers gain awareness of the moral challenges they may be confronted with at some point and provide an understanding of the process involved in successfully resolving these challenges.

Furthermore, teachers should be given more opportunities to interact with students in a school setting. The participants of this study credited their field experiences as best preparing them to successfully resolve moral challenges in school. So it stands to reason that more field experience is needed to better prepare pre-service teachers to resolve moral challenges. It is through their interactions with students and other teachers

that pre-service teachers are able to practice making split-second decisions, some of which are likely to involve ethical or moral decision-making. It is also through field experience that pre-service teachers are made aware of issues and moral challenges they have never experienced or even thought about. However, field experience alone is not enough. Pre-service teachers must be encouraged, if not required, to reflect on each and every field experience to deepen their understanding of the issue(s) they encounter, to look critically at their handling of each and every situation, and to brainstorm ways in which they can better resolve each moral challenge if it were to arise again.

With these recommendations in mind, it seems that adding a course to teacher education programs is necessary in order to allow students to interact with the moral aspects of the teaching profession in the kind of depth that is necessary for ideal preparation. While participants did point to their field experiences as preparing them more than anything else in their teacher education programs for resolving moral challenges, pre-service teachers need a separate course that takes them on a journey through the heart of teaching. This course should allow teachers to explore and discuss the philosophers of virtue, articulate their motivations for choosing teaching and, particularly if these motivations are expressed in moral language, this course should encourage teachers to find ways to fulfill these moral ends in various contexts (i.e. inner-city schools, rural districts, low-performing schools, etc.). Second, this course should encourage pre-service teachers to gain an understanding of education laws and analyze and articulate their own views on the morality of these laws in order to draw a distinction between lawfulness and morality. Third, this course should involve in-depth treatment of

teaching cases, in which pre-service teachers must read, analyze, and respond to case studies about moral challenges teachers have experienced or may experience in teaching.

This course should also provide teachers with more field experience, which will allow them to practice using the skills they develop throughout the course—finding ways to fulfill their desired moral ends, understanding how rules and laws affect various stakeholders, observing or experiencing situations that may arise in their own classrooms and learning how to respond to these situations. While pre-service teachers may participate in field experiences in other courses, they are likely to be focused on things other than moral challenges, such as pedagogy, lesson planning, classroom management, etc. Pre-service teachers need field experiences in which teachers are made to look for the moral aspects of teaching in their observations and interact with these moral aspects in their pre-service teaching experiences. These field experiences must be followed by reflection that challenges pre-service teachers to identify the issues they observed or experienced, critique their own responses or the responses they observed, and formulate a plan of action for handling these issues in the future. Finally, this course should provide teachers with the vocabulary and a framework for resolving moral challenges in teaching. What should teachers say in these situations? What should teachers do? Teachers need to have a system in place so when they are confronted with moral challenges in school, they are ready to resolve them in an ethical manner. Such a course may provide a well-rounded understanding of the moral challenges involved in teaching as well as appropriate ways of responding to these challenges.

While some teacher education programs may claim that ethics are embedded across the program curriculum, this seems difficult to oversee or maintain. Professors

tend to plan their own courses from beginning to end and would need to be very intentional about integrating into their course development and curriculum. With an ethics course, there is a guarantee that pre-service teachers will begin to be exposed to questions of morals and purpose that permeate the teaching profession. However, even with an ethics course, ethics should still be embedded throughout the teacher education program to allow teachers to develop an understanding for how the moral aspects of the teaching profession are woven throughout content, classroom management, and pedagogy. It prevents the compartmentalization of ethics apart from everything else that teaching entails.

The participants of this study also expressed their desire for a greater focus on ethics education in their professional development opportunities. A series of professional development workshops that follow the outline described above for pre-service teachers would be highly beneficial for current teachers as well. These workshops should require teachers to read excerpts from the virtue philosophers and discuss their understandings of how what they read relates to their roles as teachers, wrestling with questions like “What is a virtue?”, “How does one foster virtues?”, “How can I foster virtues in myself and in my students?” They should also be challenged to explore and articulate what brought them into teaching in the first place. Teaching can be a trying task and each day brings new challenges, so putting teachers back in touch with their motivations for walking through the doors of the school in the first place can help them rediscover the moral motivations that drive them to continue. Furthermore, teachers should be presented with case studies involving moral challenges that they can read and discuss. What was the core issue? Did the teacher in the case make the right decision? What would the teacher do if

she were faced with this moral challenge? What would be the outcome? Such opportunities to read, question, and discuss should provide teachers with a greater understanding of moral decision-making in education contexts.

