Using values: a qualitative analysis of ethical dilemmas encountered by Australian Lutheran secondary school principals

Kenneth Charles Albinger

SCHOOL OF CURRICULUM TEACHING AND LEARNING
GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Recent studies of effective leadership for schools suggest relationships between the work of principals and beliefs, values and theoretical knowledge. However, it is not clear how these relationships work. In schools of the Lutheran Church of Australia the situation is complicated by expectations that principals will be operating with a Lutheran Christian world view. The precise nature of the role of world view in determining professional action has not been fully researched.

This study made use of analysis techniques grounded in symbolic interactionism to examine the construction of meaning and rationale for professional actions by Lutheran secondary school principals. It sought to understand the impact of value on meaning and decision in ethically challenging situations.

The central question of this research was: What values influence the reflection of Australian Lutheran secondary school principals as they address ethical dilemmas in their work? Drawing on the accounts given by three Australian Lutheran secondary principals to provide data for analysis, and making use of membership category analysis techniques, the study found that three statements could be made:

1. There is evidence in the accounts to suggest that the way principals perceive dilemmas is the result of a filtering process where some facts are not fully considered prior to action.
2. There is evidence in the accounts to suggest that the filtering process is more strongly influenced by sub-rational and trans-rational values than by rational values.

3. There is evidence in the accounts that each principal has a world view that is partially shaped by values implicit in the Christian tradition.

These findings are tentative because of the limited scope of the research. They have implications for the theoretical literature, suggesting that more attention needs to be given to the impact of trans-rational and sub-rational values as filters of perception in difficult decisions. The findings suggest that any study of the reflection of school principals in ethically challenging situations should take into account the power of non-rational values to be a lens that distorts what is considered in the reflective process. They also have implications for further research by those interested in Lutheran schools and those interested in the importance of values in shaping perception. Finally they have implications for those who prepare principals for Lutheran schools, suggesting the need for a clearer articulation of a philosophy for Lutheran schooling and for the development of the habit of critical reflection in Lutheran principals.
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the dissertation itself.

Signed:

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No research into how people construct their understanding of reality can be undertaken without willing informants. I acknowledge the participation of Lutheran secondary school principals in this research project. Their open sharing of some of their most difficult moments has allowed the project to reach a conclusion. I thank them for the trust they have extended to me.

I thank my supervisors, Professor Neil Dempster and Dr Roger Hunter. They have been encouraging, yet astutely critical, as I struggled with the data and the words to express my thoughts. Their commentary has given my work a shape and focus that it would never have achieved without their input. Their willingness to allow me to make mistakes and self correct while treating me as a colleague has sustained and supported me.

Thanks also to my colleagues of Australian Lutheran College for the encouragement they have given me over the past three years.

The financial help provided by the council of ALC is acknowledged with thanks.

I am thankful for the patience, support and silent suffering of my wife Audrey, our adult children and their partners during the many conversations where I could talk of nothing but ‘the dissertation’.

My thanks to Deb Turner for typing the interview transcripts and to the library staff at Griffith, Mt Gravatt, Australian Lutheran College and ACU, McAuley for their patient help and positive attitudes.

Finally, I acknowledge my lord and saviour Jesus Christ. His world view as recorded in the Gospel accounts is both radical and inspiring. The challenge to deny self, take up the cross and follow him leads so many to shape their lives and journey in his service. This research project is a small attempt to understand its impact in individual lives. To God be the glory.

I dedicate this dissertation to the two Als in my life. Al Albinger, who taught me how important story telling can be, and Alvin Jipp, who lived his values without a fuss.
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CHAPTER 1 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

“... so I didn’t know what would have been a good way forward...” from interview transcript with a principal

“The details of any life situation usually come to us clothed in the interpretations given to them by the people with whom we are involved and viewed by us through our own interpretive lenses.” James Childs

Introduction

The origins of this study are to be found in the dreams and fears that are familiar to anyone who has had the joyful and terrible experience of administering a school in contemporary society. Organisational administration provides individuals with power over others. The possible good that might occur in people's lives through personal acts is the source of the dreams. The harm such acts could cause turns those dreams into nightmares. For the school principals with any sense of concern for others, every decision is laden with moral significance, and some decisions present themselves as ethical challenges.

The study occurs in that field of human endeavour known as educational administration, the work of principals and those to whom principals are answerable. Educational administration is an activity constructed of many complex activities. For most people, including many educational administrators, it is a black box full of enigmas, puzzles and mysteries. The location of the study is a relatively small group of secondary schools owned and operated by the Lutheran Church of Australia. In Australia most government and Catholic school principals answer to a bureaucracy embedded in an Education Department combined with a local school council. In
Lutheran schools, principals are appointed by a governing body, called ‘the council’. They are answerable to that council, but usually enjoy almost total autonomy in the day to day operations of the school. While this autonomy is liberating, when things go wrong, the consequences can be career destroying. Most ethical challenges present numerous possibilities for things to go wrong.

The study finds its focus in an examination of the accounts given by school principals concerning difficult decisions involving what was, for them, an ethical dilemma. For the purpose of the study, ethical dilemmas are those situations in which the principal faces a moral challenge where what is right and what is good for those involved is neither clear nor easily discernible. Often what is right seems to be in conflict with what is good for one or more individuals. Such situations are critical events in the day to day work of administration. They force reflection by the principal before, during and after the decision is taken. The account of the process given by the principal opens a window into the subjective world of personal knowledge, attitude, perception and value. The subjective world thus revealed is of interest because it uncovers the elements embedded within individuals that constitute the way they understand the world and the meaning they make of their own actions and interactions with others. The reason why this is important and useful knowledge is to be developed as the study unfolds.

The Setting

The Lutheran schooling endeavour in Australia has a history of over 160 years, dating back to the first settlement of German Lutheran migrants at Klemzig in 1838. That history can be roughly divided into two waves, the first eighty years from 1838 to
around 1910 where the foundations were laid and the traditions set, and the second wave beginning in the late 1940's and continuing to the present.

Between the waves was a trough related to the two major wars that pitted Germany against the British Empire, America and their allies. During World War One, for example, the forty-nine Lutheran primary schools in South Australia were closed by government decree (Hauser, 2003). In the Second World War, a number of incidents involving the persecution of fourth and fifth generation Australian Lutherans of German descent and of Lutheran churches caused significant pain and anxiety. There were incidences of books and family correspondence in German being burned by soldiers, of members of congregations in South Australia and Queensland being interred, of church buildings being vandalised and of church members being ostracised. The stories of these events have been retold throughout the intervening years. Such acts by government authorities and members of the Australian community led to the development of distrust of Government authority and isolation from the wider community. However, there also developed among many Lutherans the desire for wider acceptance as Australians. In the middle of the twentieth century, few would have expected that acceptance to come about through the attraction of middle class Australians to Lutheran schools.

Over eighty percent of current Lutheran schools have been started within the last forty years, with roughly half that number opening in the last twenty years. During this period, the growth rate of enrolments has never fallen below 4% per year, and in some years has reached over 7%. This wave of growth has yet to crest. The number of Lutheran secondary schools in Australia expanded from six in 1972 to twenty-four in
the year of this research. Ten of the schools included preschool and primary classes, a configuration that developed in the 1980's and led to enrolments in excess of 1,000 in some of the schools. Overall enrolments increased from 2,221 to 10,376. The secondary school teaching force increased from just over 200 to 835 in full time equivalents\(^1\). This growth has had several effects. It has put a severe strain on the human resources of the Lutheran church, substantially altered the client base, and changed the way church members thought about their schools.

A substantial number of the additional teachers recruited to serve in Lutheran secondary schools have come from other Christian denominations, or have no Christian background. In the year 2000 only 39% of secondary teachers were members of the Lutheran church. Few of the Lutheran teachers and even fewer of the non-Lutherans have had formal education in Biblical or theological studies. Because a key expectation of the Lutheran church is that all activity in its schools will be informed by the Biblical account and the Lutheran confessions, the fact that a substantial proportion of educators in its schools know little of these matters is a cause for concern to the church. At the same time, some of the teachers serving in the schools both resent and resist efforts by the church to increase their knowledge and understanding. The matter is not yet resolved, and remains an issue of concern for all parties. Most often it is the principal who must address this issue within the school.

The student population has also undergone a significant demographic change. Since the beginning of the period, the number of Lutheran students in Lutheran secondary

\(^1\) All statistical data are derived from the annual reports of the executive director of Lutheran Education Australia (Director, L. E. A. 2004).
schools has grown only slightly. The majority of the growth has been from students from other denominational backgrounds or with no significant Christian identity. In the year 2000, the total student enrolment in Lutheran secondary schools was 10,376. Of this number, 2463 were from Lutheran families, and 7,913 were not. This means that 76% of the students were not from Lutheran backgrounds. They and their families often start Lutheran secondary education with little knowledge of the Bible, little experience of the type of worship practiced by the Lutheran church and no knowledge of the Lutheran church's history or doctrines. Since the schools expect that they will study Christian understanding, will attend chapel worship services and will act and interact within the teaching of the church, it is to be expected that misunderstandings, misinterpretations of behaviour, tension and concern will arise during their secondary years. It is the principal who most often will have to address the difficult and contentious issues that arise from these matters.

Lutheran schools in Australia have been developed in a dynamic of authority and responsibility that is virtually unique to Australian schools (Middleton, 2000). In this dynamic every school is a part of the work of the Lutheran Church of Australia, and hence a part of the corporate identity Lutheran Schools Australia. Yet each school is independently governed by a committee or council that has been delegated final authority in all financial and personnel matters. While councils are expected to work within the theological position of the church, and to be guided by the policies and practices recommended by the church, they are able to make, and at times have made, decisions to follow a different path.  

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2 Data derived from the statistical report of Lutheran Education Australia (Ibid).
3 Examples would be appointing non Lutheran principals or non Lutheran council members
In some ways the situation is similar to the governance structure of independent schools, but in others it is similar to the systems that administer Catholic and state schools. Lutheran secondary schools are owned and operated either by districts of the church or by associations of congregations. Districts also are associations of congregations called synods, so the pattern is consistent across the range of Lutheran secondary schools. The owner congregations appoint the governing bodies consisting of members of the Lutheran church, or a majority of church members. These governing bodies are given responsibility for the operation of the school, and are answerable to the church for their actions. They in turn appoint the principal, and the principal or the principal and council together appoint staff. It is no wonder then that the communities of Lutheran schools see the council as the decision making forum on issues of policy and major practice, and it is the council to whom the principals feel primarily accountable (Middleton, 2000). In addition to the various councils which operate with decision making authority, the church has also set up a national board for Lutheran Schools Australia served by a national director for Lutheran schools, and three regional school councils, each served by a director for schools. These structures and individuals provide guidance, support and advice to governing bodies of schools and to principals. However, they cannot regulate the schools, they can only recommend action. They have also provided the basis for inter-school cooperation, for problem solving and for financial expertise. As a result of this unique structure:

Lutheran education in Australia is in a healthy state. Lutheran schools are well respected and supported by their communities. There is currently considerable expansion. The financial management is sound. The schools are well maintained (Middleton, 2000, p.19).
However, it must also be observed that as a result of the unique structure, principals must carry out, "...a particular kind of leadership, a delicate balancing act," (Middleton, 2000, p.17). The balance is between the potential to alienate teachers, and the maintenance of council support for educational endeavour. The difficulty is avoiding the development of a 'them and us' mentality among staff or at council level. "Best leadership practice in Lutheran schools is fundamentally different from best leadership practice in almost all other schools," (Middleton, 2000, p.18). The principal is challenged to find the ways and means in decision making that will allow the school to function well and without major morale or power issues. This situation increases the potential for ethical dilemmas.

**Purpose and significance of the study**

There exists a concern in Lutheran church circles that those who become administrators, who hold a position of power, may not act properly in relation to others. Bonhoeffer set the tone for this concern in his classic work on an educational institution, *Life together*:

> Every cult of personality that emphasizes the distinguished qualities, virtues and talents of another person, even though these be of an altogether spiritual nature, is worldly and has no place in the Christian community; indeed, it poisons the Christian community. The desire we who often hear expressed today for ‘episcopal figures’, ‘priestly men’, ‘authoritative personalities’ springs frequently enough from a spiritually sick need for the admiration of men, for the establishment of visible human authority, because the genuine authority of service appears to be so unimpressive.

> The question of trust, which is so closely related to that of authority, is determined by the faithfulness with which one serves Jesus Christ, never by the extraordinary talents which the individual possesses (Bonhoeffer, 1992, pp. 84-85).

The concern is echoed in more recent writers such as Koch (1990), Samiec (1999), Nuske (2001), and Kleinschmidt (2002). Because the administrator is seen as one
who has the potential to affect the lives of many people, there is a fear that when an individual has final authority in any church-related community, she or he may abuse that authority. Corporations and governments produce many examples reported in the popular press of the abuse of position, authority and power. Churches can also provide examples of people wielding power in a manner that the church cannot accept because of inconsistency with its teachings. Those who would lead or influence or provide guidance in the ministries of the Lutheran church are expected to be humble servants prepared to sacrifice their pride and dignity for the sake of the needs of others. They will speak the “truth in love” (Ephesians 4) to provide clear enunciation of God’s message to his people. They will value others over themselves, and will see their work clearly as ministry in the service of the Lord. There is a clear expectation that those who are given authority and power will not abuse it. This expectation emanates from a particularly Lutheran understanding of the meaning of the church:

The church is not only people, but also something that happens in the concrete reality of their being together. This has significance for any activity where one individual is interacting with another. To be truly church, the interaction of people must be based on the essential relationship of forgiving love first established by God with his people. The event of church does take on organization as community. The community is the field in which individuals exercise their judgement and responsibility. The community must be about the purpose of the mission God gives to his people. Its validity is based upon how closely those within are emulating the Christ model (Gritsch and Jenson, 1976, pp. 126-131).

The Lutheran church is very concerned that those who are given authority and power will not abuse it and by such abuse discredit the message of the love of God through the way his people relate to one another. This point is stated very clearly in a paper
developed by the faculty of Luther Seminary in response to a request from the College of Presidents:\(^4\):

Authority can be abused and undermined in various ways, all of them detrimental to the life and mission of the church:

- (when) a person or group of persons wields political power in an exploitative way or in a way which makes people feel that they are being manipulated.
- (when) political power is used in a competitive way, so that power struggles develop between persons or groups of persons who want to extend and preserve their own ecclesial kingdoms (Faculty of Luther Seminary, 1993, p.10).

A final comment from the faculty’s paper sums up the concern of the church in this area:

When political authority is used inappropriately or coercively, or when people are treated as tools, fools, or even as adversaries by those with political authority, unhealthy tensions and conflicts arise. This is especially true in the LCA, where the cultural climate accentuates and aggravates negative reactions when authority and power is perceived to have been used improperly (Faculty of Luther Seminary, 1993, p.9).

In secondary schools operated by the Lutheran Church of Australia there is an expectation that principals will be operating with a world view informed by the ethical principles embedded in Lutheran theology. A key principle is that of Christian love (Bonhoeffer, 1966; Childs, 1992; Jersild, 1990; Lazareth, 2001). The essence of this principle is that human acts need to reflect the love of Christ to all people affected by them. To help principals to develop such understanding, the Lutheran church has adopted a policy that states all principals must be members of the Lutheran Church of Australia, and all must study Lutheran theology (Lutheran Church of Australia, 1993; Lutheran Church of Australia, 1997). While some principals have studied aspects of Lutheran theology, many do not have an in depth knowledge of the ethical

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\(^4\) The College of Presidents is made up of the president and vice-president of the Lutheran Church of Australia and the presidents of each of the six districts of the church. All are ordained clergy.
implications. The rapid expansion of the school system has made the policy impossible to fully implement. Both the expectations and the policy assume that studying Lutheran theology and being a worshipping member of the Lutheran church will lead to the development of an ethical perspective informed by Biblical knowledge and applied Lutheran theology. It is further assumed that having such a perspective will influence the professional actions of Lutheran educators in an appropriate way. To date there have been no research studies undertaken to test these assumptions. These expectations add a dimension to the decision making of Lutheran secondary school principals that is not found in other settings. They clearly enunciate a set of values and point of view that principals are expected to hold. It might also be said that they impose a set of values that might not otherwise need to be considered in the making of decisions. This provides an additional potential for value conflict when decisions are considered.

The preceding section has sketched a brief history of Lutheran schooling in Australia, and highlighted the changes that have occurred in the past forty years, a time of rapid expansion and social change. It has then introduced the issue of the understanding of authority and responsibility embedded in the governance structures of the schools and in the expectations held for administrators of those schools. The expectations have been shown to emanate from the specific Lutheran theological perspective. From this brief presentation it is possible to see that the assumptions held by the Lutheran church regarding the best way to prepare principals for their work have yet to be examined in research studies.
Statement of the problem

In the year of this study, 2000, there were twenty-four principals of Lutheran secondary or P to 12 schools. Of this number, two were female. The average age was 51.9 years. Fifteen are between 51 and 65 years old. While all were members of the Lutheran Church of Australia, six had not had a lifelong affiliation with Lutheranism. Two of that number had been members of the Lutheran church for a decade or less before their appointment as principal. All but three had some teaching or administrative experience in other than Australian Lutheran schools. There were six who had not studied sufficient theology to meet the criteria established by the Lutheran church. Only nine had studied educational administration at a post graduate level and a further four were engaged in such study. On the other hand, all but three had more than ten years experience in Lutheran schools prior to taking up their first appointment as a principal. From this we can see that there is a diverse range of theoretical training in education and theology, and a wide range of practical experience in the workings of Lutheran schools. Do the principals have sufficient knowledge, understanding and experience to develop a worldview that would enable them to make decisions on the basis that the Lutheran church expects that they should?

As has been shown, principals are increasingly faced with decisions to take actions that raise ethical dilemmas. What values, what beliefs inform their will as they make decisions and implement those decisions into the community of the school? Such dilemmas require choices among a number of possible options, some of which may be

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5 Data derived from statistics collected by the Executive Director for Lutheran Education Australia in conjunction with the Milennial Principals Project (A. Jericho, B. Kahl, & N. Highett, 2000, Adelaide, p. 4).
perceived as improper or incorrect when judged from the standpoint of a particular set of beliefs and values. The potential for conflict within and beyond the school is exacerbated by the strong probability that the beliefs and values driving the view of members of the school community, students, parents, teachers and other employees, may not be the same as those driving the church. It becomes critical that principals have a clear grasp of their own beliefs and values, and the ability to reflect meaningfully on the implications of any possible decision in relation to the beliefs and values of others. Principals need a basis for ethical professional practice that is grounded in beliefs and values which the majority of educational stakeholders perceive as just and humane, and which will enable them to remain aligned with the expectations and the teachings of the Lutheran Church of Australia.

**The research question**

As was stated in the introduction to this chapter, the act of decision making is the fundamental task of the educational administrator. Decision-making is an act of individual will, and then the imposition of that will upon the situation. Conflicts arise when the individual will falls outside the will of the group, the organisation, the culture, the school community or the church. The individual administrator can in a mode of political correctness, take the group, the organisational or the cultural values as given, or can impose new or individual values. This becomes a will to power, or an exercise of leadership (Weber et al., 1947). Thus the study will involve the issues of power in human interaction.

Hodgkinson (1999) points out that the problems associated with power in administration are often glossed over and virtually ignored. They are accounted for
by two grand or meta-assumptions. The first of these is the assumption that all people in positions of educational administration are honourable. The second is that the authority of the office, of itself legitimises power. These can both be easily rejected. In terms of the first, it would be fair to say that in addition to honourable people, fools and knaves can and do occupy positions in educational administration (Kets De Vries, 1993). They are there out of self-interest in the form of egoism, vanity or careerism and these factors are often antagonistic to the interest of others and of the organisation. In terms of the second assumption, it can be true only if the individual holding the administrative position is fully guided by a perception of common good to which all participants are in agreement (Begley and Johansson, 2003). In post-modern, multicultural Australian society, discovering commonality in perceptions of what is the common good is a challenge few if any administrators are able to achieve. Thus the problems still remain. How can the school administrator behave in an honourable manner, and how can administrative action avoid the abuse of power?

In any project to develop deeper and clearer understanding of educational administration, and in any attempt to articulate and encourage right practice within that field of human endeavour, there is a prior need to explore the value basis that informs the exercise of individual will. This will be ascertained only through an examination of how individual principals perceive the world, and what they think and feel about the other human beings that inhabit it. These perceptions and understandings are embodied in the values that find expression in their decisions. Therefore, this study is a foundational one in terms of Lutheran schooling in that it seeks to examine the world view of secondary principals that is embedded in their decisions regarding challenging ethical dilemmas. This should be understood as a
first step in the development of useful educational programs to assist in the
development of future principals.

Therefore, the general question that the study seeks to answer is:

*What values influence the reflection of Australian Lutheran secondary school principals as they address ethical dilemmas in their work?*

This general question is broken into several smaller and more specific questions that will be asked of the data. These are:

*What kind of situations do principals choose as ethical dilemmas?*

*How do principals relate and interpret these situations?*

*What beliefs and knowledge are revealed in their accounts?*

*Is it possible to identify the source(s) of the beliefs and professional knowledge from the accounts?*

*Are there any implications for the education of principals in results of the study?*

In order to find a path to address these questions, three principals were asked to describe and explain the manner in which they addressed ethically challenging decisions that arose during the 2000 school year. Each was encouraged to talk about their thoughts and conversations as they progressed toward a decision. Their narratives of these trying events in their professional lives provide the data for the study.

**Terminology**

In this study, there is reference to terminology from numerous fields of study including theology, ethics, administrative theory and education. As Campbell (1992,
p. 3) notes, there is danger of writing with, “innumerable varying and often competing
definitions.” Therefore this section seeks to make clear the applied meaning of a
number of terms considered in the research problem and used throughout the study.

The following definitions apply throughout the dissertation.

*Ethics:* a system of moral principles whereby human actions may be judged to be
right or wrong or good or bad.

*Ethical dilemma:* a problem requiring a decision regarding what action would be right
or wrong or good or bad.

*Ethos:* the fundamental spiritual characteristics of a culture.

*The gospel:* the term used by many Christians to describe the ‘good news’ of God’s
love and forgiveness contained primarily in the first four books of the New Testament
of the Bible.

*Grace:* the term used by many Christians to describe the unconditional love and
acceptance accorded to believing humanity by God.

*Human agency:* a mode of action or speech whereby humanity exerts power or
produces effect.

*The law:* term used by many Christians to describe the ten commandments given by
God to Moses and recorded in the Old Testament.

*Lutheran doctrine:* teachings promulgated by the Lutheran church based primarily on
the biblical narrative, but secondarily on the confessions contained in the Book of
Concord (Tappert, 1959).

*Moral:* pertaining to the distinction between right and wrong, particularly with
concern for right conduct.
**Original sin**: a belief held by many Christians that human sinfulness is inherited from their progenitors.

**Scriptures**: the 66 books of the Bible recognised by Lutheran and other Protestant scholars as most likely to be inspired by the Holy Spirit.

**Two kingdoms**: a Lutheran doctrine that describes the current age as being divided into two realms, one the realm of God’s love, the other the realm of sin.

**Values**: those things of life toward which a person has a positive regard.

**World view**: individual’s own way of looking at the world, derived from tradition, culture, personal experience and learning. It serves as a map by which the individual negotiates life.

**Limitations of the study**

Because the study is a qualitative investigation into the values some Lutheran secondary principals draw on to make meaning as they address ethical dilemmas, there is no expectation that the findings will be generalisable to any given population. Hopefully the findings will enhance what is known about those elements within the world view of the sample population that inform the manner in which they work through the dilemmas that they describe. It is possible that the Lutheran church educational community may benefit from the findings and be able to further address and possibly modify the assumptions that the church holds regarding the value of theological study for school administrators. Any questions that the study raises will provide opportunity for Lutheran Education Australia to consider the possibility of further research studies to refine understandings of how principals can be prepared for the ethical challenges they will encounter in their professional lives.
It is not the intention of the study to judge, criticise, condone or condemn the principals who agreed to participate in the study. Rather it seeks to focus on the meanings that they make as they grapple with ethical dilemmas in an effort to find the sources for the values embedded in their meaning making. The participants’ willingness to be involved makes them valuable contributors to the task of developing better understanding of the difficult and challenging work of school administration.

Outline of the study

Chapter one has provided a presentation of the setting, nature and purpose of the research study. It has set out a brief description of Lutheran schooling in Australia, and discussed the values embedded in the theology and beliefs held by the members of the Lutheran Church of Australia. It then presented the rationale for the study and delineated the research questions. Finally it examined terminology to be used and the limitations to be found in the work. It concluded with an overview of the entire study.

Chapter two surveys the body of literature that speaks to the issues and manner in which researchers and thinkers have tried to unpack and understand the factors involved in the field. It takes as its focus the questions that have been uncovered as various scholars sought to address the issues involved in the work of administrators. The survey shows that there is a constant tension between the knowledge that exists in the external, objective domain of observable data, and the internal constructions that individual minds build and infuse with such factors as belief, values and will. This leads to curiosity about the reference points that individuals use in considering decisions. Do external or internal factors predominate? Several issues require consideration since they are influential in terms of individual decision making. How
and why are the good, the right and the proper determined? The chapter points to the gap in the research that this study seeks to address.

Chapter three develops a rationale for the methodology used to conduct the study. Consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of various methods for gathering data that is internal to the individual, and rendering it in a form open to analysis provides the first section. This is followed by a description of the steps that were taken to provide the data in a useable form, and the techniques selected for analysis.

In chapters four, five and six the data developed from the reflective accounts provided by the subjects of the study are presented, analysed and discussed. The presentation of data is informed by the analytical framework developed in chapter three. Consideration is given to the values that informed the narratives, and the impact of those values. The discussion is informed by the manner in which the data link to the theoretical literature.

In chapter seven, the conclusions of the study are presented. First the outcomes are presented and discussed. This is followed by a discussion of possible implications of the study for the theoretical literature. The questions that the study raises for future research are then canvassed. Finally, the implications that the study holds regarding the development of Lutheran principals is briefly outlined.
Summary

The purpose of chapter one has been to introduce the issues that led to this study and the setting within which it has been conducted. The study finds its focus in an examination of the accounts given by Australian Lutheran secondary school principals concerning difficult decisions involving what was, for them, an ethical dilemma. This brings to the fore those phenomena embedded within individuals that constitute the way they understand the world and the meaning they make of their own actions and interactions with others.

School principals face an array of issues and dilemmas that they must confront and address on a daily basis. More and more of the decisions that have to be made become potential battlefields of conflicting concepts, values and cultures. The problem is one of finding a sound basis for making decisions. Thus many key decisions present ethical dilemmas for principals trying to discern what is right and good and proper.

For principals of Lutheran secondary schools there are expectations that decisions will be made in the light of values embedded in the theology and beliefs held by the members of the Lutheran Church of Australia. However, Lutheran secondary schools have undergone significant change in the past thirty years, leading to a population of students and teachers who are not members of the church and often do not know the theology and beliefs of the church. This increases the possibility of disagreements about what the substance of Lutheran schooling should be and how it should be conducted. Expectations held for principals by the leadership of the Lutheran church
impose factors that might not otherwise need to be considered in the making of decisions. This provides an additional potential for value conflict.

The people who currently serve as Lutheran secondary school principals have a diverse range of theoretical training in education and theology and a wide range of practical experience in the workings of Lutheran schools. Church teachings and policy documents reflect a desire for principals to hold a world view that would enable them to make decisions on the basis that the Lutheran church leadership expects that they should. Therefore the study seeks to map what the subjective world view of principals is like as they confront the issues and conflicts of the day. We now turn to an examination of the related theory and research that inform the focus of the research question.
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“...I still wear the guilt for what I did ‘cause I actually still question whether it was the right decision to make.” From interview transcript with a principal

“...ethical dilemmas are often so intransigent as to leave us with no sense of moral certitude.” James Childs

Introduction

Having delineated the nature and setting of the research problem in the first chapter, I now address the body of literature that speaks to the issues inherent in the problem. While there is not an extensive number of theoretical works or empirical studies dealing directly with the research problem, there is a vast array of related literature from which to choose. I have selected from this array those elements pertinent to the establishment of an understanding of the factors that might influence Lutheran secondary school principals when confronted with perceived ethical dilemmas. The review begins with a discussion of the social, political and economic context of secondary education in Australia. It then moves to a discussion of Christian beliefs from a Lutheran perspective, with a specific focus on those elements that might contribute to the formation of the individual. This is followed by a discussion of the various theories regarding the place of values in human action, particularly in the field of educational administration. Finally, I review empirical studies with a significant connection to the research problem.
Secondary education in the Australian context

The last quarter of the twentieth century has seen rapid change become embedded in the experience of most people. The development of virtually instant telecommunications, particularly as tied to the use of computer technology spurred this change (Toffler and Toffler, 1995). In his book, *Hyperculture* (1998), Stephen Bertman asserts that we live in a synchronous society, a nationally and globally integrated culture in which the prime and unchallenged directive is to keep up with change. He believes this society has abandoned traditional values. He asserts that people have become disoriented and unlikely to reflect on the ethical and moral implications of their actions. They simply live for the moment in what he calls the "power of now". He details the effects of this power in three areas of human experience. The first is the transformation of individuals from socially interactive, community oriented people to video/computer focussed, information/gratification seekers, cut off from genuine sources of friendship and love. The second is the transformation of the family from a grouping of people centred on love, support and the mutual inter-dependence that draws people together, to one controlled by the centrifugal forces of me-ism, individual rights and instant personal satisfaction that drive people apart. The third is the transformation of the social fabric from one made up of national entities within which people sought to find a balance of wealth and power, to one with a global focus, driven by rampant consumerism. This consumerism is encouraged by multinational corporations seeking to immediately improve profit margins, and is abetted by the response of governments seeking quick fixes to the problems of the state. A widening gap between wealth and poverty is quite evident. This society exists with the twin delusions that technology is able to
bring an instant fix to any problem, and the resources available to feed human appetites are limitless (Bertman, 1998).

This picture is familiar to those people who have been working in Australian secondary schools over the past quarter century. The results of family breakdown, a strong emphasis on self-interest, the expectation of the quick-fix available through technology and the focus on consumerism surface daily in classrooms. Students demand to know why they need to study anything that does not bring them a tangible result, or access to a well-paid job. More and more parents look to teachers for help in the provision of order and stability in the lives of their children, as they struggle to cope with the problems of contemporary family life. From some politicians and business leaders there is a call for schools to instil values in students, since the traditional locations for value education, the home and church, seem no longer able to provide it. Governments have poured millions of dollars into education, with the expectation that students equipped with technical knowledge will enter the workforce and fix the economic problems of our society. The curriculum is constantly under pressure to change, and educators are expected to be at the forefront of this change. Then, when human nature is not quickly changed, when the educational endeavour does not give the quick fix, blame is assigned to schools, particularly principals and teachers, for failure to deliver.

Governments have had to address a number of problems embedded in the issue of rapid change. These ‘problems of the state’ are threefold; the problem of capital accumulation and economic efficiency; the problem of social order, social authority and stability and the problem of managing control, costs and planning (Ball, 1994). A
significant number of developed and developing countries, including Australia, have been wooed by the ideology of the ‘New Right’ which seems to provide most of the answers to the problems of the state (Marginson, 1993; Ball, 1994). The heart of New Right thinking is the perception of public policy as an expression of economics. This concept is captured in the phrase economic rationalism, where “the market economy is substituted for democratic politics and public planning as the system of production and coordination and the origin of social ethics” (Marginson, 1993, p.56). In other words, the change is one of ideology, where economy rather than humanity determines how governments deal with their citizens.

The ideology is based in a conceptualisation of human existence that sees individuals as private rather than social beings. Self-love and selfish interest are perceived as the dominant value orientation. Self-love may stretch to family and a few close friends, but generally no one is able to care for other beings altruistically (Hayek, 1960, pp. 78-79). The value or worth of something or someone can only be judged in terms of what other individuals are prepared to pay in a competitive market. Human relationships are reduced to market transactions, and government is justified only if it serves the private aims of individuals in an orderly way (Hayek, 1976). This ideological orientation is at best an over simplification of the complexities of human identity, and at worst a reduction of humans into economic units of production and consumption. It ignores the existence of values other than self-interest, and forgets or denigrates the realms of human thought devoted to aesthetics, religion, and philosophy. It ignores the motivating forces, other than greed, that have shaped human history.
Those who embrace New Right ideology seek to have governments produce laws that free individuals to make choices without interference. To this end, the idea that politicians are about doing public good is reduced to the concept of a political market. Political decisions are reduced to the same considerations as private economic decision making. Cost is to be minimised in government. Government activity is reduced to doing business, an economic endeavour in the market. With this logic, any government activity that is collective and non-market in nature will inevitably appear to be wasteful and ineffective. It will then be corporatised and finally privatised and sold to the highest bidder.

The change is significant. Education is de-constructed as a social activity through which humanity's knowledge and wisdom is developed for future generations. It is then reconstructed as an industry that provides future workers with the skills and attitudes needed to make a useful contribution to the general economic needs of the nation. As an industry, education must adopt the industrial paradigms of efficient and effective production of its service, and establish measures of quality control. Both privatisation and competition are seen as important measures to ensure the industrial paradigms are met.

Sometimes the reconstruction of education has been subtle and gradual. Sometimes the reconstruction is embedded in new policy initiatives and announced as fact. In Australia, the change process resulted from three reports to the government that were introduced over a period of eighteen months, and focussed attention on competencies needed for the workplace. In 1991 The Finn Report, *Young People’s Participation in Post-Compulsory Education and Training* recommended the establishment of a
standards framework which would create better pathways between education, training and work. This report was quickly followed in 1992 by reports from two other committees; those of the Mayer Committee *Putting General Education to Work: The Key Competencies Report*, and of the Employment and Skills Formation Council chaired by Laurie Carmichael, titled the *Australian Vocational Certificate Training System*. It called for senior secondary schools to adopt a more vocationally oriented approach.

The changes in government policy that emanated from these reports are many and varied, and have had a profound effect on the way that the educational endeavour is constructed and carried out in Australia. The new focus adopted by government was introduced with the clear purpose of addressing the problems of the government (capital accumulation and economic efficiency; social order, social authority and stability; managing control, costs and planning) rather than the problems of education. Educators were expected to reduce costs, increase alternate income and ensure students achieved 'useable' workplace skills. They were to adopt the methods of business best practice, and ensure quality control of their service. Schools were to be efficient training centres for the workers of the next generation. The Australian education industry was born in less than two years. The educational agenda narrowed, and the teaching workforce was marginalised in the process. The situation is well summarised by Leoni Degenhardt, principal of a Catholic secondary school in New South Wales:

> Within the ranks of the teaching force today there are many cynics: people who have lost hope and lost heart in the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties, constant changes of direction in the wake of political changes, and the simultaneous increase of expectations and
decrease of respect for the work of teachers by society at large
(Degenhardt, 2001, p. 7)

One immediate effect of reconstructing education as an industry is the separation of administrative means from the social ends of education (Smyth, 1997). This leads to the creation of the "self-managing school", a place where business is carried out in an effective and efficient way, and concerns are directed at financial rather than educational issues. Each school becomes a business unit that sells a service to parents. The service is the transformation of the student into an employable individual, equipped with the skills and knowledge to enter the jobs market and compete successfully. Business and government (and more recently parents) are investors in this industry. They are willing to invest because they will benefit from the human resource developed by the industry. At this moment in Australia's progress into the educational business market, business has invested primarily at the tertiary level, but there have also been examples of investment in high schools, with the sponsoring of student's education in the skills of particular industries. Stories of the racing industry providing horses for students to train and race, and the wine industry providing the facilities for students to make and sell wines are small examples of the trend. Government also plays a role as regulator of the industry to ensure that the goods are developed and deployed in the fairest way possible. Teachers are the labour force providing the training that produces knowledge and skills that are marketable. Parents are the customers who pay for the service either partly or in full. Principals are the managers held responsible for the provision of the service in the most efficient and effective way possible.
The reduction of education to an industry reduces the ability, and perhaps the will, of those involved to critically address questions of hegemony, unequal wealth distribution, poverty, gender equity and any number of compelling dilemmas within the social constructs of family, community, organisation, nation and civilisation. As the economic imperative grows in importance, moral and ethical purposes in education are reduced or eliminated. Human existence is reduced to an economic struggle where rugged individualism, self-interest and the power of personal wealth are assumed as the only worthwhile individual pursuits. Education is limited to addressing people's need to be trained to achieve the best possible economic result for themselves (Marginson, 1993). Governments are expected to provide the training that makes everyone a contributor to economic well being (Smyth, 1997). The fulfilment of self-interest dominates.

For teachers and principals whose background and ethical formation have been the result of broad liberal education and the values of Christianity or humanism, the change presents significant and recurring ethical dilemmas. They cannot accept the philosophy or its implications, but their careers may well depend on their ability to adopt, or at least to accommodate it, in their professional lives. The pace of societal change, the economic rationalism dominating the policy making of government, the demands of parents and students as they develop their voices as consumers and the dissatisfaction business leaders express concerning the way schools prepare students for the workforce combine to present school principals with an array of issues and dilemmas that they must confront and address on a daily basis.
Many principals, particularly those who have had little if any opportunity to formally study educational administration, feel ill equipped to be able to discern the best way to proceed. They struggle within themselves to know what is the right thing to do or the best choice to make. They are expected to provide stability and direction in a rapidly changing world. They are expected to be leaders of change, leaders in curriculum, administrative leaders, moral leaders, collaborative leaders, strong leaders, servant leaders, persuasive leaders, courageous leaders and humane leaders. It is expected that they will achieve such leadership without giving offence to the full range of stakeholders, all of whom have particular needs and wants in regard to schooling. Students, parents, governments, teachers, ancillary staff and the business community all drive to have their agendas given first priority. Any failure to meet sectional interests gives rise to claims of disinterest, bias or abuse of power. A powerful educational administrative metaphor developed by Liethwood, Begley and Cousins (1994) is that of trying to negotiate a swamp where direction is unclear, landmarks non-existent and all kinds of nasty and dangerous things lurk in the surrounds, waiting a chance to pounce. In this situation principals' professional decisions assume a high level of ethical complexity. Discovering the right path to satisfy all stakeholders may not be possible. More and more of the decisions that have to be made become potential battlefields of conflicting concepts, values and cultures.

This section has focussed attention on the recent and rapid changes to the way education, particularly secondary education, is viewed by governments, the business community, parents, and students in Australia. The primary force impacting on people has been the sense of urgency identified by Bertman (1998) as the power of
now. At the centre of that impress is the issue of a growing desire for satisfaction of personal needs and interests, with a corresponding decline in mutuality and concern for the family, group or organisation. Embedded in the change is the development of a focus on consumerism, driven by numerous forces. Central to the change has been the development of the thinking of the new right in economics and politics. In that ideology, people are construed as individual rather than social beings, and are seen to be driven by self-interest and consequently incapable of altruism. Human value can only be calculated in terms of what people contribute to the economy as producers and consumers. Thus education is reconstructed as a means by which government trains people to produce so that they have the ability to consume that which is produced. These changes have led to an increase in ethical and moral challenges for those educators who desire a broader agenda for schooling.

Theoretical perspectives

In this section I examine first the theology of Lutheranism which informs the work of those who serve the institutions of the Lutheran Church of Australia. I then turn to a selection of the theories that address the place of values in human action, particularly as they are applied in writing about educational administration and leadership.

A Lutheran perspective

For the purpose of this study, it is necessary to find a frame of reference that might inform the principals of Lutheran schools as they address their ethical dilemmas. William Rietschel made a key observation when he stated, “To date it appears that no thorough systematic theoretical study of Lutheran education has been published, either from a theological or a philosophical point of view” (2000, p.45). A similar
point was made by Richard Hauser in the conclusion of his investigation of the development of Lutheran schools in Queensland between 1970 and 1990 when he speaks of the lack of a clear philosophical vision for Lutheran schools (Hauser, 1991, p.103). These comments point to a general perception of a need for the development of what Malcolm Bartsch called “a comprehensive paradigm for Lutheran schools” (2001, p.1). Nevertheless, those who have been appointed principals of the schools developed by the Lutheran church in Australia have been formed to some degree by the community of Lutheranism in Australia, and have developed a world view that conforms to the teachings of that church. Therefore I turn to the body of literature that examines those teachings and informs that community.

The fact that no philosophy of education has emerged to date does not mean that there is not a solid framework in place that provides a base from which Lutheran educators might develop a world view. Miller stated, “…a Lutheran philosophy of education is the application of Lutheran doctrine and of a philosophy compatible with that doctrine to the problems of education.” (Miller, 1956, p.45). Jahsmann elaborated, “…truly Lutheran thinking flows from, or is in harmony with, biblical theology” (Jahsmann, 1960, p.ix). It is possible to operate with a sound understanding of biblical and Lutheran confessional theology, and to apply such knowledge to the operation of Lutheran schools. In fact Peterson observes that, “Christian ideas about human nature should point in key directions for a Christian doing research or theory construction…” (Peterson, 2001, p.102). This is the rationale for the current requirements for theological study in the staffing policy of the Lutheran Church of Australia.6

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6 The current requirement is that all principals will have either a Graduate Diploma of Theology in Education or a Masters Degree from Luther Seminary or their equivalent.
Therefore, it is necessary to turn to the understandings of biblical theology and Lutheran confessional theology to derive some understanding of Lutheran views on education and educational administration. The foundation document of Christian faith is the Bible. It has an authority for the faith and life of Christians that no other document can claim. This is true also with regard to authority for the moral life (Jersild, 1990). However, the biblical writings reflect values and moral standards of ancient Israel and the early Christian communities. The problem for the adult Christian in contemporary society is how to interpret and relate the biblical details to the present. According to Jersild there are at least five approaches to the use of the Bible as a moral resource:

- the Bible provides a moral code or set of commandments;
- the Bible provides moral direction through the example of people of faith;
- the Bible’s moral impact flows from God’s involvement in history as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier;
- the Bible reveals God’s plan of salvation, while our moral response depends on our particular church heritage;
- the Bible does not give us a unified coherent basis for moral life (Jersild, 1990, pp.22-25).

The problem for the contemporary Christian is that the various traditions in the stream of Christianity make use of one or more of these views, but there is no single clear guide to be found. Lutherans have followed the Reformation tradition of interpreting and organising the biblical accounts with the gospel of Jesus Christ as the central point:

This christological principle, revealing God’s love as the moving power in the world, serves us as well in understanding the moral authority of Scripture. (It) places us particularly in the fourth approach (Jersild, 1990, p.27).
The Lutheran heritage that guides ethical responses for principals in Lutheran schools, therefore, is a confessional theology derived from a body of works that are grounded in the Bible. It provides a vision for Christian living that is distinctive from the mainstream thinking of European and North American Protestantism, and of Roman Catholicism. This theology has been derived over time through study of the Bible, initially by the key theologians of the 1500’s collected in the Book of Concord (Tappert, 1959), and then by the many thousands of theologians working since the Reformation period. It is to elements of that theology that I now turn for an understanding of how Lutheran Christians might use the Bible and their reason or intellect to address moral issues.

Lutheran theologians have developed a series of concept pairings that serve to show the dynamic tension of the Christian life suspended between the creation event and the end time event (Gritsch and Jenson, 1976; Braaten, 1983; Janetzki, 1985; Lazareth, 2001; Childs, 1992; Benne, 1995; Bartsch, 2001). These pairings are God’s kingdom and Satan’s kingdom (the two kingdoms), Caesar and Christ, or in contemporary terminology, state and church (God’s twofold rule), sin and grace, law and gospel. Each element of each pair exerts a force or has an impact on the Christian seeking to live a life in faith. A full discussion of the concepts is found in the Doctrinal statements and theological opinions of the Commission on Theology and Interchurch Relations of the Lutheran Church of Australia (The two kingdoms and social ethics, 1996). For the purpose of this discussion I use a diagram developed by Lazareth (2001). This diagram is shown as Figure 1. In reading the diagram it is helpful to start at the centre, where the individuals who are Christian are located. It is also important to read spiritual rule and temporal rule as realm rather than set of
regulations. The concepts around the outside are forces impacting upon people. The primary orientation of the figure is that of the two kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Simply stated, Lutherans read the Bible with the understanding that God created a perfect universe, and Satan corrupted that universe by destroying its community or harmony of relationships.

*Figure 1. A Lutheran Theological perspective*

through the introduction of sin into the human experience. God then had to restore the harmony, which is the reason for the incarnation (God becoming fully human) and the resurrection. God’s relationship with humanity is restored through his grace. For Christians living in this world, the problem that they address is that of being caught between the possibility of a perfect relationship with God and still being confined by the effects of sin. This tension is captured in the words of the Apostle Paul who
wrote, “For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.” (Romans 6:1) In terms of ethical considerations, this means that humans cannot choose to do what is right. They are condemned by the demand for perfection that they cannot meet. The law (God’s commands) judges them. However, God’s grace (proclaimed in the gospel) justifies them before God. They are forgiven. This function of law and gospel belong to God’s spiritual rule, one of the two provisions God makes for these times between the resurrection and the Second Coming. The other provision is temporal rule, or social order. In these times the law and gospel perform another function. The law, exercised through social orders such as family, government, organisation, school or community preserves the world and humanity from self destruction and chaos. On the other hand, the gospel calls and empowers the individual Christian to a life of love following the example of Christ’s selfless love. Thus all individuals are living out their lives in dynamic tension between these forces. Bouncing around in the various force fields, individuals seek to use their intellect and talents to a purpose, that of being the body of Christ.

This theological perspective has been characterised as a paradoxical vision (Benne, 1995). Paradoxical because it contains concepts that apparently contradict each other but are ultimately true. These apparently contradictory elements are a frame of reference for Lutheran educators seeking to identify the nature and purpose of schooling. So, the school is seen as a place where it is possible to make students aware of God’s provisions, the pulls of the two kingdoms and the balance of law and gospel. It enables them to recognise that at times teachers and administrators will be operating as judges of behaviour and learning, at other times as helpers to student’s seeking to live a sanctified life; at times as proclaimers of God’s justification, and at
other times as keepers of good order. They would realise that there can be no separation of the kingdoms, no separation of the twofold provision and no separation of law and gospel. They would also recognise their own flawed nature and the fact that they are struggling with all these forces as much as their students.

This theological perspective informs a summary of beliefs currently under consideration for adoption by Lutheran Education Australia. The summary is included as one example of how the beliefs are translated into the school setting. These beliefs are directly linked to the key values that Lutheran principals are expected to see as essentials in human interaction:

We believe:
the Bible is the supreme authority for Christian faith and life;
the Holy Spirit works through the teaching of God’s word in our schools to lead people to know and trust in God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier;
all people are sinful and saved by grace through faith in Christ;
because Christians live in grace, all they do is for God’s glory not theirs;
each person is a unique creation of God and a person loved by God;
all useful knowledge and learning is God’s gift to people for their wellbeing;
service to others through actions and relationships is a reflection of and response to God’s love for all.