Limitations

In interpreting the data from this study, the reader should be aware of the limitations of this research. The researcher's acquaintance with the site school's principal may have prevented some participants from disclosing unfavorable data, fearing their jobs may be in jeopardy or they might be reprimanded. Thus, this relationship to the administrator may have hindered a true representation of the data. This study was also limited by the honesty and reliability of the participants in their reporting of information in the questionnaire, interviews, and narratives.

The generalization of this study was limited to teachers from one high school. As a result, the demographics of the participants were similar and may not be representative of teacher populations of other school districts. Moreover, this study was conducted with a very small number of participants. As only thirteen participants were included, and only seven gave interviews, it is possible the results may have been altered if a larger sample size were used.

It is also possible that the responses by participants were due to the voluntary nature of the study. Certain participants may have agreed to participate in the study because the research topic was relatable to them or their experiences. Perhaps potential participants who were indifferent to the research topic chose not to participate in the study from the outset and different responses would have been recorded if a different population and sample had been utilized.

Also, for purposes of this study, alternative certification programs were not included in the research process. Thus, no research was done on the extent to which pre-service teachers in these programs are being prepared to resolve moral challenges in teaching. Alternative certification programs tend to provide a quicker route to acquiring teacher certification than teacher education programs situated within colleges and universities as part of a four-year degree, usually consisting of evening classes lasting for under six months. Rather than embarking on a semester of student teaching after completing their coursework, these pre-service teachers are often provided a probationary teaching certificate and encouraged to begin their teaching career immediately. In many alternative programs, their first year of teaching is considered their internship year, during which they are often provided with a mentor, and after which they are eligible to receive a standard teaching certificate. Thus, because the alternative program coursework tends to be brief compared to that of college or university teacher education programs, the researcher assumed that pre-service teachers in alternative certification programs may receive less preparation for resolving moral challenges than their university counterparts and, therefore, did not include alternative certification programs in this study.

Researcher bias tends to be an area of weakness in case studies as well (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher's own experiences in her teacher education program undoubtedly contributed to the selection of the research topic and crafting of data collection tools. The researcher received very little preparation for moral challenges in teaching in her teacher education program and, as a result, assumed that this was the norm for most pre-service teachers. This led the researcher to believe most teachers were entering the teaching profession unprepared, or at the very least underprepared, for

resolving moral challenges in teaching. However, the researcher was able to verify through the research reported in Chapter Two of this study that there are scholars and researchers in the United States who have drawn similar conclusions, lending credibility to the justification for this study.

Future Research

While the data from this study support the notion that teachers are interested in assisting students in their moral development, the question of whether or not teacher education programs have any impact on this tendency remains. Do people who are naturally concerned with the moral development of others go into teaching or do teacher education programs have an effect on people's overall concern for morals?

This phenomenon warrants further exploration, because the results could have an impact on how teacher education programs approach ethics education. For instance, if the data support that people who possess a natural desire to assist in the moral development of others tend to go into teaching, then teacher education programs can utilize this important information to make recruiting decisions, intentionally focusing on finding morally-minded people for their programs, as well as providing pre-service teachers with the tools they need to turn their concern for moral development into a plan of action. On the other hand, should the data demonstrate that teacher education programs increase people's concern for moral development, this information may also impact recruiting for teacher education programs, as even those who are not as concerned with moral development could potentially be made so through the program, and the course content to which they are exposed. Answering the question of how and when teachers become interested in fostering the moral development of others can have long-term implications

for ethics preparation in teacher education programs and may, in turn, affect how teachers resolve moral challenges that occur in school.

In the previous section, the researcher mentioned her exclusion of alternative teacher certification programs as a limitation of this study. This omission leaves the door open for future study of how alternative certification programs go about preparing pre-service teachers for resolving moral challenges in teaching. This research is important, as alternative certification programs are often used particularly to fill a large number of vacancies in urban, low-socioeconomic, or low-performing schools, where good examples and concern for moral development may be even more beneficial to students than in suburban or rural school districts (Ng, 2003, p. 381). Such research could reveal inconsistencies across alternative certification programs as well as inadequacies in how they prepare teachers to resolve moral challenges in teaching.

The researcher also pointed to the use of only one research site for the data collection in this study as a limitation, because it increased the likelihood that the demographic info of the participants was similar, possibly skewing the results. This also provided room for future research on how teachers view the preparation for resolving moral challenges they received in their teacher education programs on a larger scale. Gathering data from multiple sites in various types of districts may garner a greater picture of what is going on in schools regarding moral challenges teachers face, which could provide teacher educators with valuable information for how to better prepare pre-service teachers for resolving these moral challenges.

Another potential direction for this research is a study of subject-specific moral issues. For instance, a foreign language teacher who participated in this study indicated

that one of the main moral challenges her students face is cheating through the use of online translators, like Google Translate, that allow students to enter a foreign language phrase into the translator and receive the English translation rather than having to reference flashcards, the textbook, or even their own knowledge to piece together the translation. Other relevant examples are the censorship of books in Literature courses because they have been deemed inappropriate in some way or the avoidance of controversial topics in Social Studies courses. Research may be conducted in one or more of these areas to gain an understanding of how teachers experience subject-specific moral challenges and, in turn, provide valuable information for teacher education programs to consider when preparing pre-service teachers to teach in a particular subject area.

Concluding Remarks

Preparing teachers for a changing landscape is challenging. As society changes, so do the moral challenges faced by its citizens. For example, social media seems to be one of the greatest moral challenges for teachers today, whereas thirty years ago it was nonexistent. Because of this ever-changing landscape, it is necessary for teacher education program administrators to occasionally evaluate their programs in light of how their teachers are prepared for (1) the moral challenges they will encounter in the teaching practice, and (2) their roles in helping their students to resolve their own moral challenges.

This study was important because it shed light on the extent to which teachers are concerned with the moral development of their students, and it appears that teachers take this aspect of their profession so seriously that they are willing to give up important instructional time to provide moral guidance. Furthermore, teachers seem to be facing

moral challenges involving tension between their own individual beliefs and the rules/laws of the education system. Teachers may benefit from having more interaction with moral challenges such as these, particularly through the study and discussion of teaching cases, as well as more time in the actual classroom to practice resolving these challenges. Encouraging information was revealed in this study as it appears some teacher education programs are already making the changes necessary for providing teachers with the tools they need to resolve the moral challenges with which they are confronted and foster the moral development of their students. We may not see the impact of these changes for a time, but this heightened focus on preparing teachers for the moral aspects of their profession could have a positive impact on education and, in turn, society as a whole for the foreseeable future.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire Protocol

Table A.1

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Teachers must be of high moral character.	0	0	0	0	0
2. I have been confronted with school-related decisions in which one of the options before me was unethical	0	0	0	0	0
3. I sometimes struggle with the ethics of teaching practices associated with high-stakes testing (teaching to the test, practice tests, test-taking strategies, amount of time spent focusing on the test).	0	0	0	0	0
4. I believe my students are confronted with ethical challenges of their own in school	0	0	0	0	0
5. It is my responsibility as a teacher to help my students manage the ethical challenges they face.	0	0	0	0	0
6. My teacher education program taught me that the ability to make ethical decisions is a necessary teacher skill.	0	0	0	0	0
7. My teacher education program included opportunities to practice making ethical decisions in a guided setting.	0	0	0	0	0

8. My teacher education program included opportunities to read stories written by teachers about ethical challenges they have faced.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. Ethical decision-making was not a focus of my teacher education program.	<input type="radio"/>				
10. My teacher education program offered an ethics course.	<input type="radio"/>				
11. My teacher education program prepared me to assist my students in managing their own ethical challenges.	<input type="radio"/>				
12. Teacher education programs should include ethics education in their curriculum.	<input type="radio"/>				
13. Ethics education should be included in ongoing professional development.	<input type="radio"/>				
Participation in other aspects of this study	Yes	No			
1. I am willing to be interviewed by the researcher.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			
2. I am willing to provide a written story about a time when I was faced with an ethical challenge as a teacher.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol

Time of Interview:

Interviewer:

Date:

Interviewee:

Location:

Position of Interviewee:

(Briefly describe the project before asking the following questions)

1. How important do you think it is for teachers to be ethical people of good moral character? Why?
2. Can you tell me about any instances that come to mind where you felt you had a school-related decision to make and felt one or more options to be unethical?
3. How did you manage this ethical challenge?
4. What types of ethical challenges do you see your students encountering?
5. Do you feel responsible for helping your students navigate their ethical challenges?
6. What experiences did you have in your teacher education program that you can point to and say, "That was ethics training"?
7. Do you feel your teacher education program prepared you to manage the ethical challenges you've encountered? Why or why not?
8. What do you think teacher education programs should be doing to prepare teachers to manage ethical challenges?

9. Would you like ongoing professional development in ethics and ethical decision-making? What would that look like?

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Form

Certification of Informed Consent

Baylor University—Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Principal Investigator: Caroline Pollard

This form asks for your consent to participate in educational research regarding moral education/training in teacher education programs and K-12 schools. For this research, you will be asked to respond to survey questions, open-ended questions, and follow-up questions in an interview format. The entire interview process should take no more than 45 minutes to complete. For this study, it is also requested that you allow the investigator to observe class sessions and meetings you may have with teachers or parents.