And because of this we value as core:
the Bible as the authority informing what we do and teach;
the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of each person;
forgiveness, being forgiven and reconciliation;
that God, by grace shown through Jesus loves, accepts and values each person;
the uniqueness and worth of each person;
God’s gifts of knowledge and learning;
A spirit of service reflecting God’s action in our lives
(Lutheran Education Queensland, 2003).

The document goes on to suggest that Lutheran educators should see everything they are and do in relation to God, and see each member of the school community as
someone in relation to God. This is further teased out in terms of behaviour that those working in Lutheran schools need to exhibit:

- develop the whole person;
- strive for the best;
- care for each person;
- help each student grow in the assurance of their god-given worth and purpose;
- accept the need of discipline for the well-being of the individual living in community;
- reflect the characteristics of God, especially love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, patience and service;
- create learning contexts incorporating values that reflect God’s relationship with his world (Lutheran Education Queensland, 2003).

Such statements may be taken as a useful articulation of the corporate beliefs and values that underpin Lutheran schooling. As such they provide a possible point of reference for principals of Lutheran schools as they attempt to address issues that they perceive as ethical dilemmas.

In the preceding discussion, I have presented a very limited sketch of a Christian worldview from the perspective of Lutheran theology. Such a view might or might not inform Lutheran secondary school principals as they reflect on their actions. The sketch has drawn on the work of Michael Peterson in terms of a Christian philosophy of education. It has made use of William Lazareth’s presentation of Luther’s theological ethic and of Robert Benne’s paradoxical vision to draw together the various elements of Lutheran theology. Finally, it has presented the key teachings and their implication for Lutheran schooling in the words of a document informing Lutheran Education Australia. I now turn to a discussion of the literature that addresses theory and practice for school administration in contemporary society.
A leadership perspective

An assumption embedded in most of the literature on leadership in education is that leadership is the domain of the principals and system administrators. In the independent school sector, leadership usually is seen to rest with the principal and governing body. This assumption is so prevalent that it must be acknowledged, although a few studies have opened it to question (Telford, 1996; Rost, 1991).

Hodgkinson considered leadership a vague term that encompassed both administration and management, and was open to rhetorical manipulation and capable of becoming, "...a mere incantation for the bewitchment of the led," (Hodgkinson, 1991, p.53). However, he acknowledged that every educational administrator held the self-conception of leader, and the terms administration and leadership could be used interchangeably when reading most literature in the field.

The educational administration literature developed during the past century has been strongly influenced by positivism in social science research (Rost, 1991). This has created a body of theoretical knowledge transcending individual peculiarities which sought to provide rules, laws, norms or guidelines by which those with administrative responsibility would know and could measure the success or otherwise of leadership practice. Writers considered characteristics of great leaders (Stogdill, 1948), behaviour traits of successful leaders (House, 1971; Willower, 1979; Immegart, 1988) and connections between the vast array of variables in administrative life and theories to govern the professional acts that would best assist the leader to lead (Yukl, 1989). Usually the focus on leadership sought to improve or perfect the control of the leader over the organisation, or more specifically the people within the organisation. The assumption which underlies such approaches is that the person who is in the
leadership role has the best understanding of what is right and good, and should exercise personal will in leading in that perceived direction.

As social science research moved away from positivist paradigms toward the subjective world of the thoughts of individuals (Giddens, 1984; Greenfield, 1978), so too did the leadership studies. Burns’ extensive work on transactional and transformational leadership (Burns, 1978), was a major influence on the work which followed. Studies shifted focus to consider the relationship between leader and followers, and to the factors that enhanced or hindered that relationship (Starratt, 1991, 1993). Exploration considered what factors establish and maintain relationship (Duignan and Bhindi, 1997), social justice within the relationship (Smyth, 1997), concepts able to inform the relationship (Everett, 1990; Greenleaf, 1977), matters of moral integrity and motivation (Sergiovanni, 1992) and appropriate style (DePree, 1989; Telford, 1996). Within all these studies, there is an underlying assumption regarding the issue of power and will to power. Studies emerging from the ongoing development of critical theory ask hard questions about these issues of power. Who should have it? How is it maintained? How is it used? To whose benefit is it used? (Foster, 1986, 1989).

These studies have all been of use and have pushed forward understanding about leader / follower relationships, and the ways and means those disposed to or required to give direction to a group, enterprise, school, company or nation achieve the subjugation of the collective will to their personal will. However, they did little to address the problem of whether or not the exercise of leadership can be achieved within a relational framework that is right, good, proper, fair, just and beneficial to all
parties, or for the common good. The questions of whose understanding of right, proper, good and fair should prevail are considered from various perspectives within society or organisation. To consider the appropriateness of principals’ decisions in this manner raises for consideration the tension between personal will and the common good. We now focus on literature that considers the philosophical issues that underpin the actions of those with power over others.

A values perspective

The study of the importance of values in the practice of educational administration has become a major area of focus in the last decade. A number of writers are convinced that a values perspective is essential to ethical educational administration (Begley and Leonard, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1992; Evers and Lakomski, 1991; Starratt, 1993; Ribbens, 1999; Liethwood et al., 1994). Hodgkinson makes the point:

Educational administration is a special case within the general profession of administration. Its leaders find themselves in what might be called an arena of ethical excitement – often politicized but always humane, always intimately connected to the evaluation of society … it embodies a heritage of value on the one hand, and is a massive industry on the other, in which social, economic and political forces are locked together in a complex equilibrium of power. All this calls for extra-ordinary value sensitivity on the part of educational leaders (Hodgkinson, 1991, p.164).

The problem inherent in these calls is immediately obvious. What values are a reliable guide, or more specifically can values be a reliable guide? Furthermore, exactly what is meant by values?

A view of values, as discussed by Butler (1996) is that of a perceptive framework. In a model of human agency (Figure 2) that he adapts from the work of Bruner (1990),
he provides a construct that attempts to show how knowledge, belief and value are related to experience, speech and action. It is more complex and yet more helpful than the traditional model of theory/practice that is encountered in much of the literature on human action. It also moves beyond the Neo-Marxist concept of praxis. The various elements demonstrate the complexity of the interaction of factors that impact on the individual taking action. The model depicts a field to five elements, and places

*Figure 2 A model of human agency*

![Diagram of human agency model]

those elements against a background of two contexts. The elements are public knowledge, personal constructed knowledge, reflection, worldview and practice or action. The background contexts are the inner world of self and the outer world of social interaction. Central to the model is the concept of reflection, which is seen as the open, active communication channel between the outside social context and the inner self. Public knowledge is the myriad of data outside self that is made up of information, lore, theories, church doctrine, research, expectations of other people,
peer pressure, propaganda, government policy and the like. Practice or action is the behaviour of the individual, what is said and done. The relationship of public knowledge to practice or action is not direct. Research has shown, for instance, that there is little evidence of direct and powerful relations between policy and practice in organisations such as schools (Dempster et al., 2001). Knowledge of the right thing to do does not always result in right being done. Personal constructed knowledge is a store of meaning that has been learned through experience. It derives its influence on action from that which is historical and contextual. It can and does resist reason. Worldview influences the totality of practical moral concern. It is derived from the social context within which the individual has developed. It should be seen as the moral map by which the individual negotiates life. This moral map is made up of what the individual considers to be right proper and of value. While it tends to stability, it is most effective when open to revision through reflection on learning and experience. It tends to be tacit, but a strong influence on choice of action both consciously and sub-consciously. Perception, which is shaped most strongly by worldview, or the moral map, is the lens though which individuals filter public knowledge. Butler states, “These human actions are more than behaviours because they are acted out beliefs concerning the human good and how to achieve it” (Butler, 1996, p. 271). Reflection before, during and after action is what ties the elements of the model together.

As an event occurs, values act as a filter that allows only certain features of the event to be considered. Often, meaning is made without questioning the filtering values. Egan stated, "values are so difficult to think about because they are what we think with" (Egan, 1978, p. 133). Williamson (1995) states that values are part of the
unconscious filtering process that determines how events are perceived. If values are assumptions embedded within individuals, any study of values will require some means or method able to penetrate the meaning made of an event to access the underlying values. This is the methodological challenge for this study.

A robust definition of values is advanced by Begley (Begley and Leonard, 1999), drawing on a definition provided by Hodgkinson (1978). Values are a conception of the desirable, which influence the choice made in a given situation. They may be explicit, or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group. Begley sees this definition as handy because values are seen to have a critical function in the decision making and problem solving activities of educational administrators. It allows values to encompass such fields as social ethics, trans-rational principals, rational moral values and personal preferences. In fact it highlights the interactive nature of personal values, social values and professional values, and raises the issue of the source of values. He draws the conclusion:

The more reflexive among administrators are also conscious of how their own personal values may blind or illuminate the assessment of situations. These changing educational circumstances imply a number of conceptual as well as operational justifications for studying the nature and function of values in administration (Begley and Leonard, 1999, p.52).

This raises the point that values from different sources may be in conflict, and such conflict may be a significant factor in the work of school administrators.

In a discussion of value theory, Hodgkinson (1991) provides a useful graphic and discussion of value related terms (Figure 3). The outer ring is observable actions and speech. It is, "the only way available for making empirical attributions of the value
orientations of the individual," (Begley and Leonard, 1999, p. 55). The layer beneath is that of attitudes. They are the manifestations of values at the interface of the individuals inner world and the outside world in which individuals act or speak. Observation of speech and action often leads to inferences about attitudes that might be held. Attitudes may be legion because humans engage continuously in language games, expressing attitudes in language categories. One category of attitudes is

Figure 3. Aspects of Value Action

![Diagram showing the relationship between values, motivation, and self]

opinion, which is often used by researchers as an indicator of underlying values. Like actions, attitudes expressed as opinions may or may not be reliable indicators of the values an individual holds. Beneath the attitudes lies a system of values often expressed in terms of individual character. These values are able to be expressed, thought about and used to make meaning. They also may be, as stated earlier (Butler, 1996), unexamined, masked or ignored. Their source and use are a matter of interest to this study. Often the values that are held arise from a wide range of motivation.
Begley and Leonard observe, "...it is common for individuals to deliberately or unwittingly manifest or articulate one value while being actually committed to another, usually associated with self-interest or preference, but also possibly with a trans-rational motivational base" (Begley and Leonard, 1999, p. 56). This raises the next area of interest, that of motivation. Motives are very deep seated and close to the sense of self at the core of being. Hodgkinson mentions a few basic motives to consider: the will to survive or the Freudian dualism of an urge to life counter-balanced by a wish for death. Christian ethicists propose a different basic motive, namely agape, or selfless love (Niebuhr, 1932; Pannenberg, 1981; Childs, 1992). It is clear that motivations are closely related to beliefs about the nature of our humanity, the reason for our existence, our purpose and our understanding of our destiny. At the core of the figure is the self, that which individuals perceive themselves to be biologically, existentially or transcendentally. To summarise, the figure provides a clear view of the layers between self and actions. The layers include motivations, values and attitudes. This indicates that research must probe deeper than an examination of what values are expressed in the attitudes and actions of individuals. While what people value might be interesting to know, why they value what they value is crucial to those interested in discovering how positive, helpful values are to be developed.

In the value typology developed in the works of Hodgkinson (1978, 1991, 1993, 1996), an important distinction is drawn between the axiological (that which is good) and the deontological (that which is right). Good is depicted as that which is enjoyable, likeable and pleasurable. Right is depicted as that which is proper, 'moral', duty bound or that ought to be. It is suggested that the knowledge of good is drawn
directly and spontaneously from impulse or direct introspection, from the elemental psychology of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain.

Good gives rise to no internal value conflict, but creates the potential for external inter-human value conflict in the general competition for satisfaction from limited resources (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 97).

Right is derived from a moral sense, or a sense of collective responsibility. It is developed out of the process of our socialisation from birth onwards. A sense of right creates the conscience or 'superego' that wars with self-indulgent desires. Within these parameters, Hodgkinson posits the grounds for value judgement. Three types of values are proposed, the sub-rational, the rational and the trans-rational (see Figure 4).

*Figure 4. Model of the Value Paradigm*

(Deontological-Nomothetic-Discipline Dimension)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right Value</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Consequences IIA</th>
<th>Consequences IIIB</th>
<th>Principle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Emotion</td>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>Exercise of logical thought</td>
<td>Exercise of will</td>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-rational</td>
<td>Logical Positivism</td>
<td>Hedonism</td>
<td>Utilitarianism</td>
<td>Existentialism</td>
<td>Intuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Positiveism</td>
<td>Behaviourism</td>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
<td>Democratic liberalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans-rational</td>
<td>Postmodernism</td>
<td>Hedonism</td>
<td>Utilitarianism</td>
<td>Democratic liberalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
are the rational values, Type II, of consequences and consensus. These are the areas where consideration is most often given to working through or working out the ethical dilemmas. Here we find the field where conscious thought and accumulated knowledge are put to use. Negotiation among alternatives is possible, whether it is an internal negotiation of consequences or an external negotiation seeking an agreed solution to the dilemma. The problem this presents is immediately apparent, in that the trans-rational and sub-rational values act as filters, giving meaning to the situation. If they are not included in the rational consideration, there are possible solutions to the ethical dilemmas that may never occur. It is in the area of the sub-rational and trans-rational values that conflicts of the individual will and the common good of the group are born. Hodgkinson's model also helps to clarify the motivational bases that stimulate the adoption of particular values. He shows the base motive to be the concept of what is good, grounded in the individual's preference structure or self-interest.

He suggests such motives are self-justifying or primitive in nature. The next two motivational bases are rational in nature. Consensus arises from motivation based on the opinion of an acceptable expert, or the will of the majority in a given group. The next highest level of motivation is derived from a desirable future state of affairs, or the consequences resulting from potential action. At the peak of motivational hierarchy are principles. Values at this level are grounded in the metaphysical, taking the form of ethical codes or injunctions or commandments. They cannot be justified by logical argument, and being based on fundamental understandings of the nature of reality, imply some act of faith, belief or commitment (Hodgkinson, 1978, p. 112).
Hodgkinson introduces an important dimension to the values discussion, that of the fundamental conflict between the one and the many. He points out that this conflict has, "psychoanalytic roots in that we are born as ideographic egos struggling to maintain ourselves in a nomothetic cultural context" (Hodgkinson, 1999, p. 150). The individual battles with the social rules that limit individual gratification. The first administrator in individual life experience is the parent. The line between what is good for the child, and what is good for the many becomes established as the distinction between the good and the right. He posits the view that the problem has even deeper roots; the contest between chaos, represented by nature or unbridled emotion, and order, represented by human society or reason. In this view all organisations are nomothetic systems designed to achieve beneficial ends (for the group, nation, and society) at the cost of individual submission and repression of basic drives or desires. The beneficial ends of culture, civilisation and social order are precariously held, and repressed individual desire can at any time erupt at the national level into the extremes of violence, barbarity, sabotage, terrorism and war. In the world of administration of organisation, the dominance of individual desire can lead to resentment, disruption, dysfunction, inefficiency and ineffectiveness. He then offers the possibility that the problem can be resolved by viewing administration or leadership as the effective use of structures of hierarchy and power to regulate the tension between individual desires and group ends, and necessary tools to achieve goals. This of course cannot be accepted because of the strong probability of corruption of the powerful.

He then posits another way of considering resolution to the basic value conflict, one which substitutes values impress from the culture to the individual to resolve the basic
tension between individual desires and group ends. This is visually represented in
Figure 5. This method on thinking through the issues raises a different focus for
analysis in times of ethical dilemma.

The press of value is always downward on the individual from the culture. However,
the individual alone has the only real experience of value and, by force of will, the
sole capacity to take value action in any dilemma. At the same time, the individual is

*Figure 5. Field of Value impress*

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Cultural ethos        V5
Local and subcultural interpretation  V4
Organisational values  V3
Peer group             V2
Individual             V1
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constantly receiving value determining forces beyond his or her control and or even
beyond her or his awareness. It follows then that the key points of value problem and
analysis for the leader are at the V1 or individual level, and V3 or organisational level.
These are the points where the individual need, desire, intent or will can collide with
the common need, desire intent or will of the organisation. Hodgkinson points out
that four sets of value knowledge and experience are required from the standpoint of
leadership. First is knowledge of the organisational task including aims, ends, goals,
objectives, purposes, policies and philosophies (V3). Second is knowledge of the
situation in its cultural context externally ($V_4$). Third is knowledge and self-awareness of $V_5$ values that can be used as guideposts or anchors. Finally, there is the need to be fully aware of the influence of individual values ($V_1$) held by all involved. In the end, Hodgkinson rejects this values press as truly useful for the solution of the central problem of the conflict between the individual and the group. He points out that the concept has seduced many philosophers, from Plato to medieval Christians to Marx to the post moderns. He states:

One in general ought to subject the lesser to the larger interest, but always with the caveat that the very largest interest is not a man's (sic) physical welfare but his soul. ...In the last analysis neither values nor metaphysics can be excised from administrative philosophy, theory or practice (Hodgkinson, 1996, p.162).

This call for consideration of trans-rational values, those things which are right as well as good, is of significance for this study because the principals involved are working in church schools, where belief in the Christian message is foundational to the way of life, and likely to influence value issues.

In order to move beyond the work of Hodgkinson and bring coherence to the subject of values in educational administration, Begley developed a linguistic metaphor to classify theory and research in the field under three categories that he called defining or semantic, descriptive or phonetic and applied or syntactic. When this metaphor is applied in conjunction with Hodgkinson's value types (Hodgkinson, 1991), the result was a grid to map the locus of theory and research efforts. When he did so, he found that the bulk of the available findings of applied research on the subject clusters in the domain of rational values. He states, "Relatively few research studies address the non-rational value types" (Begley, 1996, p. 59). The exceptions that he lists are mostly theorists concerned with describing or defining the meanings, with little
attention to the domain of those wrestling with the dilemmas. The few research studies that wrestle with the applied area of the actual work of principals leave the theoretical underpinning relatively unexamined. He then suggests a need for, "research that is grounded in theory, descriptive of the nature and function of values in administration and situated in administrative contexts specific enough to have practical relevance" (Begley, 1996, p. 60). This study is directly related to that need.

**Research on Values in Educational Administration**

Recent studies concerning effective leadership for schools have highlighted work of skilful principals, and provided illustrations of how values can influence practice. Personal values have been shown as significant influences in decision making. Citing North American studies, Liethwood states that the thinking of principals who are seeking to negotiate the swampy regions of decision making in contemporary schools needs some ethical basis for choice (Liethwood et al., 1994). Reporting on school leaders’ views, gained in a recent four nation study, Reeves Moos and Forrest state, “Leadership is part of a whole culture and tradition as well as being a manifestation of individual beliefs,” (Reeves et al., 1998). While in general rational values predominate in the valuation processes, there is evidence of self-interest motivation, and indication that trans-rational values are employed in limited circumstances. The concern is for consensus and consequences in almost every study and every nation studied, including Canada, Sweden, Denmark, England, Scotland and Australia (Campbell, 1992; Begley and Leonard, 1999; MacBeath, 1998; Begley and Johansson, 2003).
Values in ethical dilemmas

Dempster and Mahoney (1998) participating in the four nation study reported in MacBeath (1998), compare the data on ethical issues collected in the European portion of the work, and data collected from Australian principals, using a varied methodology. The workshops with English, Scottish and Danish heads reported in the study was an interesting contrast to the Australian segment. In these workshops the participants met in national groups and were asked to discuss six moral dilemmas, three of which were developed from earlier individual interviews and two from leadership literature. The sixth dilemma was left blank and participants were invited to supply one of their own. The outcomes were not as expected. The Danish heads in discussion focussed on denying that such dilemmas existed or could exist. The English heads seemed to deny there were dilemmas, and provided clear courses of action underpinned by strong moral principles. They did not suggest a dilemma of their own. The Scottish heads addressed the dilemmas, and showed a strong sense of the struggle between the demands of the market and school survival. There was a sense of losing collaborative structures. They too did not provide a dilemma of their own. The researchers concluded that the discussion groups were too public, and heads did not wish to appear less than virtuous. Therefore, the workshops did not work as a means of examining the ways heads go about addressing competing demands in an ethical manner. However, the groups did develop a set of principles from their examination of the dilemmas. They are very like a code of ethics to guide principals in their actions, and as such would function as Type III trans-rational values according to Hodgkinson's model. However the researchers warn that unless they are subjected to, "vigorous scrutiny, and assessment in practical circumstances," they are simply, "a bland set of pieties" (Dempster and Mahoney, 1998, p. 137).
They undertook an alternative approach in the Australian segment of the study, using specific cases of ethical dilemma to generate conversations with principals. Their rationale for the use of dilemma was based on the work of Dymock (1996) because in their view, "the ethical debate is about how power ought to be exercised in an organisation and by whom" (Dempster and Mahoney, 1998, p. 127). They used data gathered from interviews to generate examples of real dilemmas faced by principals. From the data generated, they were able to deduce the meanings attached to the situations by principals, and then identify values that were implicit in what the principals said. The list of values generated included multiculturalism, equity, social justice, accessibility, intellectual humility, concern for excellence and self-determination tempered by regard for effort and social responsibility, altruism, consensus and empowerment of individuals and communities (Dempster and Mahoney, 1998). Mapping these values on Hodgkinson's model of the value paradigm shows that all fall into the realm of principle or transrational value. These values are developed by the researchers. They are deduced from the meanings that principals gave to the dilemma situations. A closer examination of the meanings provided in the data shows that the rational values associated with consensus and consequences are dominant in the words of the principals. Their conclusion was that they had barely scratched the surface of, "a difficult field of professional activity for school leaders." They call for:

Further empirical research into the professional values on which heads base their leadership; morally defensible decision-making processes consistent with those leadership values; and the types of ethical solutions available when difficult dilemmas are encountered (Dempster and Mahoney, 1998, p. 137).
The essence of their concern is that unless studies are undertaken, the experience that present school principals are gaining in the crucible of these turbulent times will be lost to those future principals who might gain from it.

Values and change

A study by Louden and Wildy (1999) from Edith Cowan University in Western Australia sets out to identify what mattered to school principals in the context of school restructuring. The phrase "what mattered" might be understood as what was valued. While the purpose of the study was to develop a set of standards for school principals, the findings do offer insight into the way that principals understood the ethical challenges that emerged from the rapidly changing school system that they served. A number of cases involving ethically challenging situations were generated from interviews with principals. After being classified in terms of the duties of principals determined by the employing authority, the cases were used as items to be rated and described by a large number of principals. The responses generated 3822 descriptors of the cases, but only a very small number of frequently used words. These words were fair, decisive, supportive, innovative, collaborative and flexible. These terms were later used as descriptors of moral dispositions that could be understood as values considered important in the work of principals.

It is possible to consider the descriptors according to the model of the value paradigm. When this is done, all are based in the use of Type II rational values. They describe people who will operate within organisational structure collaboratively (fair, supportive collaborative, flexible), and have an interest in the future state (decisive, innovative). While this study indicates that it is possible to indirectly deduce the
values held by principals, its main importance to the research being reported here is that it demonstrates that in times of change, there is an expectation that educational administrators will act rationally, concerned about collaboration and future positive states. What does not seem to come through in the report is the reality that not all change is right.

**Ethical challenge**

A Queensland study of principals in state schools undertaken by Dempster, Freakley and Parry (Dempster et al., 2001) sought to address four questions:

1. What ethical issues are confronted by school principals?
2. What is the nature of the immediate setting within which these ethical issues arise?
3. How and why do school principals make ethical decisions?
4. How might the answers to these questions best inform professional development programs?