There will be no physical risks at any time. You may elect, either now or at any time during the study, to withdraw your participation, with no penalty or loss of benefits. You have been selected to participate in this study based on your employment with Gatesville ISD as an elementary school teacher. You should understand that your compliance is completely voluntary and that your participation, or lack of participation, in this study will not affect your employment.

A pseudonym will be used to identify each participant so you are guaranteed complete confidentiality. All information gathered will be held in strictest confidence and all recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet for three years and then destroyed.

This study meets the American Psychological Association’s standards for “minimal risk” and poses no major risks or dangers for you as a participant.

The interviews will be audio recorded and written field notes will be taken by the researcher. These artifacts will be studied and analyzed to help the investigator understand the importance of moral education in teacher education programs and K-12 schools. Your anonymity will be preserved because the research report will represent composites of interview results and participant names will be changed if specific references are made. This data will allow the researcher to better understand what is occurring in teacher education programs and K-12 schools with regard to moral education.

Please direct all inquiries to Mrs. Caroline Pollard, principal investigator for this project and a doctoral student at Baylor University. She may be reached at (254)462-3890 or caroline_pollard@baylor.edu. You may also direct inquiries to her faculty research chairperson, Dr. Gretchen Schwarz, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, School of Education, Baylor University, One Bear Place #97314, Waco, TX 76798-7314. Dr. Schwarz may also be reached by telephone at (254)710-3160 or by email at Gretchen_Schwarz@baylor.edu.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, or any other aspect of the research as it relates to you as a participant, please contact the Baylor University Committee for Protection of Human Subjects in Research, Dr. David W. Schlueter, Ph.D., Chair Baylor IRB, Baylor University, One Bear Place #97368, Waco, TX 76798-7368. Dr. Schlueter may also be reached at (254)710-6920 or (254)710-3708.

I have read and understood this form, am aware of my rights as a participant, and have agreed to participate in the research.

Name (signature)

Date

APPENDIX D

Questionnaire Data

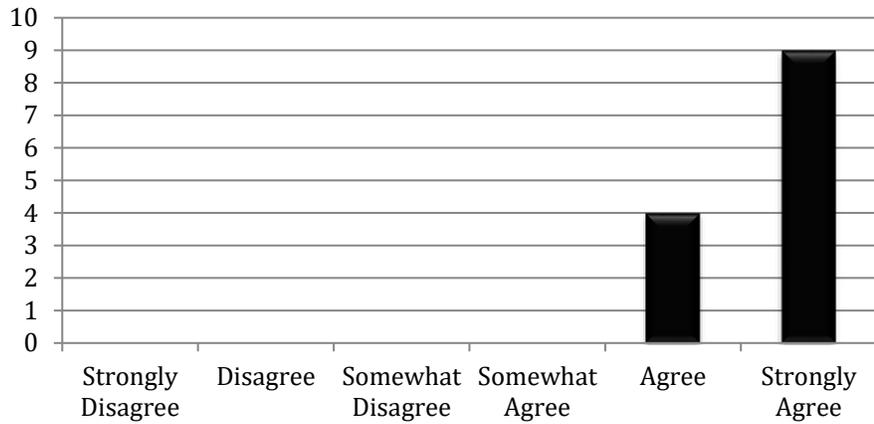


Figure D.1. Belief that teachers should possess high moral character. Question wording: Teachers must be of high moral character.

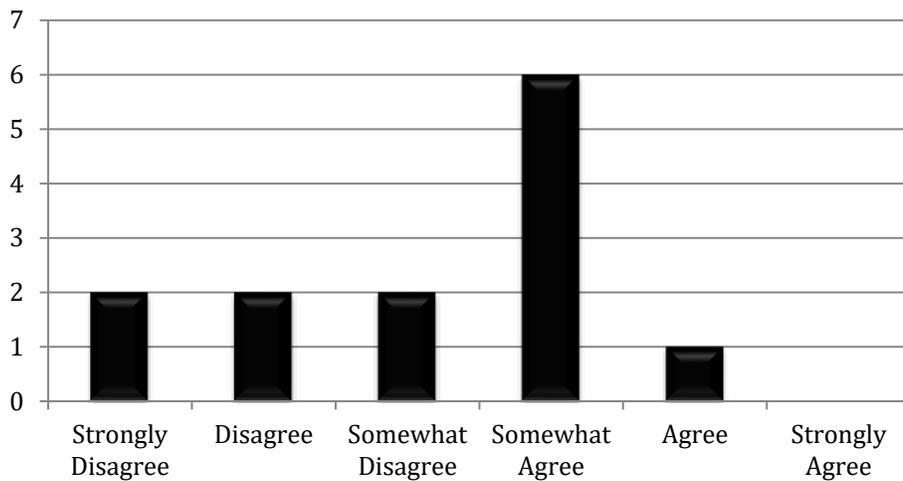


Figure D.2. Experience confronting ethical challenges. Question wording: I have been confronted with school-related decisions in which one of the options before me was unethical.

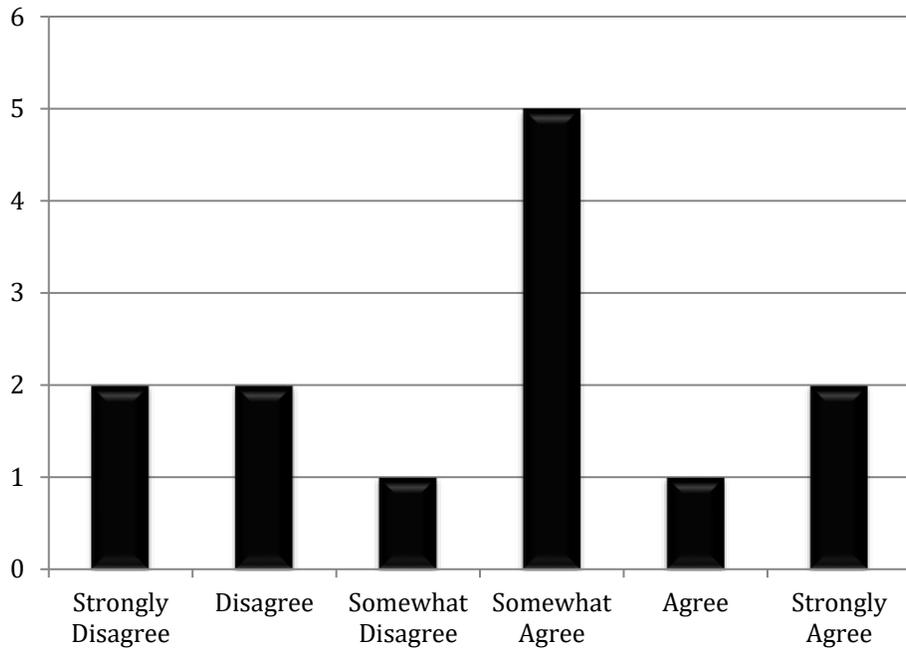


Figure D.3. Ethical challenges associated with high-stakes testing. Question wording: I sometimes struggle with the ethics of teaching practices associated with high-stakes testing.

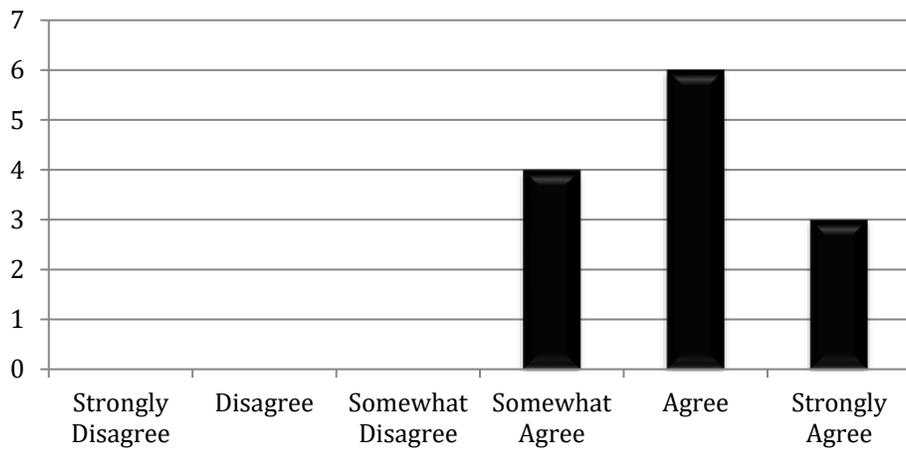


Figure D.4. Views of whether or not students face ethical challenges. Question wording: I believe my students are confronted with ethical challenges of their own in school.