The third question is directly related to the concern of this study. The study identified a series of value dualities where ethical decisions were problematical. The dualities were:

- rights of individual vs. rights of majority;
- interest of student vs. interest of school;
- excellence vs. effort;
- quality vs. equity;
- self-determination vs. social responsibility;
- local need vs. system priority;
- academic achievement vs. other successes;
- loyalty to parents vs. loyalty to teachers;
- compliance vs. professional autonomy.

The study also uncovered agreement among those principals who participated regarding what personal attributes were important for ethical decision-making. These
were interpersonal skills, empathy, ability to recognise the ethical features of a situation, reasoning and logic. To a lesser degree, there was an opinion by many principals that knowledge of relevant laws and organisational rules and procedures was important. The study concluded that there is a strong argument in the data for the use of case study and reflection to improve ability to cope with ethical issues in the professional development of school principals. There is also a case made for the use of communities of ethical inquiry (Freakley and Burgh, 1998) as a useful tool in assisting principals to converge theory and practice in dealing with their own ethical dilemmas.

When the Hodgkinson model is applied to the issues reported in this study, an interesting fact is revealed. The value dualities are expressed in the opposition of principles, or trans-rational values. Thus the principle of individual rights is set against the principle of group rights; the principle of individual needs is set against the principle of organisational needs, etc. In these dualities, it becomes apparent that the right outcome is perceived differently by the parties disputing the issue. The attention of the principals involved is focussed on the personal skills and attitudes that they need to develop in order to address the conflict over trans-rational values. They seek skills to address the issues at the rational level, with ability to negotiate, to be empathetic; to know the rules and laws, to use reason and to apply logic. In a sense, they want to be able to find good solutions for all, and downgrade the debate to levels that can be managed. While this is a reasoned and reasonable intent, it may not provide a lasting solution in the value conflicts set up by the dualities. Human history is laden with examples where negotiated settlements of trans-rational value conflicts do not hold simply because some values are not negotiable for the individuals
involved. For them, it is an issue of what is right in the matter, not what is good. The question to be addressed in such matters is what knowledge and beliefs have established these non-negotiable values.

Recent studies

Four studies conducted during the past decade have dealt specifically with the matter of ethical reasoning in the face of conflicting values perspectives. Three are specifically situated in the area of educational administration and the other in the area of teaching children with severe and profound intellectual disabilities. All provide findings of interest to this study.

Kirby, Paradise and Protti studied the ethical reasoning of school administrators in Louisiana (Kirby et al, 1992). Their purpose was to describe typical moral dilemmas faced by school administrators and to test the applicability of models of ethical reasoning for analysing their decisions. One model, which was developed by van Hoose and Paradise using Kohlberg's model of moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1976), provided a rough gauge of principals' moral development, but neglected to allow for the situation where principals are faced with conflicts between individuals or groups. The second model, developed by Howe using concepts from Wilson, had the capacity to account for conflicting views or values (Howe, 1984; Wilson, 1967). This model used the concepts of empathy, interpersonal skills, knowledge of consequences or possible futures and courage to carry through on decisions. In this model, the concepts of "good," "right" and "moral" are not distinguished from each other.
The van Hoose and Paradise model, gauged five levels of ethical orientation, described as punishment, institutional societal, individual and principal. These were seen as aligned developmentally from the most basic to the most sophisticated. It is interesting to note that the orientations could be compared with Hodgkinson's types of values, but because of the lack of a distinction between right and good, they fall into a different ordering. The Howe model provided for four levels of moral education, empathy, interpersonal skills, knowledge of facts and possible goals, reasoning about possible consequences and courage to follow through on decisions. These were called moral components. The assumption is that education can affect moral orientation. This suggests a strong logical positivist and behaviourist orientation in the model. In terms of the importance of values in providing motivation and explanation, it is of limited assistance to this study.

Bredberg and Davidson conducted a study involving interviews with teachers of children in special education classrooms segregated from other classes in the schools (Bredberg & Davidson, 1999). The teachers responded to four ethical dilemmas, and the data provided was discussed and analysed for the reasoning they used, and for the presence of four normative ethics: justice, respect for autonomy, beneficence and non-maleficence. The researchers assumed that there was an inevitable shortfall between the ethical reasoning of most people and their practice, but held that a recognition of the values to which any group of people adhere allows for the discrepancy to be better addressed than by an imposition of some extrinsic ethical system. The results of the study showed that two of the ethical norms, justice and beneficence dominated teachers' discussions. They saw beneficence as a guiding principle. Their primary ethical duty was to work toward the benefit of the students. They linked this principal
to a collaborative approach, which involved all the people interacting with the students, parents, consultants, teachers' aides and the teachers themselves. They felt that consensus among these people led to the best outcomes for the students who often were unable to make their views and needs known. Justice, realised at the individual level of the student was the other key guiding value. Here the teachers re-framed the ethical dilemma that pitted individual rights against group needs to one where the needs of all must be addressed, and they inserted the concepts of priority and professional judgement, as a way to meet the principle. The other two ethical norms, respect for autonomy and non-maleficence, received much less attention. The discussion and analyses of the data are very carefully carried out, and have the potential to add significantly to the discussion and debate concerning the education of children with profound learning disabilities, as well as the discussion and debate regarding how society conducts the ongoing moral debate regarding how to recognise the breadth and diversity of the membership of humanity.

Of interest to this study, the report provides four important characteristics to consider in the discussion of values and ethical dilemmas. First, the teachers in the study did not rely solely on their own particular view as definitive, but valued a variety of perspectives in arriving at a more complete understanding of the complexities in considering the interests of any person. Second, they argued from value principles (Type I), rather than rational values or personal values (Types II and III), and thus avoided the problem of argument against their view or against other views. Third, they assumed the discussion of varying views was not only necessary but also essential in arriving at best outcomes. Thus, they would use rational values (Type II) as a base for discussion, but not as a base for decision. Finally, they addressed the
issues from the viewpoint of the entire community, not their own group or the unique group of their students. They held everyone to be part of the moral community and subject to its norms.

A study by Kevin Roche that investigated the responses of Australian Catholic school principals to moral and ethical dilemmas within the belief and value system of the Roman Catholic Church provides useful information for the conduct of this study (Roche, 1997). Roche intended three things; to describe the responses of particular principals to personal, professional and organisational moral and ethical dilemmas, to determine which values prevail when these dilemmas are resolved and to ascertain whether there are consistent patterns in the way that they reach resolution. Four hypothetical vignettes were developed by the researcher. In three interviews conducted over four months with five principals the researcher sought to ascertain the nature and variety of principals’ responses. The data was analysed and the responses categorised into a response classification framework of four elements: avoidance, suspending morality, creative insubordination and personal morality. Each element was aligned with a type of response, which took some behavioural form and was based on some value assumptions.

The researcher made use of Hodgkinson’s values framework mentioned earlier to develop an interpretation of the responses. In his final conclusion Roche makes the following statement in relation to the fact that all principals displayed a highly individualistic orientation in their decisions regarding ethical or moral dilemmas.

Although one might assume that the moral framework of each individual Catholic principal is largely based on the same religious beliefs, it is interesting to note that all of the principals, (except for
James), felt little moral obligation to follow the directives of the Catholic Education Office and/or the Catholic Church hierarchy in those instances when their own values were in conflict (Roche, 1997, p.262).

The conflict scenarios that Roche constructed sought to uncover the authority to which principals would turn when addressing moral and ethical dilemmas. That authority was clearly their own values, not that of the church. What the research study does not develop is the source of those personal values. Because there was a very tightly constructed framework for analysis, and because the questions asked of the data were focussed on the meaning making of the researcher, the opportunity to ascertain how the principals made meaning was only marginally addressed. It is to those unaddressed elements that the current study directs itself.

In a recent study of Iowa (USA) public high school principals, Deborah Hunter sought to ascertain how the principals make meaning of the ethical issues that they face (Hunter, 2002). Working from empirical research evidence that experience is an important factor in facing ethical issues, she sought to determine if how that experience is gained and processed might be a significant factor. She examined the detail principals perceived as important, the effect of gender and size of the school, the theoretical frameworks principals used, the impact on job satisfaction and possible implications for the development of future administrators.

Hunter blends two conceptual models into a framework for analysis of her data. The first is one that organises spheres of influence of cultural variables that affect career issues and professional work life. The second is one that identifies zones of ethical choice. She also made use of Kidder’s dilemma paradigms and resolution principles
(Kidder, 1999). She then looked for patterns related to gender, district size, professional experience in relation to personal, professional and educational values and beliefs. While the analysis of the data is interesting, there is one key point that Hunter makes:

As school administrators sort through educational values, identify ethical issues and resolve ethical dilemmas, greater knowledge and experience applying theoretical frameworks helps to clarify, sort out, and prioritize competing rights and values (Hunter, 2002, p. 146).

This points to the need for better understanding of what theoretical frameworks are being used and what theoretical frameworks could or should be used.

A final point of the Iowa study that is of value to the present study is the observation that Hunter makes when she notes that much rich data in the narratives of the principals was not used in the study and therefore an in depth analysis could not be conducted. She notes that it would be of value to conduct research into the underlying beliefs and values of principals through the use of reflective narratives (Hunter, 2002, p. 144).

**Summary**

This chapter began with a brief analysis of the educational environment within which the study is embedded. The discussion established the variety of forces at work in Australian society and politics that impact on the beliefs and values of those involved in the operations and administration of Lutheran schools in Australia. The combined impact of distrust of institutions inherent in postmodern thought, hyperculture, family breakdown, new right economics, reconstruction of education from a social good to a consumer service and the power of now or immediacy was explored.
There followed a discussion of the theological constructs that form a Lutheran perspective of a Christian world view. The possibility provided by this framework to examine the manner in which principals might consider the ethical dilemmas that they face was briefly explored. The section concluded with the statement of values now under consideration by Lutheran Education Australia. These values are a useful summary of how the theology of Lutheranism has been translated into statements intended to guide the educational endeavour of Lutheran schools.

The next section discussed the literature that deals with the place of values in educational decision making and in particular the cognitive frameworks that might provide guidance and understanding in the evaluation of the data. Of particular note were Hodgkinson’s three constructs regarding values and morals; aspects of value action, a model of value paradigm and the field of value impress, which help to clarify our understanding of the place of value in ethical decision making.

In the final section, a number of recent empirical studies into issues surrounding ethical administrative decision making are briefly presented and discussed. The implications for the current research are examined. Having developed a foundation on which to draw through the related literature, I now turn to a detailed discussion of the constructs that will inform the presentation and analysis of the data.
CHAPTER 3  METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

“I guess from a Christian point of view folks ask how do you consider what you are doing and how you are responding and your actions in the sense of what would Christ have you do in this situation?” from transcript of interview with a principal

“…we are not only formed by love in our moral character,…we are also informed by love in our decision making.” James Childs

Introduction

In the preceding chapters the research problem has been introduced and detailed, and the literature with the potential to inform the investigation has been presented and discussed. I now proceed to discuss the methodology that has been used. I start with the development of a rationale for the design of the study. I then proceed to a brief presentation of the perspective of symbolic interactionism and its potential for examination of the research question. This is followed by a somewhat more detailed development of the particular methodology I have adopted and my reasons for doing so. The discussion includes the manner in which data were generated for analysis. The chapter ends with description of the group of Lutheran principals in Australia and the method used to determine the subjects and cases for the study.

A rationale

The research question, “What value assumptions influence the reflection of Australian Lutheran secondary school principals as they address ethical dilemmas in their work?” emerges from a view of humanity that sees individuals as intelligent beings interacting with their environment, who construct within themselves a perspective or
world view that informs their words and actions. Human action is informed by a perspective of the world developed by the individual through reflection within cultural context (Pannenberg, 1962; Charon, 2001). This perspective is developed by the construction of knowledge derived from learning, personal experience, and reflection (Butler, 1996). The individual perspective is a mediated view of reality, strongly influenced by what the individual has come to see as valuable (Greenfield, 1991). The discernment for this is akin to common sense judgement as to the best possible choice from those rationally available (van Huyssteen, 2000). More often than not the ethical perspective that shapes the choices of action cannot be known to be absolutely valid or correct. Rather it is the choice that most closely aligns with the individual's understanding of what is to be valued (Childs, 1992).

Professional competence of individuals in positions of authority depends to a significant degree on an ability to explain their ethical perspectives to stakeholders who may operate with different values and beliefs. Individuals who suffer any form of disintegration of their inner world may have difficulty in making the necessary connections between belief and knowledge that enable rational judgements to occur (Mann, 1959). Thus their reflection may be reduced to forms of self-gratification and self-absorption that van Huyssteen perceives to be so common in our world (van Huyssteen, 2000). The outcome of such lack of integration can find expression in the abuse of power and position within organisations.

Since self is constituted and re-fashioned through reference to one’s own understandings, opinions, knowledge, cognations and emotion (Elliot, 2001), it cannot be set apart from the social, cultural, political and historical contexts in which it is
embedded. Both internal and external frames of reference contribute to the individual’s sense of self. This sense of self is frequently referred to as character, where character is seen as the compilation of values and beliefs shaping action. As has been shown in the work of Hodgkinson (1991) and Begley (1999, 1996), the connection between the self, motivation and value that lead to the perceptions people form and use to inform their actions is both complex and difficult to ascertain. The only evidence directly available to a researcher takes the form of action and speech. Therefore, a methodology appropriate for the research question must involve examination of the meaning that principals give to the ethical dilemmas that they encounter. What do they think of the people involved? What significance do they ascribe to the situation that develops? Does the dilemma cause a conflict of values? Also, a methodology will need to allow an examination of the process of reflection or thought that the principals engage in as they work their way through the dilemma. Finally, an appropriate methodology will need to provide the opportunity to open a window into the inner world of the principal in some way. It will require that the language of the principal be used as such a window. The perspective of symbolic interactionism provides a most appropriate locus for this study.

Symbolic Interactionism

I begin with a brief overview of the origins of the perspective, then move to a discussion of its key elements. Finally, I discuss the importance of the perspective for addressing the research questions.

Symbolic interactionism is a sociological perspective focussed on the importance of meaning to the individual. It has its origins in North America, and can be linked with
the pragmatic philosophy of John Dewy, the theories of Charles Darwin and the psychological perspective of behaviourism. These influences came together in the work of George Herbert Mead, a professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago. While Mead published numerous articles during his career, the true impact of his work in symbolic interactionism occurred more through the publishing of his lectures and notes by his students, particularly Herbert Blumer. Blumer, who published mainly in the 1950’s and 1960’s, also drew on the work of other pragmatists such as William James, Charles Peirce, William Thomas and Charles Cooley. Since the emergence of the perspective, it has been further developed through the work of people such as Norman Denzin (1970), Charles Warriner (1970), Tamotsu Shibutani (1955, 1961), Howard Becker (1973), John Lofland (1995) and Carl Couch (1989). Erving Goffman (1971, 1975, 1981) has added the concept of dramaturgical sociology to the perspective.

The perspective that has emerged is one that emphasises the uniqueness of humanity in nature, particularly the fact that humans act on their environment rather than passively responding to it. The first significant concept within the perspective is the view that human beings are symbol users. In order to understand humans, we need to study their interactions. Such interactions rely heavily on the use of symbols, namely words. Mead saw the use of symbols as the essence of humanity. Symbols contribute much to the nature of our reality and the nature of our society. They are tools for the creation of our reality.

Another key concept of the perspective of symbolic interactionism is the understanding that human beings possess a self. The self is perceived as the internal
environment toward which we act (Charon, 2001). This self is not the actor, but the creation of the defining symbols that others provide. The sense of self is the result of the information that others give. Self is a boy or a girl, young woman or a teenager. Self possesses patience, or ability, or no talent. The actor can act on self:

Others label and define the self to the actor, and they help the actor understand himself or herself in the environment. ...Each actor becomes an object to himself or herself because of the actions of others toward him or her (Charon, 2001, p.73).

Human actors are able to talk to themselves. They engage in mind action. Talking to self, using symbols [words] is thought. Thought is essential to the human ability to talk to others, and to the ability to develop a moral sense. People are able to objectify themselves. They are able to see self in situations, and to consider self before, during and after acting. They imagine self in situations, and determine appropriate action. They form a generalised view of themselves, sometimes called self-perception. They make judgements about themselves. From those judgements emerges a self-concept. One aspect of self-concept is identity. The human being able to self-reflect is also capable of taking action toward self, in exercising self-control. Human self-control depends on other people. If the self is pointed out by others, the individual is guided by the perspectives of significant others and reference groups in developing actions:

Self-direction is neither completely social, nor is it completely determined by the actor. As in all else human, it is interaction with others and with self that matters. Although the acts of others play an important role in how we direct ourselves, because we are able to act back on ourselves, part of what we do is independent of the acts of others (Charon, 2001, pp.89-90).

It is this interaction with self that is the focus of my research. This ability is seen by many as freedom, namely the ability of each human to direct self in situations. Outside forces may influence, but not determine, the decisions of the actor. Charles Warriner argued that it is important to accept an emergent human view; in order to
examine how humans develop their perspectives, we must see them as constantly emerging or developing (Warriner, 1970). Tamotsu Shibutani developed the concept of reference groups as a basis for individual perspective (Shibutani, 1955). In essence he stated that what we perceive as reality is a result of the perspectives we take on through social interaction, and the groups whose perspectives we use are called our reference groups. An individual's choice of reference groups is closely related to an individual's relationships and personal commitment to "significant others" - those who are directly responsible for the internalisation of norms. Reference group here is used to establish that group, real or imaginary, whose point of view is being used as the frame of reference by the "actor" (Shibutani, 1961). These aspects of symbolic interactionism are significant for the analysis necessary to address the research question.

Symbolic interactionism views human action in a particular manner. It is seen not as a result of stimulated behaviour, nor as a result of individual personality traits. Rather, it is seen as the result of the actor actively making decisions through the consideration of goal, definition, and manipulation within the stream of human action. This requires constant definition as interaction proceeds:

Any given act along the stream of action is caused by the individual’s decisions at that point. A given decision in turn is caused by the individual’s definition of the situation at that point, including goals, plans, social objects, future consequences, relevant memories recalled and applied. The definition of the situation the individual arrives at in turn is influenced by two things: interaction with self (thinking) and interaction with others (Charon, 2001, p.133).

The definition of the situation that each person makes becomes his or her reality. The defining process is mind action. Every person acts in a world that they create mainly
through their self-interaction, although it may be influenced by their interaction with others. The process is complex, as Charon points out:

The cause of action is always definition, and the definition is not easily understood: Goals, perspective, significant others, reference groups, objects, other people, view of future and past, self, identity and assessment of what is taking place in the situation are all matters that must be considered if action is to be understood. And to make cause even more difficult to isolate, recall that the situation always changes; the actor engages in an ongoing stream of action, defining the situation one way at one point, another way later on (Charon, 2001, p.137).

The importance of the past cannot be underestimated. Significant others, reference groups, perspective, beliefs and information from the individuals past are recalled and used as social objects that can be applied to work through present situations. The future that is considered is always the product of imagined possibility. The conception of the future is influenced by the memory of the past. Therefore symbolic interactionism can be seen as:

The study of human beings interacting symbolically with one another and with themselves, and in the process of that symbolic interaction making decisions and directing their streams of action (Charon, 2001, p.151).

One final concept within the perspective of symbolic interactionism that is important to this study is that of moral guide, that which the individual uses to control action. The self with whom the actor interacts is capable of constructing a generalised other that provides the rule that must be obeyed. This is sometimes called conscience. It is seen as the basis for self-control in relation to others. It contains rules the individual follows, the rules that have been taught to them in their culture or society. Charon states, “The generalized other is the moral system that the individual internalizes, makes his or her own,” (Charon, 2001, p.176). This generalised other is described by Butler as the world view that develops from the internal construction of knowledge (Butler, 1996).
When viewed from the teachings of Christianity as understood in the Lutheran tradition, the perspective of symbolic interactionism is compatible. The reasons for this are fourfold. First, symbolic interactionism views humanity as making meaning through the use of language as a shared experience. The entire Christian tradition has such interaction at its core. Words and the meanings of words are at the heart of biblical scholarship. In the Old Testament tradition, God is named “I am” or the one who exists (Exodus 3:14). In the New Testament, Christ is referred to as “the Word” (John 1:1-14). Christians speak and act in terms of being formed by love as expressed in the words and actions of that Word. Second, the perspective of symbolic interactionism rejects determinism and views human action as the result of the freedom to choose through interaction with others and with self. Christianity from the Lutheran perspective also rejects determinism, or predestination. Human freedom to choose and to act is considered critical to the relationship of people with God and with each other. As Gritsch and Jensen point out:

The gospel is a message of freedom from inhibitions to questioning and to action. These are not necessarily psychological. ...A believer, we may say, is someone who knows he does not need to care for himself, since God will do that, and so has all that time and energy left to care for other people. Such freedom is not given all at once and forever. Believers are not necessarily, in any sense of a continuing characteristic, “freer” than others. And yet, in a situation where I must seek the good, if someone tells me the gospel as a word about that situation, the required little crack of freedom opens (Gritsch and Jenson, 1976, p. 152).

Third, the perspective of symbolic interactionism recognises the importance of past experience and imagined future possibility in the process of deciding to act. Lutheran Christians have a clear understanding that they live out their lives poised between the creation and the end of the world. They remember the action of God in the past and
use it to inform their action in the present. They also look with assurance to a bright future possibility, and this has the potential to free them from fear in making choices. Finally, the symbolic interactionism perspective recognises that the actor makes use of a moral perspective construed as the generalised other. For Christians in the Lutheran tradition, Jesus Christ as personal saviour, and the Church, the body of Christ, are recognised in this way. Therefore, symbolic interactionism provides a methodological framework that is compatible with the research question and with the philosophical and theological teachings that frame the locus of the research activity.

**Method of analysis**

Within the perspective of symbolic interactionism, the analytical method that aligns clearly with the nature of the research question is narrative analysis, since the matter I am seeking to unpack must consider how past learning, experience and reflection shape the values applied by principals to the ethical dilemmas that they encounter. Narrative analysis is commonly used to explore ethical ambiguities. As Silverman states, “By analysing how people talk to one another, one is directly gaining access to a cultural universe and its content of moral assumptions,” (Silverman, 1993, p.108). The stories that principals tell of their experiences have the potential to reveal perceived reality, and provide insight as to the source of that view. However, one technique often used with narrative analysis, the focus group, I chose to avoid. There were two reasons for this. The first was a phenomenon that arose in the study of principals that was conducted by Dempster and Mahoney (Dempster & Mahoney, 1998), and the second an ethics consideration. In the 1998 study, when groups of principals discussed ethical dilemmas, they seemed to be constrained by a need to appear virtuous to colleagues. The researchers indicated that the need to relate to the
peer group might have influenced the manner in which the principals related the issues of ethical dilemma. I concluded from that information that use of a focus group might cause principals to hold back or modify the way that they discussed the ethical dilemma. Naturally, I was also aware that interaction with the researcher might have a similar effect. Therefore I sought in the process to minimise the possibility through careful building up of a collaborative framework for the interview.

The ethical concerns were driven by the fact that within the Lutheran Church of Australia it is difficult to maintain confidentiality. The membership of the church is quite small, numbering around 250,000 members. There are a number of large interrelated family groups. These groups provide a grapevine for gossip and news. The subjects interviewed in the study are all members of the Lutheran Church, and so I have been concerned to protect the confidentiality of the data shared by participants. It is reasonable to expect that there will be speculation regarding who were the subjects of the study at the time when the study is published. Therefore, it has been necessary to take reasonable steps to protect the identity of the collaborating principals and to maintain the confidentiality of the data.

Having determined that the broad frame of narrative analysis would be appropriate, I still had to discern what analytical techniques could assist me in the examination of the narratives that the principals generated. A number of models of narrative are available. These can be categorised as sociological and sociolinguistic models, psychological models, anthropological models and literary models (Cortazzi, 1993). Because I am dealing with narratives that are not part of dialogue, but are accounts given after reflection on an event, conversational analysis as carried out by Sacks,
Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), and Goffman (1975, 1981) are not appropriate. My data are essentially in the form of monologues. The stories that the principals tell emerge as oral reflections on a past event that caused them worry and concern. In retelling the experience, they have the opportunity to interpret the events. My interest is in the references they used for that interpretation. I am searching for indicators of reference groups and significant others (Shibutani, 1955), how they defined the situation (Charon, 2001), indicators of the moral framework and more specifically the possible sources of that moral framework.

Because I am seeking to probe behind the words of the narrative in order to identify the sources of values, membership categorisation analysis is a useful starting point. Carolyn Baker developed an approach to addressing interview data using membership categorisation as first developed by Sacks (Baker, 1997; Sacks, 1992). She viewed the account of narrators as cultural knowledge and logic in use, wherein they are engaged in social and moral activity. Therefore:

Membership categorization is a pervasive resource for sense-making through utterances. Tracing members’ use of these categories and devices in any settings, including interview settings is a means of showing how identities, social relationships and even institutions are produced (Baker, 1997, p. 132).

With Silverman, Baker holds that such analysis is a way of directly gaining access to a cultural universe and its content of moral assumptions (Silverman, 1993). She states, “These categories are in a sense the speakers’ ‘puppets’, which they can dress up in different ways and make behave in various ways” (Baker, 1997, p. 143). Use of membership categorisation provides a window into the values being assigned in the narrative, and has the potential to reveal sources of those values.
In addition, each of the interviews contains a narrative that can be viewed as a moral lesson that the principal being interviewed is constructing (Silverman, 1993). There could be both common particulars and common sources for explaining and making sense of the sequence of events revealed in the narrative. An analysis of the references used by the principals to make sense of the events in which they found themselves, and with which they interpreted the story has the potential to assist in addressing the research question.

**Generation of data**

The decision to make use of the perspective of symbolic interactionism led to the need to generate or find data that provided symbolic interactions. Since the research question asked about the value assumptions, it became necessary to generate data that would capture the interaction between the actor (in this case Lutheran secondary school principal), and the actor’s self. In effect I was trying to capture the reflection that Butler suggests links individually constructed knowledge to actions (Butler, 1996). Thus a strong case existed for the use of in depth interviews that allowed the subjects to reflect out loud on the chain of events that occurred when they were confronted by a difficult ethical dilemma. The use of a past event had the potential to call up the significant others, reference groups, perspectives, beliefs and information that might give access to the components of the moral guide (Charon, 2001). The nature of the question moved the focus of the study away from the action and placed it squarely in the reflective area.

In order to access the thinking of principals and discover their ethical perspective and its components, each principal was engaged in a conversation about an incident that
occurred during the 2000 school year. It was important that they perceived it as presenting a significant moral dilemma. The following explanation of moral dilemma was provided prior to the interview:

In the course of professional life, principals are confronted with many decisions they perceive to be mundane and routine and able to be made with little thought. Such decisions usually present as things to do with practical and factual realities, where choice is dictated by structure and rules. However, there is often a moral element embedded in the structure and the rules. As Foster states, "Each administrative decision carries with it a restructuring of a human life; this is why administration at its heart is the resolution of moral dilemmas," (Foster, 1986).

At other times principals confront decisions that they perceive to require some form of assessment of the relative merit of the choices. This occurs when the decision is seen to involve potential conflict with values and beliefs that they hold. Often the choices that are presented offer no comfort zone that allows the individual to feel they have done what is right and proper. That is to say there is an evident moral dimension. Morality is the area where consideration is given to the understanding of a distinction between right and wrong. Many decisions present in such a way as to prevent the distinction from being possible to make. Thus the individual is confronted with a moral dilemma.

In the interview the principals were invited to take up their presentation of the event, and to tell it as they experienced it. The job of the interviewer was to keep the conversation flowing, and to provide feedback to the principal about comments of particular interest or which seemed to require expansion in order to more fully understand the issue.

The interviews were recorded and the recordings transcribed. The transcripts quite varied in length. The shortest contained 275 lines, the next 466 lines and the longest
546 lines. In two cases the principals chose to have the interviews in their homes. In
the third case the principal requested that the interview take place in the school during
the holidays.

**Research subjects and cases**
The research subjects selected for the study are all drawn from the membership of
Lutheran secondary school principals in Australia. The rationale for the selection of
this group includes several key points. First, Lutheran schools are operated by a
church with a long history of thinking and writing in the area of human ethics. There
is an expectation that principals will apply the teachings of the Word of God in their
life. Therefore it is reasonable to expect that they will have reflected on their beliefs
and values in their professional life. Second, while the group is diverse in terms of
education, background and experience, all are members of the Lutheran Church.
Only a few have undertaken post-graduate study in educational administration. Very
few have studied Lutheran theology. Third, the secondary schools of the Lutheran
Church are more cosmopolitan than the primary schools. A majority of students have
little or no contact with Lutheranism before enrolling. The teaching staffs, too, are
mostly non-Lutheran. Many of the morally challenging issues that lead to decisions
and actions by principals will require rational explanation to students, parents and
staff. Lutheran secondary principals in conference often talk informally of the
tremendous pressure they are under to make compromises in regard to Lutheran
Church expectations and policy. Fourth, because of my position as a teacher educator
for the Lutheran Church, the schools and their principals are likely to be more
accessible and open to the purpose of the endeavour. Finally, there is little research
into the work of Lutheran principals, and none that addresses the focus of this study.
To carry out the research with the entire group would have been impractical. Therefore a method needed to be devised to select which principals to interview. The basis for selection was determined by a number of considerations. I wanted to achieve a spread of possible perspectives. Since it is possible that world view is influenced by gender identity, the sample needed to include both females and males. Since it is probable that world view is derived in part from formal study, at least one principal should have undertaken theological study. Since world view is also a result of professional experience, at least one should be a relatively recent appointee to Lutheran schools. The use of the three categories provided a means of avoiding a concentration of respondents in terms of gender, theological knowledge or experience in Lutheran secondary schools.

The names of the entire group of Lutheran secondary principals were placed into three categories. The first category was female principals. The second category was principals who have held office for less than five years. The third category was principals who have undertaken Lutheran based theological units of study at the post-graduate level. Members of each category were randomly selected using a circular count based on a number selected from a chart of random numbers. Three names were chosen and eliminated from the list, then three additional names were chosen in case a backup was needed in one or more of the categories. Those selected were approached to participate. The first three accepted and became the subjects of the study. It was not necessary to use the backup names. The use of random selection reduced the possibility for me to insert consciously or sub-consciously any personal
bias, beyond the categorisation already explained, into my interaction with those who would be interviewed.

In order to protect the identity of the principals, and to ensure confidentiality of the information a number of protocols were implemented in the collection of the data:

- interviews were conducted at a location designated by each principal;
- there is no reference to individual schools or their locations in the published data;
- there is no reference to demographic information that could be related to an individual in the published data;
- all participants were informed of the risk to confidentiality and the measures undertaken to limit that risk (Appendices H, I);
- permission to conduct the research was sought from the General President of the Lutheran Church of Australia, the relevant district directors for Lutheran schools and the participants (Appendices D, E, F, G & H).

**Summary**

Any research problem is addressed through some understanding of reality. The method for addressing the research will emerge from that understanding. The research question addressed in this study emerges from an educational context that is an expression of the beliefs and values of the Lutheran Church in Australia. The rationale for method is based on an understanding of humans and of society that is informed by those beliefs and values. The perspective of symbolic interactionism provides a research paradigm that fits well with those beliefs and values, and with the issues contained in the problem. Of particular value for this study is the possibility in this research paradigm to uncover and analyse the sources of value and meaning.
making used by principals in addressing ethical dilemmas in their professional practice.

Within the perspective of symbolic interactionism, the specific analytical tool of membership categorisation as developed and used by Baker provides a solid base from which to address the data. In addition, the classifying of narrative reference stories and illustrations has the potential to reveal sources of belief and value common to the principal group.

Having presented the rationale for the method of the study, the perspective of the research, the case for the use of in depth interviews, the method of analysis and the generation of data, I present a summary of this information in visual form.

*Figure 6  Development of research methodology*

| Research question: What are the sources of the value assumptions that influence the reflection of Australian Lutheran secondary school principals as they address ethical dilemmas in their work? |
|  |
| Related questions |
| - How do principals describe and interpret ethically challenging situations? |
| - What beliefs and knowledge are revealed in their narratives? |
| - Is it possible to identify the source(s) of the beliefs and professional knowledge? |
| - Are there common reference groups or reference points in the narratives? |

| Research Perspective: Symbolic Interactionism |
| Data: Stories of ethical dilemma |
| Analysis: Membership Category |
| Reference point Self in situation |
With the means to generate data for analysis, I have arrived at the point where the accounts of the principals in the three cases can be presented and discussed.
CHAPTER 4 THE MISTAKE

Maybe if we were more observant we therefore could have acted and, maybe, stopped this occurring, and, maybe, have got, you know some assistance for that student.

from transcript of interview with a principal

…our vocation is to keep faith with our neighbor and our world in love, as God has kept faith with us and, by our witness of love, to anticipate the fullness of God’s promised future. James Childs

Introduction

In the preceding chapter I discussed the sociological perspective of symbolic interactionism and its value to addressing the questions of my research problem. I then outlined the methodology from within that paradigm that I have adopted to analyse the data I collected. In the next three chapters I present the three accounts that were reported by the principals, and my analysis of those accounts. Transcripts of each of the accounts are appended to the study. However, for ease of reading in the chapters, I have edited the accounts by removing repeats, gaps and connecting words, and by presenting the line of the account in a chronological manner. This is justified on the basis that the analysis does not depend on the reader experiencing the vagaries of naturally occurring speech. In each of the chapters I present a shortened summary of the account. I then present the data derived from the account and discuss the values embedded in the data.

A principal in a relatively new school provides the first account. The principal is working hard, trying to develop a sound reputation for the school. Growth has been rapid, and tasks are often carried out on the run. During the working day there is little
time for reflection. The account is given briefly with little embellishment. The transcript of this account is Appendix A.

**Account of a mistake**

This is about an issue in relation to a child in year two, who went home and told his parents how another student in the class, a female student, had been touching him inappropriately, fondling him in a sexually explicit way. The female student was actually a year older than the class, had come from a sexual abuse background and was certainly a lot more worldly than most year two students. (We found out later that there were other students also fondled by her.) The boy who reported the matter to his parents was the son of a member of the school board, a very prominent person in the congregation. She came to see me, very concerned, very angry and very upset that something like that would happen in the school. She wanted action, dramatic action, taken in relation to the matter. She felt her child and all the other children in the class were not safe while the female was there.

I spoke to the foster parents of the student doing the fondling. They were actually her aunty and uncle. They disclosed to me that she had also been touching their own children at home and that they were a bit unsure about what to do. So, I called an executive meeting of the school board to recommend that we expel the student from the school. The difficult situation that I sort of went through was that knowing the background of the child, that fact that they had a very rough childhood, that they had been exposed to sexual abuse themselves, helps understand how they became an abuser. By expelling them we’re not actually helping the child at all. I’m solving the problem within the school, but I am not really helping the child. But at the same time
I needed to guarantee the safety of the other students around them. I didn’t feel that I could provide enough eyes to watch this child consistently and be able to say that the other kids would be safe from this. In the end, under my recommendation, the executive voted to expel the child. That was the ethical dilemma I went through.

There were several issues that came to light when I thought back on it. One was the safety of the other students. You want your school to be a safe place, and I couldn’t guarantee that this child would not do this again. I don’t think they actually understood that what they were doing was inappropriate. It was something they had grown up with, were used to, and therefore saw really nothing wrong. When I spoke to the child, the child showed no remorse or anything else. You’re talking about an eight-year-old child. The other thing was that with a new school the reputation came in. In a new school having a situation where there has been sexual abuse is going to damage the school, so I was trying to think about those elements. You like to try and keep things quiet but something like that would never be kept quiet. It would always be out there.

The difficulty was the fact that I also know enough about sexual abuse to know that expelling the child from this environment was not going to do anything to help that child, it was going to put the problem onto someone else to deal with. The foster parents might not tell the next school and the whole thing might happen again. There were all sorts of things I had to come to grips with. It was very difficult.

I kept track of the family. Three months after the event the child went back to their natural mother who was a drug addict. She was under the supervision of the Family
and Children’s Services. We had let them know of the incident. A few months after that, the mother committed suicide. Now the child is in another foster care arrangement with another aunty and uncle. I don’t know whether the incident in our school had anything to do with the suicide, but all those things run through your mind. I had sleepless nights. When we made the decision, most of the board members were in tears. It was a pretty emotional thing.

The pastor helped us through, because to some extent we all felt that we had let down this child, that if we were more observant we would have picked up the behaviour sooner and could have acted sooner, stopped it happening, and gotten some help for the student. It was a very emotional time for not just myself, but the members of the board. It was a great thing that the decision was shared. I think that eases the load that you do wear. But the parent (of the fondled child) was irate. The parent felt the school has breached the agreement to be a safe place. They were angry about that. The parent could not see it from the point that it was an eight-year-old child. They put their adult perspective on it, and saw it more of a crime that needed a severe punishment more than the fact than it was a child that needed help. No matter how much talking we did to that parent in relation to that, there was no way that parent was going to be satisfied.

It was the balancing act between what is better for the community against what is better for the individual. We looked at other alternatives like putting her into different classes, increasing teacher assistance so that we would be monitoring recesses and lunches but all of those had financial implications that we simply couldn’t do. The cost was prohibitive, especially in a new school. We were concerned about how the
child and the foster parents might feel. I still have contact with the foster parents. They supported our decision. They found they could no longer foster the child for the sake of their children. They made the hard decision to give the child up. It was hard because it was also a family member. When the mother died, it created a lot of guilt for them. Our pastor worked with them, and I tried to organise counselling for their children who had been abused. I also tried to get the child we expelled some help through Family and Children’s Services, but with very little success. The degree of sexual abuse was deemed to be minor in terms of the bigger picture of what they are dealing with.

One principle we always worked on was very much what Christ would do in the situation, and the hardest thing about it is that we realised that Christ wouldn’t have done what we had chosen to do. In the end a pastor told me that I was not Christ, so I shouldn’t try to put him up as my measure. I was comforted, and thankful for all the people that helped me work through the issues, including the legal issues. It was hard to know what to tell parents (of the school) and what not to tell them. But I still wear the guilt for what I did cause. I actually still question whether it was the right decision to make. I don’t think I’ve actually gotten to the stage where I’ve said what I did was okay, and I think it is something that I can never actually see myself saying. I think I should have fought harder for that child.

I guess it’s the belief or value system that you have. My experience growing up and what I’ve learnt as a teacher and principal in church schools come together to form what I now believe. The concept of unconditional love that I learned in my studies forms a lot of where I stand now. Looking back on it, I think the individual is still
incredibly important within any community and that although we look at the benefit to the community, the individual cannot be discounted. Someone who is God’s child, who is in difficulty and needs assistance…I couldn’t imaging Christ turning his back on this child, and I don’t believe we have a right to. We should have spent more time with the angry parent to try and get them to understand more about the fact that the student didn’t understand; that the student needed our help and our support and our love and our care and that we are not in a position to turn our back on them. I hope no one else has to go through this.

This is the end of the account. I now undertake an analysis of the account in order to attempt to unpack the values depicted within the narration and discuss their impact on the perspective used by the principal in making sense of the ethical dilemma that is being related.

**Analysis of the account**

Starting with the transcripts, I developed tables to code the data. The first column listed the character(s) introduced in the account. The second placed the character into a membership category. The third column used words from the account to describe category bound behaviour, and the fourth the implied valued behaviours embedded in the descriptive behaviours. The fifth column was used to show the value(s) type as delineated by Hodgkinson (Hodgkinson, 1996) demonstrated by the behaviour, and the final column was used to show a possible philosophical source and psychological base. In this manner I was seeking a means to discover the various values that the principals used in constructing their meaning of the events that they relate. Table 1 illustrates the process.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Descriptive behaviours</th>
<th>Implied Characteristics</th>
<th>Value type embedded</th>
<th>Base</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Decision maker</td>
<td>I spoke to foster parents</td>
<td>Consultative</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Utility Pragmatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I had an issue of safety</td>
<td>Decisive and firm</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I called a meeting of board</td>
<td>Aware of responsibility</td>
<td>Sub-rational</td>
<td>Logical positivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I recommended we expel the student</td>
<td>Guilt feelings</td>
<td>Sub-rational</td>
<td>Behaviourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I needed to guarantee the safety of other students</td>
<td>The Christ as role model</td>
<td>Transrational</td>
<td>Faith formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I spoke to the child</td>
<td>Remorseful</td>
<td>Transrational</td>
<td>Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I was incredibly torn, with sleepless nights</td>
<td>Tied to beliefs</td>
<td>Transrational</td>
<td>Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I had lots of discussions with foster parents</td>
<td>Repentant</td>
<td>Transrational</td>
<td>Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I did not do what Christ would have done</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I spoke with my district director</td>
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<td>I still wear the guilt</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I think I should have fought harder to retain</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It has to do with belief and value systems that you have</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I believe in unconditional love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I couldn’t imagine Christ turning his back, and we didn’t have a right to either</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2 girl</td>
<td>Female sexual offender</td>
<td>Touching a boy in year two inappropriately</td>
<td>Sexually aware</td>
<td>Sub rational</td>
<td>Behaviourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eight years old</td>
<td>Abused</td>
<td>Sub rational</td>
<td>Behaviourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>From a sexual abuse background</td>
<td>Habitual offender</td>
<td>Sub rational</td>
<td>Behaviourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Had fondled others</td>
<td>Unaware of error</td>
<td>Sub rational</td>
<td>Behaviourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Had a very rough childhood</td>
<td>At risk</td>
<td>Sub rational</td>
<td>Behaviourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Didn’t understand that behaviour was inappropriate</td>
<td>Protected</td>
<td>Sub rational</td>
<td>Behaviourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Showed no remorse</td>
<td>Suffering</td>
<td>Sub rational</td>
<td>Behaviourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Went back to her natural mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Under supervision of Family and Children’s Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother committed suicide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Now in permanent foster care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Angry powerful person</td>
<td>School board member</td>
<td>Had ability to do damage to the reputation of school</td>
<td>Sub rational</td>
<td>Behaviourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prominent person in congregation</td>
<td>Well connected Irrational</td>
<td>Sub rational</td>
<td>Behaviourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very angry</td>
<td>Action oriented</td>
<td>Sub rational</td>
<td>Behaviourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very upset</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Accused school of breaching safe place promise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Irrate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wanted severe punishment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Was not going to be satisfied by talk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster parents</td>
<td>Helpless victims</td>
<td>Aunty and uncle to child</td>
<td>Well meaning</td>
<td>Sub rational</td>
<td>Logical positivism Pragmatism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure what to do about the child’s behaviour</td>
<td>Unable to assist with the issue</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Logical positivism Pragmatism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wanting to protect their own children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1  Categories in the first account

While this analysis clearly shows a range of values held by the principal, it does not explain the actions taken or the motives for those actions. What it clearly illustrates is
a phenomenon mentioned by Begley who stated that individuals commonly manifest or articulate one value while being committed to another (Begley, 1999). I then have to ask how the principal sees the generalised other and self as proposed by Charon (Charon, 2001). With these thoughts in mind, I proceed to a discussion of this account.

Discussion of the account

The first of the major characters introduced in this account is the mother of the child who was fondled by a classmate. She is described as a school board member and a very prominent person. She is very angry and very upset. She wants dramatic action. She sees a crime that requires punishment. She has the potential to damage the school. She feels the school has breached its agreement to provide a safe place for her child. She feels her child is not safe. There is no way that she is going to be satisfied unless the child is expelled. She threatens to take some action if the child is not expelled. The category into which this character is placed could be described as powerful parent demanding action. Whenever the principal mentions this individual it is in terms of the threat to the school that she represents.

The second of the major characters in this account is the female child who fondled a male classmate. She is a year older than her classmates, an eight year old. To the principal she appears a lot worldlier than the usual year two student does. She has had a rough childhood. She comes from a sexual abuse background. She shows no remorse because she doesn’t understand her action is inappropriate. She fondles others in the class. She fondles children in her foster home. The principal depicts her as a danger to other students. She needs constant supervision. Her presence is
perceived as a threat to the reputation of the school. At two points in the account, the principal talks about the child in the third person plural (they, them). This occurs when the rough childhood and sexual abuse are introduced, and the second when the failure to show remorse is mentioned. At all other points the principal speaks of ‘the child’. The third person singular is never used. The principal has placed the student into a category and distanced that category. The label is sexually abused/sexual abuser. As the account continues, this child becomes the victim of circumstance, someone the school has deserted, someone who needs counselling. In the line where the principal mentions the child returning to live with her mother, there is the strange mixture of the term the child and the plural pronoun their.

The third of the characters is the couple who has fostered the child. They are the actual aunty and uncle of the child. They reveal that their own children have reported being touched by the child. They will have to send the child to another school. Three months later they no longer are fostering the child. They feel guilt when the natural mother commits suicide. They are no longer involved with the school. They need pastoral support because of the guilt they experience. They are the principal’s continuing connection with the expelled child. These people have been placed in the category of well meaning but helpless victims of the situation.

The final character is the principal. The principal is the one who speaks to the student, who speaks to the foster parents, who listens to the irate parent and who decides to expel the child. However, the principal involves the executive of the school board, minus the irate parent, to carry out the expulsion. The principal is not happy after the child is expelled. There are concerns about the fate of the child and
about whether it was correct to expel the child. There is the concern that the child was not helped. There is concern that the school did not act in a Christ-like way toward the individual. The principal feels guilt. The principal talks about loss of sleep. The principal describes the choice as one between the safety of the entire school and the needs of a child with a problem. The limited resources of the school and its future reputation are seen as the rationale for taking the decision. The principal is not comforted by being told that it is not necessary to be Christ-like. The principal believes a mistake has been made and that it has had dire consequences for one child. The principal experiences a sense of guilt. In this account the principal has categorised self as the one who must decide between two undesirable outcomes. The principal is trying to weigh up the different possibilities, and finally decides on a course of action. Then guilt and remorse are experienced as the principal comes to realise the decision was contrary to basic beliefs and values. This raises a significant question, namely why did the principal expel the child? Is there some indication in the account that provides a clue as to what value conflicted with the importance of accepting the child as Christ would have, and with working with the child?

As soon as the principal becomes involved in the situation, the reference group (Shibutani, 1955) related to is the one consisting of parents and potential parents of the school. The angry powerful mother who had the potential to damage the school is the representative of this group in the narrative. The principal decides to expel the child, and has the school board endorse that decision. The child, who is presented as both the abuser and the victim of abuse, is distanced into a category of people who don’t know that they are doing something wrong, who need constant surveillance, who show no remorse. They are people who have problems the school does not have
the resources to address. Later in the narrative the point is made that even the state does not have the resources that the child needs. However, when there is time to reflect the principal uses the reference group of the churches he/she has worked for and the teachers she/he has had to view the child in a different light. Now the child is an individual that needed acceptance and help, someone who would have been treated differently by Christ. The situation in retrospect is depicted as a choice between doing what was right for the child and doing what was right for the entire school.