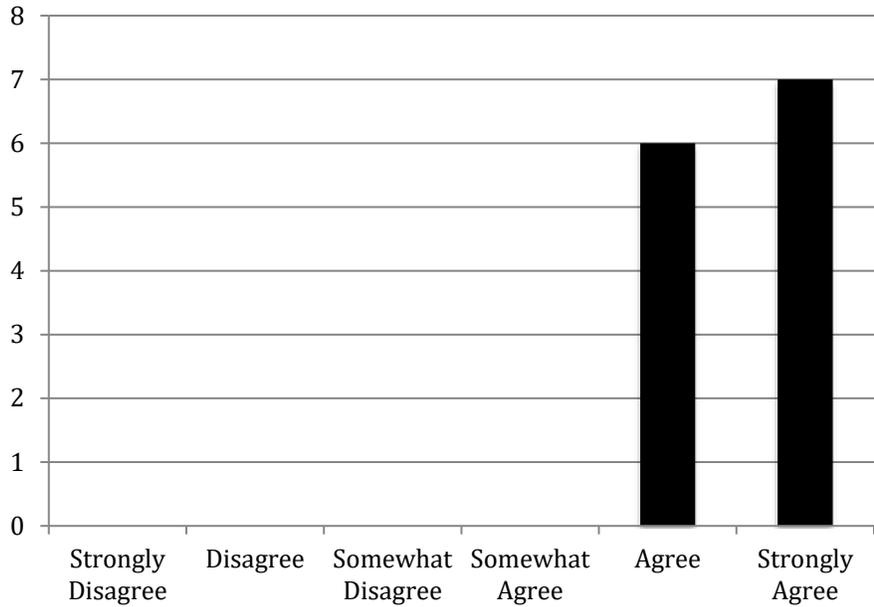


Figure D.5. Feelings of responsibility for assisting students in managing ethical challenges. Question wording: It is my responsibility as a teacher to help my students manage the ethical challenges they face.

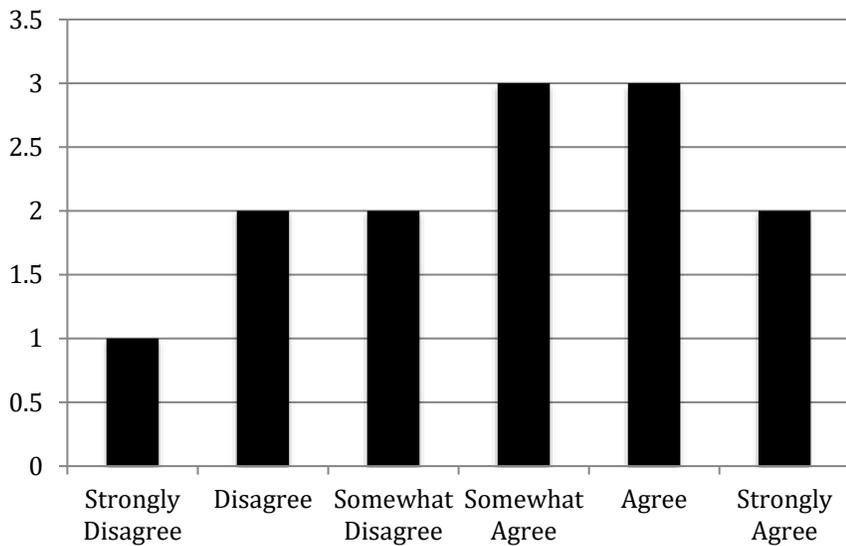


Figure D.6. Views of whether or not participants' teacher education programs taught them the necessity of being able to make ethical decisions. Question wording: My teacher education program taught me that the ability to make ethical decisions is a necessary teacher skill.

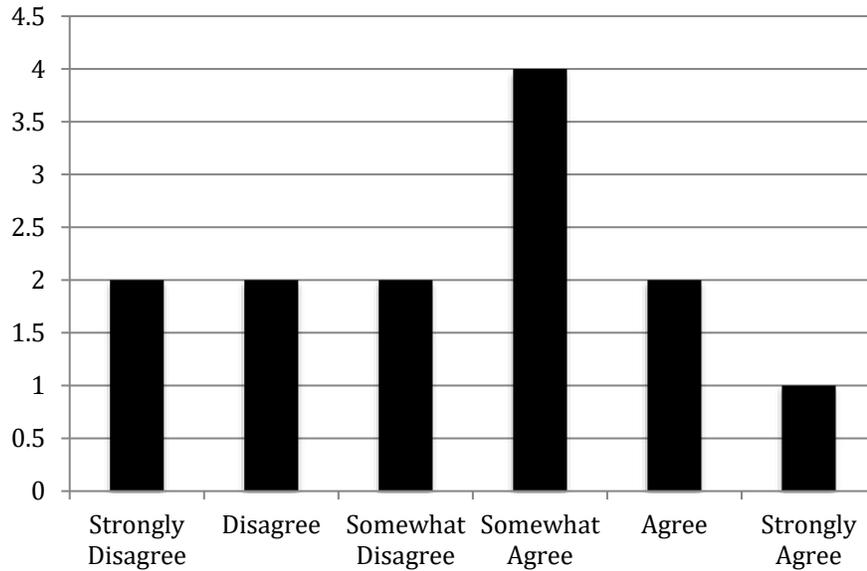


Figure D.7. Experience practicing making ethical decisions in participants' teacher education programs. Question wording: My teacher education program included opportunities to practice making ethical decisions in a guided setting.