**Haunted by a value**

This case is a clear example of a conflict between values as posited by Hodgkinson (Hodgkinson 1991, 1996, 1978) and discussed in the second chapter. As the account unfolds, the rational values dealing with consequences are given primary attention. The principal carefully considers what is best for the school, and then acts according to that value. However, after a period of time following reflection on the action that was taken, the discovery is made that a basic Christian trans-rational principle has been violated. The value of caring for a person in need as Christ would have done has been sacrificed. We hear in the principal’s account the struggle to come to terms with that decision. Guilt is clearly felt. In the principal’s own words:

> Umm… oh you know the I was incredibly torn, you know the.. the.. the concept of sleepless nights over those sort of decisions are (sic) very common. 
> …to some extent we all felt that we had let down this child.. umm.. that maybe if we were more observant we would have picked up the behaviour sooner. Umm… maybe if we were more observant we therefore could have acted, and maybe stopped this occurring, and maybe have got.. you know.. some assistance for that student. (Lines 111-119)⁷

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⁷ All quotes are from transcripts of the interviews.
With this confession, the principal is admitting to not being able to defend the decision on moral grounds. There is recognition that the well-being an individual child has been sacrificed for the sake of perceptions regarding how future parents might view the school.

The principal gives clear indication of the source of the trans-rational values. They are based on the life and work of Christ.

Yeah umm I.. I suppose there were several things that we did. One was the principle we always worked on was.. was very much of what would Christ do in this situation and ah the.. the hardest thing about it is that we actually realised that Christ wouldn’t have done what we had chosen to do and I think as a group we knew that umm and I certainly did, but in the end umm a pastor in fact a district a now district president said to me yes that’s.. that’s fine but your not Christ umm so basically you know don’t try and you know put yourself up against Him as a model. (Lines 187-193)

The voice of the pastor pronounces forgiveness, but the conscience does not give rest. Why did the principal make a decision before reflecting on all the implications? What were the forces that led to speedy action at the expense of deeply held values? When I asked what was the source of the values that are held, the principal made the following comment:

… probably a combination of my experience growing up, what I’ve learnt as a principal and a teacher in the Lutheran system and the (another church) system for that matter. I suppose it’s come together to form what I now believe and.. ah.. and, you know, the .. the concept of which we’ve has been something that’s been held very firm with me.. and also you know I suppose from within the masters (postgraduate program of Australian Lutheran College)... In relation to agape love. It’s formulated I think of lot of where I stand now. (Lines 238-245)

Yes, these values have led to the feelings of guilt, but they do not account for the decision to expel the child. One indicator of what values were driving the principal is
the recurring reference to the anger of an influential parent and the expectations of the parent body. Another is the small but significant reference to the help of the district director in regard to legal matters. The principal mentions:

aticalities of what could occur as well umm you know if it had got out to parent community what had occurred umm you know how much information should we give parents…(Lines 194-198)

Here I believe is the sub-rational value based on fear (Hodgkinson, 1996). This is not fear for self, but rather fear of the legal implications of sexual behaviour by a student. Perhaps it is a deeper fear, that of a child who is different, and therefore somehow threatening. Perhaps it is fear of the reaction of parents who might pack up and leave the school. Perhaps it is all of the above fears rolled together.

It appears that the conflict with which the principal is left after the event and the passage of time is that between a trans-rational value of Christ-like acceptance and love and a sub-rational value of fear expressed as the of rejection of the school by the parents. The principal’s discomfort is in the knowledge that the behaviour shows she/he allowed the fear to dominate. He/she used rational argument to explain a behaviour that conflicts with a central principle to which the principal subscribes. This is the lesson that the principal is seeking to convey. She/he acted too quickly. In the time since the event, reflection shows that in order to be consistent with personal principles he/she should have acted differently. The final statement by the principal is an eloquent summary of that realisation:

I suppose the advice that I would give would be that the individual is still incredibly important within any community and that although we look at the benefit the community, (we) can not discount that individual. But that is still someone who is God’s child, who is in
difficulty and needs assistance. I couldn’t imagine Christ turning his back on this child and therefore I don’t believe that we have a right to. I think I’d advise the school board to probably spend more time with the parent who was so upset and use a pastor more to help them. In fact the principal or someone (should) council them to try and get them to understand more about the fact that this student really didn’t understand and does need our help and our support and our love and our care, and that we really are not in a position to turn our back on them. (Lines 251-261)

Summary

The first of the accounts as here presented and discussed, raises a number of points for thought and reflection. It clearly confirms observations made by others such as Begley (1999), Butler (1996), and Charon (2001), that the pathway from the beliefs and values held by an individual to the actions that they take in ethical dilemmas is anything but straightforward or simple. Clearly, as Butler (1996) has pointed out, the values have served as filters in what was considered. However, as the account shows, there were values operating that the principal did not attend to until well after the event. These are brought out during periods of introspection and reflection as tools to make sense of the events that unfolded. The application of the trans-rational value lens led to a situation where the principal is haunted by the thought of what should have been done. I now move to the presentation and discussion of the second account.
CHAPTER 5

With the approval of the Acting Dean, Graduate Studies, an account and analysis of one confidential interview has been removed from the thesis to ensure that the interviewee's anonymity is guaranteed. The account has been removed from the following pages, 96 – 114. The transcript from which the account was drawn (Appendix B), pages 164 - 175 has also been removed. Quotes from and specific reference to the account in the final chapter have been removed from the following pages, 137-138, 139, 141. The author regrets any inconvenience this causes readers seeking to fully understand the conclusions.
CHAPTER 6 THE LAST STRAW

I became frustrated with the group because of their self-righteous belief that they were doing all that God wanted them to do, and it was the other person that had to do something different. from transcript of interview with principal.

...we are faced with a dialogue of decision that forces us to struggle not only with the choice of that material principle of justice that is most appropriate to a given area of human activity but also with the reality of the constant conflicting claims that arise in the pursuit of justice. James Childs

Introduction

The two preceding accounts addressed quite different ethical dilemmas. While the first involved students, the second had its locus in the lives of teaching staff that overflowed into the school. Within each account there are indications of the values shaping the view of the principals as they seek to address the dilemmas, and the manner in which those values had an effect on their decisions. I now present the third account, as I seek to continue the process of discovery of the values being used and the effect that they have. In this account the ethical dilemma involves neither students nor teaching staff. Rather it is located in the school office, where a number of ancillary staff work in close proximity with one another.

Account of an outsider

I’ve always maintained that good relationships among staff and a sense of team commitment is crucial if we are to build a community based on the love of Christ. Such a community provides a tremendous environment for young people. I’ve been
blessed with few conflicts among staff. When they do occur, they worry me most.
The worst one is recent.

A vacancy came up in a senior position on the support staff team when a very popular
person who had been with us from the start of the school suddenly resigned. When
we advertised, we didn’t get any really good candidates, so we readvertised. One
particular candidate displayed some of the skills we wanted, and was already known
in the college (a parent), so we made the appointment. The appointee had a
tremendous love for the school and was prepared to go beyond the call of duty in
many ways, but had some personal characteristics that put other office staff off side
very quickly. She had the tendency to want to know all about people, and the habit of
invading their personal space. I became involved when they spoke to me of their
concerns. They felt that she was prying into their personal lives and uncovering past
traumas. I spoke to the new staff member and we worked out a way the friction could
be avoided. However, the damage was already done. The complaints continued, and
the line manager who should have addressed them didn’t talk to the offending person.

When staff came to me I asked them to consider the positive qualities of the person,
and also to consider that they might have built things up by talking to each other about
her. They were not happy about that, and I could see that there was some justification
for their concerns. Then we began to hear that the person was talking about her
colleagues to friends not in the school. It was starting to develop into a very tense
situation. I discussed it with the school pastor and with the senior management team.
We decided to urge all the people involved to try to be more objective, and to
concentrate on their work. We suggested that pointing the finger at one person would
not resolve the matter. What really troubled me was the fact that many of the complaining staff were active Christians, but did not seem able to work the matter through in the spirit of Christian love. I encouraged everyone to sit down and talk the matter through. The lady at the centre of the matter claimed that she tried to speak to people but they would not.

One member of staff became a spokesperson for the rest, and I suspect that there was a bit of a power struggle in the matter as well, since the spokesperson seemed to resent that the newcomer had a higher position and salary. The rest of the staff resented that.

Finally we realised that the matter was out of hand and beyond our ability to fix. The lines had been drawn so strongly and the positions taken so strongly that it would take a miracle to sort it out. I thought that the new lady had tried to change, but that the rest of the staff were not willing to accept responsibility to sort it out. They had virtually made up their minds that it would not be sorted until that person left. Finally we brought in a mediator from outside the school who got all the people to sit down together and try to sort it out. At the end nobody was happy. Long serving staff felt that the school and I had let them down by bringing in an outsider. They believed we should have been able to fix it internally.

The mediator stated there were two key people in opposition, and that both were very strong, and neither one would budge or accept any responsibility for the tension. The remainder of staff were supporting one of them. He came up with a plan, but it didn’t help the situation. Oh, things quieted down, and I heard that everyone was trying to
resolve matters, but I continued to hear complaints about the woman, and she continued to let me know that she felt the others were harassing her. I suggested she confront them, but she didn’t want to do that.

When I think about my role in this, I guess that I was trying to get the staff to see that they should be asking themselves, “What would Christ have you do in this situation? How would he want you to behave? How would he want you to respond?” I was becoming frustrated that everyone seemed to have the self-righteous belief that they were doing all that God wanted of them and that it was the other person who really needed to do something different.

We got to the end of the matter in the fourth term when the lady in question put in her resignation. We talked her out of it, and tried to ensure that everyone gave it another go. It went on, and gradually other members of the staff and community got drawn in. Finally she did resign. It really frustrated me, and it seemed to me that there had been a conspiracy to get rid of the lady, so I decided to write a letter to give all those who had been involved in the matter my view of what they had done. I ran it past senior management, and my school pastor contributed to it. In it I said that the lady had resigned and it made me reflect on the events of the past couple of years, and that the treatment of the person was not in harmony with the Christian ethos of the school. I stated that while people felt that their behaviour and actions were appropriate and legitimate, I really thought they should rethink the situation and realise that there might have been actions that they should regret and should change. I let them know that this had worked against the general harmony and teamwork of the school, and
that we all had to work to make sure it would not happen again. Actually, the wording might have been a bit stronger.

It drew an immediate response. I gave them the letter on the Thursday and on the following Monday the person who was the leader of the group came to see me and broke into tears and told me how disappointed they were that I would write a letter to them. They had always thought I was an understanding person, but now I had taken this person’s side, and obviously didn’t understand what they had gone through. They were particularly hurt when I said their actions were not in harmony with the Christian ethos of the school. They felt that they had put up with this person for some time.

I reacted by saying that I did not want to discuss the matter at once, but that we should take a week to think about what I had written. I said that after that if individuals wanted to, they could come and talk to me one at a time. (I did that on advice from senior management staff.) The spokesperson came back to me and said they wanted to come and speak to me as a group. Finally I agreed to that. When we were about to meet, the main spokesperson came and told me that not only would I be talking to the group, but that the union representative would be coming to join them. First however, she said the union rep wanted to talk to me individually. I agreed.

The union person said that the group needs to talk with you. They are hurting and it would be really good if you heard what they have to say. They are very appreciative of you and what you’ve done, but they feel hurt because they believe you have let them down. So they all came in with the union representative, and I got another member of
staff to come with me so that I had somebody there as a witness. Each one of them had written out a thing and they just read those out to me and there were tears and everything. It was very much expressing their hurt, that they had been wronged by the lady who resigned and that senior management had taken her side.

I didn’t feel I had taken anyone’s side. For the whole two years that it had gone on, I could see fault on both sides. Over the time, I had probably felt more comfortable with the members of the group than with the person who resigned. However, as time went on, I felt that the isolation of the person was not fair and wasn’t right. I was hurt that they all read out the stuff. The staff member I took with me told me afterward that she wanted to try to stop the injustice of the situation. She wanted to say “Stop, stop! You are giving this man hell here and he doesn’t deserve it.” She felt they were taking out all their bitterness and anger against me rather than looking at the situation they had created, and only they could sort out. I listened to them and I really didn’t respond. I told them I heard what they were saying, but I still stand by what I wrote in my letter. The lady would be with us for another month, and then she had children in the school, so I hoped they would make the next month no more difficult for her.

I did actually write another letter to the group members in which I apologised for what they went through, but drew their attention to the points I made in the letter because I still see it as something that you need to reflect on. I told them I would think about how I could have better responded that might have saved all the hurt and pain, but I wanted them to realise that the other party also felt pain. Then I asked everyone to put the experience behind us, and start the next year fresh. I told them I
value what they do for the school, and the way they support me and other staff, and that they were crucial to the smooth running of the school.

Since that time a new person has been appointed who is a different gender and all is calm and all is peaceful.

Why didn’t I make a decision and sort out the problem early by getting rid of one of the ringleaders? Probably because I’m too unwilling to take sides. My (spouse) calls me ‘Enos’, the peacemaker. You know you take ‘Enos’ if you have an upset tummy. I try to avoid causing pain. I try to get a resolution where everybody is happy and sometimes I can’t. I don’t want to be the judge. I didn’t want to use force on the issue. I’m not sure if was a good or a bad thing.

I guess that in everything that happens in a Lutheran school should we bear in mind the gospel message because we say we offer a distinctive environment for education that is motivated and undergirded by our Christian faith. It seems to me that the gospel message is a message of peace, a message that does not cause division. These people for all intents and purposes were telling me they were Christians, and I believe that in the Bible we are told if your brother sins against you go and talk to him alone, and then if you can’t, get another one. I suppose I was trying to get them to do that. I was hoping and praying that the matter could be resolved without my making a decision. I did not have the wisdom of Solomon to know who was right. I wasn’t confident enough to know for sure that I would make the right decision, and that it would stand up. I didn’t want to cause an unfair dismissal. I believe there was wrong on both sides.
I wanted them to do what we as Christians are called to do and that is to weigh up, to consider what we can do to love our neighbour as ourselves, to put ourself into the neighbour’s shoe and step back from conflict. I think if I could have gotten those folk to see that they’d each contributed to the conflict we could all have sought forgiveness and started afresh, putting it behind us. That’s what I wanted to happen, but it didn’t work. Yet, I’ve seen it work with staff. One of the things that probably contributed to it is that they all work in very close proximity to each other. I also reflect that I have never had to deal with anything like this with teaching staff. Maybe it is because all the people involved are female. I don’t know.

My strong commitment to the ethos of the school comes from the faith, simple as that. I stuff up all the time and too often don’t think things through in a procedural way. I tend simplistically to believe that it is all about relationships. Get the relationships right and the rest will fall into line. It may be naive and silly but in many ways when the relationships are stuffed up as they were here, I am at a loss because I want people to work through to a resolution. I guess that if relationships break down and we rely on procedural things, we may not grow better relationships.

I think its best not to put people on performance review, but to sit them down and by talking get them to pick up their game. Generally it’s worked for me. My experience has been that if you can’t talk with people and get them to realise their mistake, and apologise, it doesn’t work out. In this case it didn’t work out anyway. The lady at the centre of it didn’t want to work it out. Nor did the others. It was a messy business.
As a postscript to the events, in recent times the school has had some conflict with the lady who resigned over decisions regarding her children. From that I can begin to see or sense the things about her that caused the problems when she worked for us. Perhaps I always felt that she was not easy to work with right from the start.

This is the end of the account. Again I undertake an analysis of the account, starting with membership categorisation, and then proceeding to discuss the values and the source of values that the account reveals.

**Analysis of the account**

This account at first appears to have a larger cast of major characters than the first two accounts. However, on closer examination, there are only three, the principal who openly reflects upon the thoughts and considerations that were behind personal actions, the new employee, whose behaviour and manner initiate a conflict, and the close knit group of support staff who are not identified as individuals. The table for this account was more difficult to construct since the self created by the principal is the dominant character in the account. It became evident after consideration that the principal, in constructing the account, placed self into two membership categories. The first of these is the school administrator, belonging to the category of primary authority in the school. The second is that of the thoughtful Christian, confused by the inability of the other characters to carry out the appropriate behaviour that he/she can see is called for. Table 3 is constructed in that way. The table is an indicator that this account is very strongly shaped by the lens through which the principal views the world. That lens is consistently used to comment on the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Descriptive Behaviours</th>
<th>Implied Characteristics</th>
<th>Value type</th>
<th>Base</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self 1</td>
<td>pragmatic</td>
<td>Listened to complaints</td>
<td>Approachable</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>administra</td>
<td>Gave advice to staff members</td>
<td>Directive</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>tor</td>
<td>Spoke to the offending new worker</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consulted with pastor and senior management team</td>
<td>Consultative</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Utility</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brought in a mediator</td>
<td>Not territorial</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Offered to speak to staff individually</td>
<td>Cautious</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Heard comments but did not respond immediately</td>
<td>Measured</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Liberalism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Had a witness present when meeting with staff</td>
<td>Cautious</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Avoided formal procedure</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self 2</td>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>Wanted community with love of Christ</td>
<td>Committed to modelling</td>
<td>Transrational</td>
<td>Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Believed that positive relationships were critical</td>
<td>Idealistic</td>
<td>Transrational</td>
<td>Faith</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>leader</td>
<td>Prayed about problem</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Transrational</td>
<td>Faith</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Urged people to consider what a Christian response would be</td>
<td>Encouraging</td>
<td>Transrational</td>
<td>Faith</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kept talking to unhappy group and urging them to consider Christian solution</td>
<td>Directive</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Humanism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asked people what would Christ do in this situation</td>
<td>Directive</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Confronted group by writing a letter expressing disappointment with their behaviour</td>
<td>Judgemental</td>
<td>Transrational</td>
<td>Faith</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Apologised for causing hurt but did not reside from letter</td>
<td>Compassionate but firm</td>
<td>Transrational</td>
<td>Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New worker</td>
<td>Outsider</td>
<td>Pried into private lives of other staff</td>
<td>Nosy</td>
<td>Sub-rational</td>
<td>Behaviour-ism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Invaded private space</td>
<td>Insensitive</td>
<td>Sub-rational</td>
<td>Behaviour-ism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Put people off side</td>
<td>Different Unprofessional</td>
<td>Sub-rational</td>
<td>Hedonism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Did not fit in</td>
<td>Open to change</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Utility</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Talked about people out of school</td>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>Sub-rational</td>
<td>Utility</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tried to improve relationship with other staff</td>
<td>Defeated</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Hedonism</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Made effort to change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complained of being harassed</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resigned</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The group</td>
<td>Insiders</td>
<td>Complained and asked that something be done to help them</td>
<td>Offended and upset</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Utility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of workers</td>
<td>Resented the position, wages &amp; flexible work hours the new person was given</td>
<td>Powerless</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Utility</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seemed unwilling to change</td>
<td>Jealous</td>
<td>Sub-rational</td>
<td>Hedonism</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Felt let down by school</td>
<td>Stubborn</td>
<td>Sub-rational</td>
<td>Hedonism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read out statements of discontent with principal</td>
<td>Ungrateful</td>
<td>Sub-rational</td>
<td>Hedonism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Sub-rational</td>
<td>Hedonism</td>
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</table>

Table 3  Categories in the third account
behaviour of self and of others. The values of the principal are clear. What is not valued is also very clear. Hodgkinson (1978, p. 12) would call them ethical principles that take the form of injunctions unable to be justified by logical argument. This now unfolds as I turn to a discussion of the account.

**Discussion of the account**

Unlike the first account which presented the personal struggle with values within a principal, this account portrays a case where the values shaping the perception of the principal tend to blind him/her to other viewpoints, hampering the assessment of the issues (Begley, 1999). From the outset of the account the principal establishes a framing perspective for what is to follow. In her/his words:

> I have always maintained that relationships and a sense of committed team is crucial …if there is going to be a community developed which is based on the love of Christ and (which) will provide a tremendous environment for young people (lines 10-13).

The dilemma that the principal goes on to describe is one where the staff involved cannot resolve an issue they have with each other in the manner to which the principal is committed. When the staff members begin to approach the principal with concerns and complaints, they were given advice to avoid making judgements, to see the good in the person they did not like and to make more effort to get along. The principal spoke to them about the things in behaviour that were upsetting or annoying others, and tried to help develop ways to avoid such upset. This approach was of no help. Staff felt that the new person did not fit in. However, the principal, while seeing it as a difficult situation, continued to be of the view that they must make it work.
…it developed into a very difficult situation. I discussed with my school pastor and senior management team. We weighed up various ways that we might be able to handle this. We prayed about it. We urged each person to...they were becoming a bit subjective...we urged them to really work hard at trying to look to themselves and what they could do to resolve the situation rather than pointing the finger and we did that with the other person involved too...(lines 77-84).

According to the principal’s frame of reference, the staff members were not behaving in a manner that was in keeping with their Christian beliefs. This point was made very explicitly.

I guess one of the things that made it even more frustrating was that..two or three of the key figures involved...the person who was causing the concern to the others and a couple of the other key people...by their words, by their actions in their church...were strongly committed Christians would talk very strongly about their faith and about seeking God’s will (lines 84-90).

To the principal, to be a Christian meant that there would be a particular way of addressing the issue that they staff had in the workplace. The commitment should be to sit down together and talk through the issues. They should be acting in response to God’s love. They should find a way to restore their relationship and the harmony of the work environment. The only reason that this might not be happening is that there is a power struggle between the new person and others, who resent the salary, and the power that goes with the position.

Finally in frustration the principal and senior management team come to a conclusion that they cannot solve the issue, and a decision is made to bring in a mediator from outside. The conclusion that the mediator came to after a mediation meeting was that two people were at fault, but that they would not accept responsibility for the conflict, and would not budge in their way of seeing it. There was a plan put in place but nothing came of it. This left the principal confused, uncertain and rather frustrated.
I was seeking advice from others and trying to work out what is my role here. I’m trying to get this (sorted). I’m…emphasising from a Christian point of view, “Folks, do you consider what you are doing and how you are responding and your actions in the sense of what would Christ have you do in this situation? How would he want you to behave? How would he want you to respond?” I guess I became frustrated with the group at the self-righteous belief that they were doing all that God would want them to do (lines 149-158).

For this principal there was only one way to solve the matter, and that was to put into action the values that in her/his view were fundamental to human relationships. When the new person tried to put in her resignation the principal talked her out of it. However, the problems continued. The principal felt that people were harassing the woman, and went so far as to advise her to make a claim that she was being harassed. The principal kept encouraging people to consider what Christ would do. Over time more and more people became aware of the issue. Finally, the woman at the centre did resign, and her resignation was accepted.

At this point the matter of the conflict is over. However, for this principal the issue is not finished:

…it seemed to me that the group of staff who had taken this action and who had carried out this—almost a plan I suppose—that they should be confronted. Alright, this person was leaving, but we had to fill the position and would the next person if they took a dislike …I wrote a letter which I ran past senior management and my school pastor, and when we were happy sent it to them. It was a letter saying that with disappointment I had received the woman’s resignation…and that the treatment of that person …was not in harmony with the Christian ethos of the school. While there may have been some reasons for which people felt that their behaviour and actions were appropriate and legitimate I really asked them to rethink that in terms of …whether there were things they regretted and if they had the time again, might change (lines 174-192).

There was more in the letter along the same lines, and needless to say there was a strong reaction. Before too long the principal was faced with a tearful spokesperson
for the group, who made it clear that they felt betrayed. The principal refused to
discuss his/her action and offered to speak to individuals in a week. After a week, the
outcome was that there was a meeting of the entire group with the principal and a
union representative and the principal had to sit through the painful experience of
staff reading statements of disappointment in him/her.

The principal was hurt by the experience, but did not seem to understand that there
might be another way to see the situation. He/she believed that the isolation of one
person by the group was not fair and not right. The person did not deserve the
treatment. The words in the account of the neutral staff member the principal invited
to be with him at the meeting give voice to the feelings:

    Hang on, hang on. Stop this! You are giving this (person) hell here and
    he/she doesn’t deserve it. What you are doing is taking out all your
    bitterness and all your anger against her/him rather than looking at the
    situation that you have created and which only you can sort out (lines
    261-266).

The response of the principal to the meeting was to write another letter to the staff
involved. In it there was an apology for causing hurt to them, but another request that
they reflect on what had happened and the way that they behaved and whether this
was in line with their Christian life. This was followed by a request to put it all
behind them and start afresh the following year.

**Blinkered by a value**

From the point of view of many administrative and leadership writers, this situation
would not be an ethical dilemma. However for this principal it was a dilemma and
the effort to deal with closely held personal values and pragmatic rational values
resulted in what amounted to a division within self. The pragmatic administrator tried
to keep the peace, gave people advice, consulted with senior staff, brought in a mediator, didn’t order people around, and generally tried to allow folks to work it out for themselves. In that role the principal sought to avoid quick action, took precautions to have witnesses present, sought to operate according to industrial law and generally seemed balanced and sensible. On the other hand the strongly Christian individual held that there was a correct way of seeing the conflict and addressing the issues within it. That person also did not want to take sides, could see right and wrong on both sides. That person had come to believe that good relationships are the result of good interaction, not policy or rules. That person had reached a point where it was most important to go about things in a particular way. The deep seated personal values had become the lens. This is most clear in the lines:

…deep down I wanted them to do what I believe we as Christians are called to do and that is to weigh up and consider what we individually have done to love our neighbour as ourselves to try and put yourself into the neighbour’s shoe and basically to take a backwards step and say I think … I think we could have gotten those people to have admitted that they had contributed in their own way to this. To say, “We all have things to seek forgiveness for and we are prepared to give that forgiveness and we are now prepared to start afresh.” That’s what I wanted to happen (lines 353-362).

It was an ethical dilemma because the principal had a particular world view informed by strong values. Yet, the people involved did not respond in the way the principal wanted. They saw things differently. As the principal reflects at the end of the account:

…it didn’t work. Yet I’ve seen it work with staff. I guess one of the things that really made me think about this-I have to say its terrible-that all the people involved in this were females. We might say this happens with males as well and perhaps it does, but in this case that is one of the things that contributed to it. That and they all work in very close proximity to each other. Also, why did it happen at that level (administration staff) and not at the level of teaching staff (lines 366-374)?
Whether it could happen at teaching staff level was not explored. Finally, the principal reflects on why the choices were made. In doing so the two roles for self are set up side by side and compared.

Istuff up all the time and too often I don’t sit down and look at this from a procedural way—what should happen here from a legal or organisational way. I’m not strong on that. Thank goodness I have a couple of people around me who remind me of those things. I tend to simplistically say its all about relationships. Get the relationships right and the rest will fall into line. Naive and silly, but in many ways because I feel that way, when the relationships are stuffed up perhaps I’m at a bit of a loss then, because I still want to get that working…I myself will admit to people, “Look, I’m sorry I let you down there, and I want you to know…,” and generally that works it out (from lines 385-393 and 416-418).

The account ends with the principal trying to explain to some staff what had happened. At the end it is obvious that for the principal, “It was a messy business.” Messy because the people with whom the principal was working did not operate according to the world view he/she held.

Summary

In this final account I have presented the case of a principal acting in ways that seem guaranteed to cause upset and discontent, yet persisting in following a course of action that is deemed to be the right way to solve the issue. It clearly demonstrates the power of value perspective to provide a lens to interpret the world, providing an example of the kind of reflection that Butler suggests in his model of human agency (Butler, 1996). The principal was blinded to a number of possible solutions to the dilemma by a fundamental value.

In the last three chapters, I have presented the three accounts provided by the principals that were interviewed. After each account I presented a chart
demonstrating the membership category of the significant characters in the account, the category bound behaviours and the type of values demonstrated, using Hodgkinson’s hierarchy (Hodgkinson, 1996). This was followed by a discussion of the account within which I highlighted the way in which each account was unique, and yet demonstrated one or more aspects of issues addressed in the theoretical literature. Having presented and discussed the data, I now develop a discussion of the outcomes of the research, and the implications of these outcomes.
CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

My methods come from the faith, simple as that sounds. Please don’t get me wrong. I stuff up all the time... from interview with a principal

In some sense we are all deadwood and apparently not good for much. But God graciously retrieves us and fashions us anew into a thing of beauty that is a service to humankind: a church, a people of promise, a people of anticipation. James Childs

Introduction

This study has investigated the way that Lutheran secondary school principals in Australia reflect on ethical dilemmas in an effort to ascertain the values they call upon in the process. The first section of this chapter contains a brief summary of the study. The second section has as its focus a discussion of the outcomes of the study in relation to the research questions, concluding with a clear statement of the primary thesis. In the third section the implications of the findings for a range of stakeholders in Lutheran secondary education are discussed. The fourth section explores the implications in the findings for future research. As a conclusion the chapter describes how the study might be used to contribute to an understanding of the values that shape or distort a world view in the reflections of school principals.

Overview of the study

This study sought to address the question:

What values influence the reflection of Australian Lutheran secondary school principals as they address ethical dilemmas in their work?
It is of interest because every school principal exercises power over others by making decisions. In the exercise of power, as Hodgkinson points out (Hodgkinson, 1999), the individual will and the common good often come in conflict, or individual perceptions of the common good are clouded or occluded by the values that act as lenses in assessing event where action is required (Begley, 1999). It is the intersection of the theoretical with the practical that locates the question. To date most research studies have not addressed non-rational value types, and those that address the actual work of principals tend to ignore theoretical underpinning (Begley, 1996). This study is a deliberate attempt to unpack the unexamined issues.

Significance of the study
The changing nature of education in Australia, the changing nature of the student population in Lutheran schools and the rapid expansion of those schools throughout Australia have compounded the possibility for differences in fundamental values and the potential for conflicts among those involved with Lutheran schooling in Australia. Because the people of the Lutheran church who operate the schools have expectations regarding the beliefs, values and practise of teachers and principals (Lutheran Church of Australia, 1992; Lutheran Church of Australia, 1993; Lutheran Church of Australia, 1997), it is of interest to know what values are operating in ethically challenging situations.

There is theological literature describing a possible world view that Lutheran principals might have (Lazareth, 2001; Bonhoeffer, 1992; Jersild, 1990), but no one has to date attempted to see if they do. There is also theoretical literature that examines the place of values in the practise of school administration (Hodgkinson,
1991, 1996; Begley, 1996; Begley and Leonard, 1999), but one does not know how these might connect to the day to day practise of Lutheran school principals. There is a theoretical model of human agency (Butler, 1996) that suggests the world view of educators may be strongly influenced by the values that they hold. However this model was developed in conjunction with a study of teacher in-service education rather than school administration. All of these elements have the potential to inform our understanding of how Lutheran secondary principals reflect on their professional practise. To date there are no studies of the question in this population.

The number of studies into the issue of values in educational administration is fairly limited, but interest in the topic is growing. Studies of various aspects of leadership touch on the issue of values in decision making (Campbell, 1992; Liethwood et al., 1994; Reeves et al., 1998). Studies into values and the reality of change (Louden and Wildy, 1999), ethical challenges in decision making (MacBeath, 1998; Dempster and Mahoney, 1998; Dempster et al., 2001), ethical reasoning (Kirby et al., 1992), addressing ethical dilemmas (Roche, 1997; Bredberg and Davidson, 1999,), and meaning making by principals (Hunter, 2002) have all addressed aspects of the research issue, but have not combined all the elements considered here. I agree with Begley’s (1996) finding that the bulk of the studies address rational values. This study responds to his call for research that is situated in administrative contexts specific enough to provide practical relevance. It is also sensitive to the call for research into the professional values on which heads base their leadership (Dempster and Mahoney, 1998).
Research design and methodology
Since this study sought to examine the values that had an influence on Lutheran secondary school principals as they addressed ethical dilemmas, it was necessary to adopt a methodology that could illuminate the world of inner knowledge within which values inform agency. A qualitative rather than a quantitative approach seemed most appropriate for a number of reasons. It is descriptive and seeks to understand the meaning making of the individual, rather than seeking a specific outcome. Its concern is more with the authenticity of the illumination of that inner world (Silverman, 1993) rather than the generalisability of the data to a wider population. The focus of the study is the self. The sociological perspective of symbolic interactionism provides an avenue through which access can be gained to the inner world constructed by individuals (Elliott, 2001, Charon, 2001). The mind action that each person engages in is the construction of his or her reality. This mind action is most often interaction with self, an inner dialogue.

The task of generating a narrative within which reflection on an event, the inner dialogue, could occur externally led to the use of interview as a means of gathering data. The principals who were interviewed were randomly selected from three defined groups in an effort to allow for variety in years of experience, gender and location. The transcript of the interviews provided a text for analysis. The methodology of membership categorisation analysis (Sacks, 1992; Baker, 1997) combined with a consideration of the moral lesson constructed (Silverman, 1993) provided data for discussion. The accounts of ethical dilemmas provided by the principals generated a window to the world view of the principals and the characters in the accounts clear evidence of the values that influence that world view. The types
of values most influential in the definitions of what was occurring began to emerge, and the value assumptions appeared (Baker, 1997). Having presented an overview of the study with regard to its significance and its methodology, I now turn to a discussion of the outcomes.

**Outcomes**

The three cases presented in the accounts of the principals are each a kind of camera obscura providing a reflection of the reality of the inner world of the account givers. We can see the reflections and we can use analytical devices to bring the image of this inner world into some kind of focus. However, we need to be very aware of the possibility to distort the image by imposing our own lenses, and of the fact that we are not seeing the full reality. For those reasons, the findings of this study are stated cautiously and tentatively, and would require substantial additional research before any significant conclusions could be formulated. That said, there are a number of interesting and useful observations that can be made from the study. These are presented in the form of descriptive statements. Each statement is then expanded in relation to the data that supports it and the theoretical/theological lens through which it has been revealed.

1 There is evidence in the accounts to suggest that the way principals perceive dilemmas is the result of a filtering process where some facts are not fully considered prior to action.

Each of the three accounts provided examples of the filtering process. In the first account (Chapter Four) the principal initially addresses the situation by accepting that the child in question is a sexual offender. The language in the account is about a
category of people, “them”. The parent of the boy who was groped is perceived as a threat. What are ignored initially are facts such as the age of the accused child, her motivation and the possibility that there might be ways and means to modify such behaviour. Also not considered are the possibilities that the response of the majority of parents and the wider public might not be the same as that of the parent, who is angry, confused and wanting some action taken to protect her child. Fear is the dominant motivator, and it is driven by some values that are never fully examined in the account. The assumptions are driven by sub rational feelings; that the angry parent will carry out the threat, that the offending child will continue in the behaviour because she can’t help herself, that the public is waiting for this new school to fall over, that parents will take away their children and that there are no solutions to the issue that are affordable to this new and struggling school. It is only later in the account that other values come to the fore, as the passage of time provides opportunity to reflect on the alternatives that were not considered at first.

The second account (Chapter Five) reveals a situation where the principal holds a view
as the principal seeks to ensure that all staff will be Christian in their manner and decorum.

The principal providing the last account (Chapter 6) is also selective in seeing the facts in an issue. In the account it would seem that the principal is unwilling to make a decision to assist a group of people to resolve conflict. The importance that the principal places on a Biblical methodology to resolve a conflict leads to a number of actions that seem quite illogical. Little credit is given to the possibility that the way someone is behaving may justify the concerns a number of people have. When the matter is not resolved over time, and expert advice indicates that it is probable there cannot be a resolution, the principal still wants staff to work it out in a particular way. Finally when the centre of the controversy resigns, and the letter is written, the principal seems surprised by the reaction of the staff. Throughout there seems to be no attention given to the possibility that the staff may not have the maturity or the principles to solve the dilemma following the Biblical model. The blinkers of deeply held values are quite evident.

2. There is evidence in the accounts to suggest that the filtering process is more strongly influenced by sub-rational and trans-rational values than by rational values. The values of the principals that are revealed in the accounts indicate more sub-rational and trans-rational values being expressed than rational values. The analysis of the type of value has been deduced from the meaning that the principal made of the situation. In the first account, the sub-rational value of feeling dominates the first
section. Then there is a shift, and the trans-rational values of acceptance and forgiveness and unconditional love dominate. Both smother rational possibilities. When fear dominates the process, hasty action causes an unjust and improper decision. When reflection is dominated by the agape (unconditional love) value, irrational guilt consumes the principal. The rational values considering consensus and consequences are only used to explain behaviour in retrospect. This finding supports the observation made by Begley and Leonard the commitment to trans-rational values (Begley & Leonard, 1999, p. 56).

One of the accounts also provides evidence that the rational values that consider consequences and the use of consensus are subjugated to values that are aligned with deep belief and deep feeling, a possibility noted by Hodgkinson (Hodgkinson, 1978, p. 112). The principal is given a number of facts that might alter perception of the problem if addressed in a rational manner.

Rational values can’t compete with the transrational values at stake.

The strongest evidence of the dominance of trans-rational and sub rational values in filtering the perception of the facts of a situation are contained in the third account. The ethical dilemma for the principal is that staff will not behave like Christians, even
though some claim to be Christian. The Christian behaviour that is expected is the methodology of resolving conflict expressed in the eighteenth chapter of the gospel of Matthew. In that passage there is an admonition to speak directly and honestly to someone who offends you, and if you can’t resolve the disagreement, bring another along as witness, and if you still can’t resolve the matter, refer it to the elders. This method is highly valued by the principal. Also valued are two feelings. The first is that relationships are an important indicator of a healthy school and the second that people need to work out their own problems. These values tend to hide from consideration by the principal that some administrative decisions regarding workspace and desk location might reduce the issue to manageable proportions. Rational values are not driving action in this case.

3. There is evidence in the accounts that each principal has a world view that is at least partially shaped by values implicit in the Christian tradition.

The three principals in the study approached their ethical dilemmas with a world view that filtered what they considered and strongly influenced their chosen actions. The first principal was empowered to recognise and acknowledge a mistake. One was driven to resist the press of community values in order to pursue an outcome aligned with value. The last was blinded to some apparently logical possibilities in order to encourage and finally insist that staff live out their faith in their lives. When questioned in the interviews regarding where they thought their motivation originated, each had a different answer.

The first principal said, “My experience growing up and what I’ve learnt as a teacher and principal in church schools come together to form what I now believe. The
concept of unconditional love that I learned in my studies forms a lot of where I stand now.”

The last principal said, “I guess that everything that happens in a Lutheran school should bear in mind the gospel message because we say we offer a distinctive environment for education that is motivated and undergirded by our Christian faith. It seems to me that the gospel message is a message of peace, a message that does not cause division. These people for all intents and purposes were telling me they were Christians, and I believe that in the Bible we are told if your brother sins against you go and talk to him alone, and then if you can’t, get another one. I suppose I was trying to get them to do that.”

The trans-rational values that challenged them and drove them and even blinkered them were grounded in their faith and the meaning that their faith had given to their professional life and their professional activity. They did not speak about theory. They spoke about their beliefs.
Implications of the findings for theory

Because of the findings, it is possible to suggest that values that are grounded in beliefs and emotions overrode values grounded in theory in shaping the world view of the Lutheran principals in the study. When principals reflected on their actions in ethical dilemmas, they made use of faith values to make sense of what they observed and what they did. This is an element that moves us beyond the general use of values as a filter in perception and meaning making as suggested by Butler (1996) and Williamson (1995) to an understanding that particular types of value (Hodgkinson, 1996) are more influential than others.

Given the Lutheran commitment to the use of theology as a tool for understanding the human condition, it is interesting to note that the principals made no mention of theological precepts in their accounts. The accounts contain no direct references to the formal theological precepts of Lutheranism. Yet the tensions of their dilemmas did involve the forces of sin and grace, of law and gospel and of forgiveness and condemnation. Instead the principals in the study referred to the example of Christ, to what Childs (1992) defines as agape love. This provided the point of reference most often stated. This is a strong indicator of the significance that the Biblical accounts might have for the principals who were interviewed. This calls attention to the fact that there is a dearth of literature in the Lutheran tradition that directly addresses a philosophy of Lutheran schooling or looks at the application of Lutheran ethics to the schooling process. In this study the principals made no reference to Lutheran theological and ethical writing. Lutheran understandings of the world, the nature of the human beings that inhabit that world, the origins of that world and the purpose of
those humans have not been drawn together in an accessible format that busy school principals can access.

The first case discussed in chapter four clearly shows the impact of the ‘power of now’ suggested by Bertman (1998). The pressure for a quick response virtually eliminated the opportunity for the principal to give adequate time for reflection. The second case provides a reasonable example of what Hodgkinson calls the values press, and the resistance of the individual will to that press. In the third case we are shown an example of the power of deeply held values to so shape the perception that an irrational action is taken.

The findings do not support the emphasis placed on theory for addressing ethical issues that is found in much of the literature (Liethwood et al., 1994; Begley, 1996; Dempster and Logan, 1998; Dempster et al., 2001;). Rather, Hodgkinson’s view (Hodgkinson, 1996p. 162) that values and metaphysics cannot be excised from administrative philosophy, theory or practice seems to find support in the accounts provided by the Lutheran principals. The literature in this field would benefit from further attempts to explore the differentiation in value proposed by Hodgkinson. There is also a need to further develop the connections between fundamental metaphysical beliefs, the shaping of essential values and the filtering function of a world view shaped by those values. This could be helpful in providing for greater understanding of the manner in which school principals address ethical dilemmas.

The most significant point evident in the findings is that the theoretical model of human agency presented by Butler (1996) needs to be strengthened by a clearer
representation of the impact values have on the process of reflection, and on the linking of the world of inner knowledge with the world of action or agency. Trans-rational and sub-rational values blinkered, accused and misled the principals in the study. This interfered with the ability of the principals to reflect rationally on the situations in which they had to make decisions. *Any study of the reflection of school principals in ethically challenging situations should take into account the power of non-rational values to be a lens that distorts what is considered in the reflective process.* Figure 7 provides a visual representation of the variation. In this variation, an ellipse labelled values has been added over the box representing the reflective process. An arrow has been inserted in the figure to show that these values are derived from the world view. The values that are contained in the world view invade the reflection process, acting as a powerful lens that will change perception, selection of matters to address and consideration of options from which to choose.

*Figure 7. Revised model of human agency*
Implications of the findings for research

This study was far too limited. There are numerous areas for further explorations into the connections between values and human agency. These extend well beyond the field of this study, which is quite limited in scope. The findings present a number of partial explanations. These explanations raise two questions that beg for further clarification. First, would studies of more cases, particularly those that extend beyond the work of Lutheran schools, find the same values filtering the facts? The use of trans-rational and sub-rational rather than rational values to address ethical dilemmas may or may not occur beyond the principals who provided the accounts. Studies of larger populations of school principals, making use of quantitative methodology have the potential to test the possibility. Second, are the people administering Lutheran church schools substantially different in their selection of values from counterparts in other school systems or settings? Similar studies to this one, exploring the values used by principals in addressing ethical dilemmas could provide evidence to either confirm or contradict these findings.

Another tantalising uncertainty that arises from the findings is the source of the trans-rational values that the principals in the study made use of in giving an account of their actions. While they made reference to Biblical sources, it is probable that there are other sources, and a range of studies might further develop the possibilities. For example, might a theory of value development be possible? Such questions open a number of research avenues. Studies that explore the influence of family, of the worshipping community, or of the peer group would all provide new dimensions to our understanding of the filtering values.
The account that demonstrates how the strong values of a principal can empower the individual to resist the value press of the community and organisation provides another avenue for further research consideration. What is the connection between formation of individual will, which is often discussed as character development, and trans-rational values? Studies that explore this link could also add to the understanding of value in consideration of ethical dilemmas.

In many ways the findings of this study are a few intriguing pieces of a jigsaw. They provide hints regarding the way principals reflect on their actions in what they see as ethical dilemmas, but they do not in any way provide a total picture. I am left with more questions now than when I began the research project several years ago. The partial knowledge is useful, but more knowledge and understanding of the reflective process in the development of Lutheran secondary school principals, and of the function of values in that process would be of even greater use. Only further research will be able to widen the scope of knowledge and understanding.

**Implications of the findings for development of Lutheran principals**

The Lutheran Church of Australia is concerned about current demographic trends in the staffing and enrolments of Lutheran schools. It is felt that these trends could lead to Lutheran school communities that are not aligned with the values considered to be essentially Lutheran. The church and its schools are prepared to invest in the education and development of those who will administer the schools. For that reason there could be considerable interest in any findings regarding the values that influence school principals in their actions. While this study has the potential to contribute to the discussion of principal development, it is too limited in scope to provide definitive
direction. There are however implications in the findings that indicate avenues for the church to follow in the preparation and development of principals for their work and in its support of their work.

The use of trans-rational values for meaning making by the principals is an indication to the church that faith driven beliefs do influence the actions of principals, at least the ones in this study. While the findings indicate those values are present, they do not support a view that there is a theological reasoning operating. In all three accounts, the importance of walking the talk, of being an example of Christian behaviour is spotlighted. The accounts suggest that the principals have an idealistic expectation that the way of Christ will be the way of life in the schools. However, the study shows that there are many difficulties in this expectation. Human sinfulness, weakness, circumstance and stubbornness are all operating in the day to day events. An important implication for the development of Lutheran principals is the need to provide more opportunities for principals to master the theological underpinning to their values, and find a balanced attitude toward those who are driven by differing values.

The importance of both family and community in the formation of values is suggested in the accounts. An implication for the church regarding the development of principals is the provision for principals to gather with congregational and family groups. Consideration here might be to provide time and opportunity for such gathering. While this will occur naturally in the lives of some, the expectations inherent in the work of principals can sometimes militate against taking time to reflect on events with family and church members. Structured times for retreat with
congregational and family members could help in this kind of reflection and development.

Implications for the educational development of principals for Lutheran schools also emerge from the findings. It is evident that the world view is strongly shaped by values, and that values act as a filter for the acquisition of knowledge, the taking in. In order to grow, individuals need to be encouraged to see events and experiences in new ways. This will require the development of situations that shake the filters or even question the filters. Such development will need to begin with critical reflection. Since the research demonstrates how powerfully the sub rational and trans-rational values impact on the functioning of some Lutheran principals, it would be useful for the Lutheran Church of Australia to find ways to help principals become more attuned to their own values and the impact these have on their professional lives. The techniques of Clinical Pastoral Education that the church uses in the development of its pastors might well be adapted to use in the development of the principals of its schools.

Finally, the Lutheran church should consider in what ways it could continue to foster a strong culture of Biblical and theological study and critical reflection for principals and potential principals. The current opportunities for study are limited and very dependent on the initiative of individuals. It may be important to encourage and support young educators who have the academic potential and the desire to broaden their educational experience beyond the boundaries of Australia.
Concluding summary

*Using values: A qualitative analysis of ethical dilemmas encountered by Australian Lutheran secondary school principals* has attempted to address the meaning making of Lutheran principals through an examination of their accounts of the difficult ethical dilemmas that they experienced in the year 2000. The specific purpose was to examine the values that influenced their world view, and the effect of that view on their actions. The study found three statements could be made regarding these phenomena. First, it was found that the principals in the study filtered the facts they consider on the basis of certain values. Second it was found that the values that acted as filters in these cases were sub-rational or trans-rational rather than rational. Third, it was found that the principals in the study were strongly influenced in their perception by trans-rational values embedded in their beliefs and Christian faith.