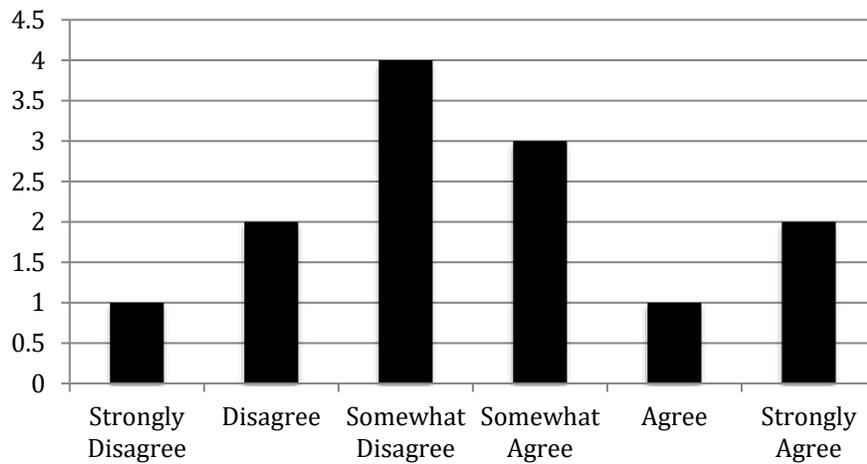


Figure D.8. Experience reading teacher narratives about ethical challenges. Question wording: My teacher education program included opportunities to read stories written by teachers about ethical challenges they have faced.

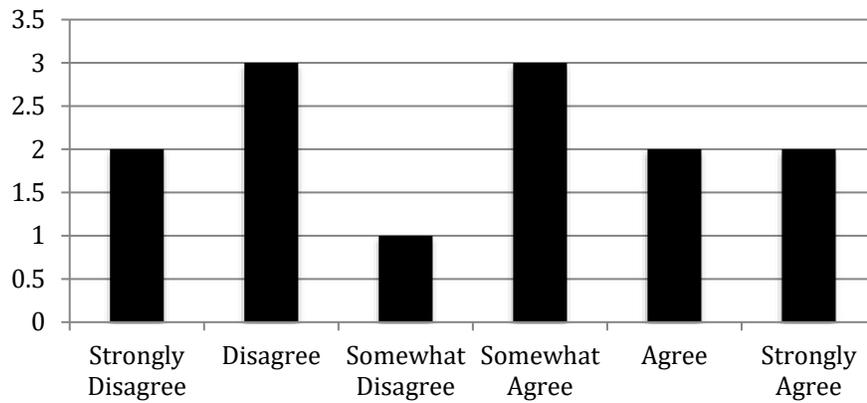


Figure D.9. Views of whether or not ethical decision-making was a focus of participants' teacher education program. Question wording: Ethical decision-making was not a focus of my teacher education program.

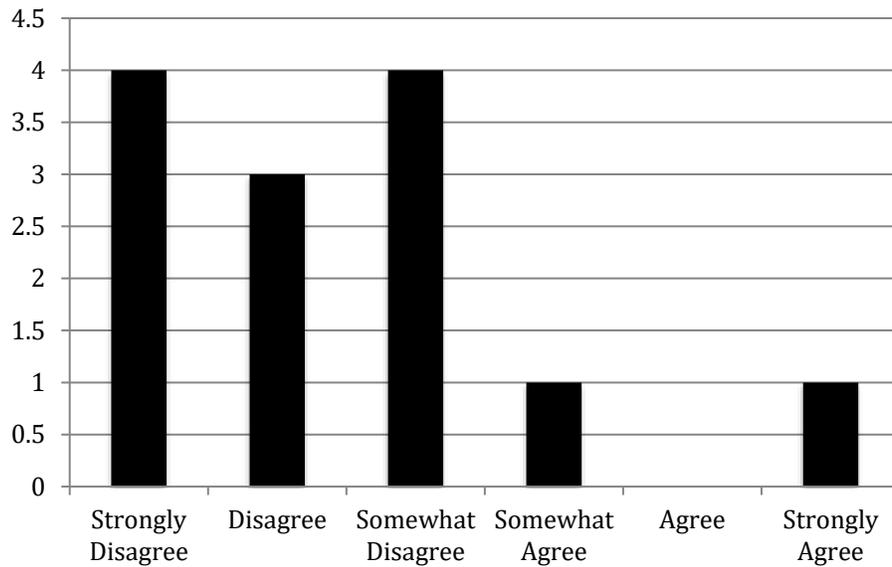


Figure D.10. Whether or not participants' teacher education program offered ethics courses. Question wording: My teacher education program offered an ethics course.

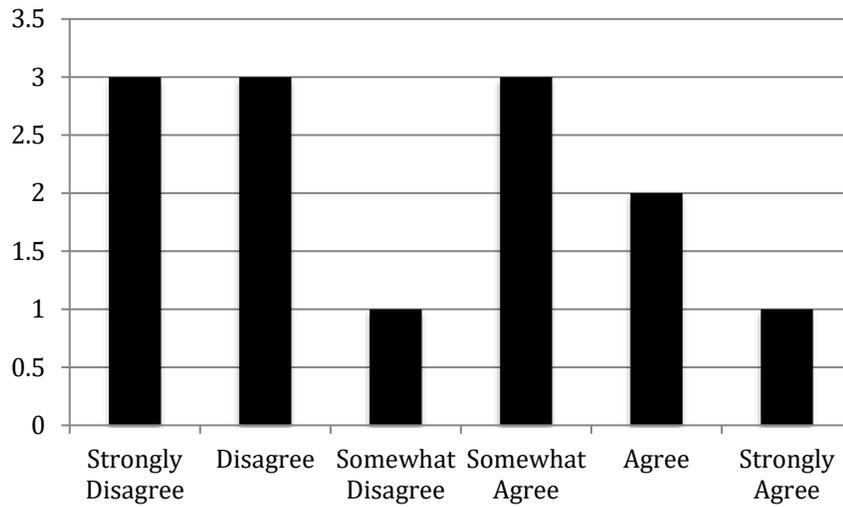


Figure D.11. Participants' views of whether or not their teacher education programs prepared them to help their students manage ethical challenges. Question wording: My teacher education program prepared me to assist my students in managing their own ethical challenges.

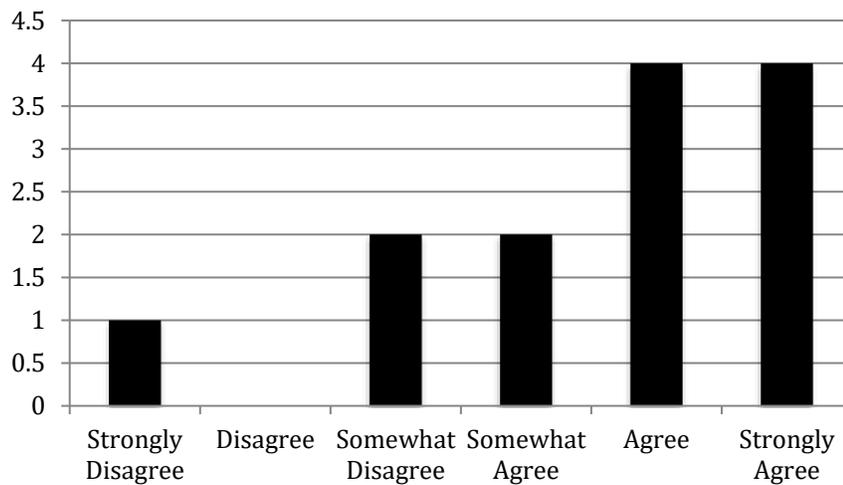


Figure D.12. Views of whether or not ethics education should be included in teacher education programs. Question wording: Teacher education programs should include ethics education in their curriculum.

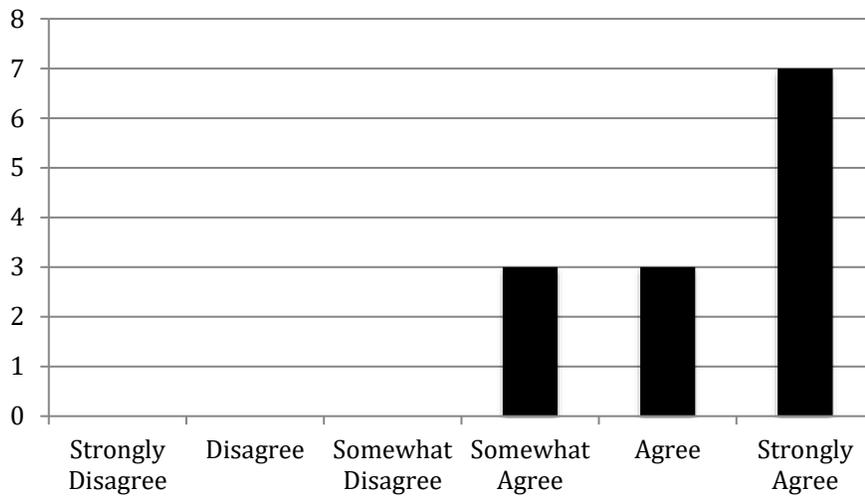


Figure D.13. Views of whether or not ethics education should be included in ongoing professional development. Question wording: Ethics education should be included in ongoing professional development.

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