The literature review found a gap in the research regarding the place of non-rational values in the decision making of principals. There was a call for research into the values on which heads base their leadership. A further gap was found in the area of how principals make meaning when they encounter difficult dilemmas. There is also a significant gap in research into the activities of Lutheran secondary school principals. This research has sought to address in a small way these three gaps. As a result of the findings it is possible to suggest that non-rational rather than rational values have a significant influence on the actions of the three Lutheran principals in the study. This suggests that belief and emotion are more powerful forces than theory and logic in shaping the world view, and that non-rational values serve as a lens to focus or distort reflection on practice.
The findings have implications for the literature, for further research and for the development of Lutheran school principals. The two points with regard to the literature are the need for further examination of the connections between metaphysical beliefs, values and world view, and the need for the development of a philosophy for Lutheran schooling. The points of implication for further research are several. Further work could be done to explore the connections between values and world view. The small scope of this study suggests that research into larger populations might be instructive. Further research into the sources of trans-rational values would also deepen understanding of their impact on world view and therefore on human agency. Finally, the implications for the development of Lutheran principals suggest that there is a need to find the means to assist principals in finding ways to achieve faith development in community, acquisition of theological as well as Biblical knowledge and critical reflection on personal experience.

The accounts of these principals clearly show how challenging the work of a principal can be. In the words of one, “I hope no one else has to go through this,” but of course, someone will go through the sleepless nights and anguish of trying to find the right thing to do. It is part of our human journey.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPT OF FIRST INTERVIEW

I am in ST interviewing my second subject and I would like to simply say that we presented you with a statement about this research and as I understand it you are comfortable with the interview.

Yes, not a problem.

Okay. One of the things that will happen is that all references to this place and you will be expunged and substitute with code words which only the transcriber and myself will have. You will have a copy of the transcript when it’s done to edit and amend as you wish.

What my purpose is in this research is to try to get into the way that the world view of principals operates when they are operating and to do that I need to hear principals tell the story of their dealing with ethical dilemmas and that can be told in anyway you want, every now and then I may interrupt to ask for clarification.

Okay

So if you want to start up. The year is 2000, that’s last year.

Yep

And somewhere in that year, something happened which you saw as a major ethical dilemma, a moral conundrum something that you had to wrestle with.

Okay. I suppose the major one that I can recall is an issue we had in relation to a child in a year 2 class who went home one night, and explained to his parents umm how another student in the class had actually been touching him inappropriately, umm fondling, sort of sexual explicit ah type touching. Umm the background to it is that the student who was doing the fondling was female, year two but actually a year older than the class, had actually come from a sexual abuse background so was certainly a lot more worldly than most year two students are. The student who was basically then touched, while we found out later there were other students who were also being fondled by the student the one that actually went home and spoke to the parents that person was a child of a school board member, also a very prominent person in the congregation and she then came to school to speak to me, very concerned, very angry, and very upset that should occur within the school.

The process we went through with that was, I spoke to the foster parents of the student who was doing the fondling, and the child was actually fostered out. To and the people who were fostering were actually the aunty and uncle of this child. They then also disclosed that this child had also been touching their own children at home and that they were a bit unsure about what to do about it. The issue I had was that the school board member or the parent of the child wanted some action taken wanted some dramatic action taken in relation to it. Didn’t feel that their child was safe at
school or that other children were safe while this child was there. So I called an
executive meeting of the school board to recommend at the time that we expel the
student from the school.

The ethical situation that I sort of went through with that was, and it was a very
difficult situation was that, knowing the background of the child who we were about
to expel, the fact that they had a very rough childhood or still in childhood, but that
they had been exposed to sexual abuse themselves helps understand how they become
an abuser, that if we’d actually, by turning our back on them or expelling them we’re
not actually helping the child at all. I’m solving the problem within the school, but
I’m not really helping the child. But at the same time I needed to guarantee the safety
of the other students around them. I didn’t feel that I could provide enough, I suppose
enough eyes to watch this child consistently to say that the other kids would be safe
from this. So in the end under my recommendation the school executive voted to
expel the child.

So I suppose that was the ethical dilemma I went through.

Q- In going though that ethical dilemma, perhaps if you would just tease out for me.
You say you were wrestling with the competing issues of what was good for the child
and what was good for the group if I understood you correctly?

Yep

Now when you were wrestling with that you obviously came down on the side of
what was good for the group, right, why don’t you sort of reflect on why you did that,
what were the issues that you considered there?

Ahh, I think there were several issues that came came to to light after the time when I
thought back on it. I think one was the that the fact was that the safety of the other
students was an issue and do you know what I mean you want your school to be a safe
place do you know what I mean and I couldn’t in my heart guarantee that this child
would not do this again because I don’t think they actually understood that what they
were doing was inappropriate. Something they had grown up with were used to
therefore saw really nothing wrong and when I spoke to the child the child showed no
remorse or anything else, but you’re talking about really an eight year old you know
child anyway. Umm so the the difficulties are I couldn’t guarantee the safety. The
other thing was that with a new school too which also came in is that umm a
reputation of the school having a situation where there has been sexual abuse is going
to damage the school in the long run so I was also trying to think about those elements
too and although you’d like to try and keep things quiet something like that would
never be kept quiet it would always be out there so I had to think about those
elements.

The difficulty of it was too was the fact that I also know enough about sexual abuse
that the the expelling a child from this environment was not actually going to do
anything to help that child all it was going to do was put the problem onto someone
else to deal with umm and in fact you know when the foster parents then told the
other school of the issue do you know what I mean and they might have to end up going through the same thing that we’re going through umm all sorts of things I had to come to grips with umm it was very difficult umm to fill in a little more on that was that about three months after the event I kept in contact with how the child was going. The child went back to their natural mother who was actually a drug addict umm in a marriage south of here the child was relocated back to the mother umm under the supervision of the Family and Children’s services who we’d informed about all of this umm the mother I think it was two or three months later committed suicide okay and the child is now in a permanent foster care arrangement with another aunty and uncle, different from the first one umm now I don’t know whether the the ah issue with the child had anything to do with the end up with the suicide, but I think all those things run through your mind you know when you hear those sort of things.

Q – What were your feelings when you were reaching this decision how did you feel about things?

Umm oh you know the I was incredibly torn you know the the concept of sleepless nights over those sort of decisions are very common. Umm I think when we’d actually made the decision there wasn’t too many of my board members present who were not in tears about what we’d done umm which was a pretty emotional thing, we had a pastor present who helped us through that umm because to some extent we all felt that we had let down this child umm that maybe if we were more observant we would have picked up the behavior sooner umm maybe if we were more observant we therefore could have acted and maybe stopped this occurring and maybe have got you know some assistance for that student. Umm so it was a very emotional time not just for myself but be also for the members of the school board who shared that decision.

One of the great things about the process was that the fact the decision was a shared decision between a group of you know board members and myself although it was my recommendation the decision is a shared one umm and I think that eases the load that you do wear.

Q – Did the pressure bought to bear by the parent of the child who was the victim have a bearing on the debate?

Umm yeah without a doubt umm the and understandably so the the parent was irate that their child was put in this situation because one of the you know the emphasis’ that we place as Lutheran schools is that we are safe places umm and the parent felt the school had basically breached that agreement umm so were angry about that. The parent also couldn’t see it from the point of view of the fact that this was an eight year old child umm I think they actually put their adult perspective into it and saw it more of a crime that needed a severe punishment more than the fact that it was a child that needed help umm but no matter how much talking we did to that parent in relation to that there was no way that parent was going to be satisfied.

Q – So as you worked through this logically you were thinking in terms of the benefit to the group as opposed to the problem for the individual?

Yeah umm and that’s very much it was the balancing act of you know what is better for the community against what is better for the individual umm there was yeah the
we looked at other alternatives of putting into different classes increasing teacher assistance so that we had a teacher assistant monitoring both recesses and lunches but all of those had financial implications which we simply couldn’t do.

Q – You couldn’t afford

No no

Q – To to to put those strategies in place?

No and we did look at them but the the cost of doing that was just prohibitive, especially in a new school.

Q – Did you think at all in terms of how the child might feel or the child’s foster parents might feel?

Yeah very much so and in fact umm I still have contact today with the foster parents although their children aren't involved in the school anymore. Umm they were very supportive of our decision in the end because they realised that really we had not alternative. They also had to make the hard decision from their perspective and they’ve been working they worked with a pastor in relation to that too, umm was that after this situation they also said they couldn’t could no longer foster that student that child because they realised that you know their own children were being abused umm at home when they weren’t there or not not observing umm so it was a hard decision for them too because it was also a family member that they had to do this to and then of course the death of the you know the sister or the mother ah presented a lot of guilt for them.

Q – did the school ah do anything to support them? For instance the pastor with whom they worked?

Yeah the pastor worked very closely with them umm and I did to, I had lots of discussions with them, I tried to organise counseling for their children who had been abused and also through family and children’s services and the umm ah mental health services here to try and get the child who was doing the abusing into some form of counseling but with very little success because of lack staff from those agencies umm and that the degree of sexual abuse was deemed to be minor in terms of the bigger picture of what they are probably dealing with umm so although they the agencies were sympathetic umm really couldn’t offer any solution for us.

Q – What to what did you turn I mean you talked about your logical progression did you turn to any other sources of advice or umm or what shall say knowledge or

Yeah umm I I suppose there were several things that we did. One was the the principle we always worked on was was very much of what would Christ do in this situation and ah the the hardest thing about it is that we actually realised that Christ wouldn’t have done what we had chosen to do and I think as a group we knew that umm and I certainly did, but in the end umm a pastor in fact a district a now district president said to me yes that’s that’s fine but your not Christ umm so basically you
know don’t try and you know put yourself up against Him as a model umm you know it is its different umm which is very comforting umm the other people I spoke to is suppose all the legalities of what could occur as well umm you know if it had got out to parent community what had occurred umm you know how much information should we give parents how open should we be with the other parents umm how open should we be with the other students umm umm and then what do we need to do for this student whose been hurt umm and ah you know how do we provide the necessary support?

Q – As you stepped through that process ah you were obviously feeling strained, you mention that several times, umm what in that besides the pastoral comment that you received actually gave you comfort or you know alleviated the sense of I’m maybe not doing the right thing.

Umm I’m not sure anything actually other could do that I still wear the guilt for what I did cause I actually still question whether it was the right decision to make. So I don’t think I’ve actually got the stage where I’ve said you know what I did was okay umm and I think its something that I I can never actually see myself saying its okay to do and I think I probably would have fought harder for that child umm if it ever comes up again umm to me I think I should have fought harder to retain

Q – do you think that umm the age of the school had any bearing on how things fell out?

Ahh yeah without a doubt because you know within your first five years your very much at a critical stage in getting a reputation especially in a new state do you know what I mean who knows nothing about Lutheran education there was also umm things occurring within the community at the time there had been a fairly major sexual abuse at a state school not far from us that had just hit the presses umm so that is in the background of all of this umm it was still in the height of umm you know the current affairs shows reporting on the Catholic issues from back in the 1950s and these sort of things so all of that was very much you know putting this this into this historical perspective I suppose.

Q – You you’ve talked in very much in terms of you know what was best for that child umm showing a concern you also talked about the Christ model I wonder if you could reflect just briefly, where where do these elements in your thinking your mind where do they come from?

Umm that’s that’s yeah I’m not quite sure how to answer that one umm I suppose it’s the belief in the value system that you have.

Q – but where did you value system come from?

Yeah, probably a combination of my experience growing up what I’ve learnt as a Principal and a teacher in the Lutheran system and the Catholic system for that matter umm that I suppose its come together to form what I now believe and ah and you know the the concept of which we’ve spoken about today with the unconditional love
for people umm has been something that’s been held very firm with me umm and also
you know I suppose from within the Masters especially with what I did with Art
Linderman in the States. In relation to agape love its formulated I think of lot of
where I stand now.

Q – Alright on reflecting on back onto this situation what might you say to a school
board about situations like this what advice would you have to give to governing
bodies when these issues arise?

Umm I suppose one of the advice I would say was that I would give would be that the
individual is still incredibly important within any community and that you know
although we we look at the benefit the community can not discount that individual but
that is still a you know someone who is Gods child who is in difficulty and needs
assistance umm and I couldn’t imagine Christ turning his back on this child and
therefore I don’t believe that we have a right to umm I think I’d advise the school
board to probably spend more time with the parent who was so upset umm and use a
pastor more to help them umm or in fact the principal or someone to council them to
try and get them to understand more about the fact that you know this student really
didn’t understand and that does need our help and our support and our love and our
care umm and that we really are not in a position to turn our back on them.

Q – Did the parent who I believe you said was a board member participate in the
boards deliberations?

No umm I used the executive of the school board rather than the full board for that
reason umm because I felt it was an emotive issue as it was without that person being
present.

Q – Are there any final thoughts you’d like to share on the issue?

Umm I don’t suppose only I hope no one else has to go through it
Thank you very much for these comments I think they’ll be of great value to you on
reflection and to others I’m sure
APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPT OF THIRD INTERVIEW

Interview with M in September 2001.

Well M as we’ve just been talking you’ve shared with me that there is a particular incident that you’d like to tell the story about umm I’ll just leave it to you to set the scene and take us into it and from time to time I’ll ask questions.

Okay, umm yeah M I guess just the whole the whole issue of ethical moral dilemmas for principals in schools certainly is the one that probably keeps us awake most at night there’s no doubt about that. And in the schools of which I’ve been principal and I’m now in my second one, I guess one of the things that I have always maintained is that relationships and a sense of committed team is crucial amongst the staff if there is going to be a a community develop which based on the love of Christ will provide a tremendous environment for young people. And and I’ve been blessed I suppose in that conflicts between staff have been few and far between in in my seventeen years now as a principal but when they’ve occurred they have probably been the ones that that have worried me most. Umm one that really probably was turned out to be the most difficult the most the one over which I agonised most umm has occurred in recent years. It came about when when a a member of our well I guess you’d call it our support staff but in in a position which umm was ahh a position that’s part of our senior management team became vacant the the previous person who’d been in that position had a done a a very good job as the first person in that role in our school was very popular umm commanded had a great presence among people and umm and that persons resignation probably came as a bit of a surprise to us and ahh and meant that we had to advertise the position. We advertised the position umm the applicants that we had were umm were not particularly strong so we readvertised and ahh even then when we interviewed we we didn’t we didn’t feel that we umm were getting somebody who who perhaps filled the role in all the dimensions but in interview one particular candidate interviewed and displayed some skills that we thought were very good. Umm it was a person who was already known within the college and that turned out to be part of the problem later. So we offered the position the person accepted the position umm the school ahh was prepared to do go beyond the call of duty in many ways in the role but did have some personal characteristics that put that person off side very quickly with some of the other staff in the office area basically not so much the teaching staff but more the support staff umm I I sensed some of this early in the piece umm a couple of office staff spoke to me about some of the the habits or the the characteristics of the person that were proving to be upsetting I spoke to the the person involved umm and we we worked out way that this could perhaps be avoided.

Q – Ahh could you just elaborate on the characteristics?

Yeah

That you spoke about
The characteristics were a tendency to want to know all about people, ah ahh an invasion of their private space physically when talking to them and ah this person had a background of helping people in social situations in some unfortunate social situations. Umm and yes that ahh you know everybody likes their private space and we had a couple of staff members in the office area who’ve had trauma in the lives and ahh who’d come to terms with it I think but when this new member heard a bit of the background couldn’t help but try and and ahh I guess pry a little bit and and feeling that they could do something about it. The end result was that very yeah in a reasonably short time it became obvious that there was a fair degree of umm I suppose almost umm subtle subtle umm isolation subtle non-co-operation subtle and subtle in the sense that it wasn’t obvious to everybody but obvious enough to people that it was picked up umm almost antagonism I’d say you could put towards the person umm and in fact I had a group of the office staff come to me as a group and this was one of the things that was a worry it became a group versus an individual umm basically in that area even though other staff were drawn into it in time come to me with with their complaints about this this person. Umm I listened to those complaints I guess another contributing factor was that really the line manager for all of these ahh office staff was a person who who again had wonderful gift and qualities that were serving the school well but in terms of handling people and relating people was not not strong in that area and so umm some these these particular people didn’t feel they could they could umm talk to that person and get a what they would have sensed might have been a good hearing about the issue. So they came and saw me we I listened to them I I pointed out to them I I guess one contributing factor was that really the line manager for all of these these particular people needed to be very careful that they weren’t making judgements which were you know supportive just because they were talking to each other but I I tried to point out the very positive qualities of the person in terms of for the school and for benefit but I guess one of things that they were very strong on was M you know that one of the key things here is how we work together and that we support each other and that we get on we feel and of course we there’s so much justification because we all feel we feel that this person is not fitting what is right there was some suggestion that the person was talking about them out of school to friends umm and that was coming back via via via umm so it developed into a very difficult situation I I ahh my school pastor I discussed it with him I discussed it with my senior management team we we weighed up various ways that we might be able to handle this this was going on over a period of time we we urged each person we prayed about it we urged person involved to to they were becoming we thought a bit subjective and a little bit umm not they were losing objectivity to to really work hard at trying to umm look to themselves and what they could do to resolve the situation rather than pointing the finger and we did that with the person involved too. Umm I guess one of the things that that made it even more frustrating was that I would say two or three of the key figures involved the the person to whom this ahh you know this this umm the person who was causing the concern to the others and a couple of the other key people on the surface of it by in their words by their actions by their umm church in terms of that were strongly committed Christians who who umm would talk very strongly about their faith and about seeking Gods will it just seemed to me as if umm that and I I did I suppose subtly and sometimes not so subtly try to ask them to to think a little bit more carefully about as a Christian in response to Gods love what were they doing to resolve the situation or to to find some way of working through.
Q – Okay can you give me some examples of the kind of advice you gave? Can you remember any of that?

We suggested that that the most important thing was for them to talk to each other to actually sit down and we said that probably you would need if you were comfortable doing that umm but if you by yourselves but if you do need anybody else there’s M there’s my school pastor there’s myself there’s other staff who will be happy to sit down with you. Umm the person who was at the centre of all this said that at times she had gone and spoken tried to speak people umm but that they were reluctant to talk singularly to her apart from one who was basically became the leader if you like of the group and when the talking took place umm there was I think it was a little bit of power struggle too I think these the the other people the office staff resented the fact that this person was in a position which entitled her to a place on the senior management team entitled her to a higher salary than them and to more flexible time umm a lot of work done out of school hours umm in in the role and I think there was a feeling that this person has all this but they are not helping bring harmony and team work and those things to our school so I think there was there was almost a power a bit of a power play there too.

Q – mmm huh

Umm in the end and after a lot of discussion umm in the end we did decide and that’s the the umm senior management other than the this person did decide that it was beyond us it was beyond us we we ahhh and particularly my school pastor whose had a lot of experience in counseling and working with people said umm I don’t I think we need more professional support to try and get this sorted umm I guess there was a concern there that the lines had been drawn so strongly and and the the positions that had been taken so strongly that it would almost need a miracle to sort it out because umm they they weren’t inclined to to umm to accept I guess much responsibility themselves really either side umm I have to say I guess I have to say that my feeling was that the lady the person at the centre of it had made more of an effort to change her behavior and to change umm the things that we upsetting the others when the when the other when the group had and I still believe that the group had virtually made up their minds and and ahh it came back to me via a third third person that umm it had been said that really it won’t be sorted till that person leaves. We did in the end get in a a professional person from a group that we knew of umm the we discussed the case with that person they felt that the best way was draw all the people in together draw them all in together and for this person to act a mediator and as a conciliator in a group session. And ah that happened, at the end of it nobody was happy the the group felt umm they almost felt that I and the school had let em down by calling in somebody from outside we could have sorted it ourselves even though we weren’t umm in the session the the person that we called in spoke to us later on and said I there are two key people involved here they are both very strong neither one will budge umm neither one will really accept their responsibility and the others are just supporting umm and this person he he suggested again that they needed to keep I think he came up with some sort of plan for them or I must remember I must admit I’m I’m doesn’t spring easily to mind but I do know that that the it didn’t help it didn’t help the situation which was a which was a shame. Umm then that following on
from that umm I suppose time went on people people try well certainly there was we
were told that they were trying but every now and then there would be an incident
where one of the staff would mention to me something that this person had done
where the person would tell me how she’d felt that they were really almost harassing
her I did say to the person at times look if you believe you are believing you are
being harassed lay a claim lets work through it and lets you confront them but she
didn’t want to do that umm and finally and in all this time I guess I was trying to I
was seeking advice from others and trying to work out what is my role here I’m trying
to get this I’m talking to these people I’m trying to get em ah and particularly
emphasising I guess from a Christian point of view folks umm how does this how how
do you not how do you always consider what you are doing and how you are
responding and your actions in the sense of what would Christ have you do in this
situation? How how would He want you to behave how would He want you to
respond and and I I guess I became frustrated particularly I suppose umm with the
with the group umm at the the almost self righteous belief that they were doing all that
God would want them to do it was the other person who really needed to do
something different. So we got to the end of ahh towards third and fourth term in fact
the lady ahh in at the centre of it had put in her resignation basically put in her
resignation at the end of umm hmm at the end of the previous year I think umm but
we’d ask her to think about it umm and and and a but ah and and she did decide to
withdraw it and and give it another go but in umm in fact yeah in fact it was ahh it
was ahh that that came out a little bit later because I guess when during all of this as
this had taken place and this was taking place over a couple of years umm others had
been drawn in other support staff who worked in different areas of the school had
because of their contact on so on almost started to align themselves umm some of the
teaching ahh also it hadn’t the teaching staff were probably because it was bigger they
were probably less involved but there were some and and each of each of the people
involved from those areas probably most of those involved in those areas umm felt
that the the umm the person who was being in a sense isolated by the group that the
person umm hadn’t deserved what was what was happening that they could see they
could see was happening. Ahh so, the letter of resignation came in and I guess I guess
I made a decision then that I would that that this situation it just seemed to me that
that ahh the group of staff who had taken this action and who had carried out this
almost a plan I suppose that they had to be confronted that alright this person was
leaving but we had to fill that position and would the next person you know if they
took a dislike of something how would that person so I umm after talking about it and
and writing I I wrote a letter which were I was going to give to all of those who had
been involved in the initial umm discussion with the the outside body as seen as part
of the whole situation I wrote a letter which I ran past senior management which my
school pastor contributed too and when we were finally happy with it was basically a
letter saying that umm it was with real disappointment that umm I had received a
letter of resignation from the lady and ah and it it made me reflect even more on on
events of the past couple of years and and I basically said that I felt that the the the
treatment of that person which had been noticed by other staff and so on in in the
school umm was not in harmony with the Christian ethos of the school umm and
while there may have been some reasons for why people felt that their their behavior
and actions were appropriate and legitimate I really asked them rethink that in terms
of looking back on the situation and where it go to ahh whether there weren’t some
things that that maybe they regretted and maybe umm had they had the time again
might change. I said to them that that sort of situation had caused a lot of people pain as well as themselves and that this had worked against the general harmony and team work of the school and that umm we all had to work to make sure that it would not happen again. Umm I think I probably it might have even been a bit stronger than that I think it was I I don’t can’t recall it it drew an immediate response umm in fact ahh the the person who was I guess the leader of the group who yeah umm I gave them the letter on the the Thursday and on the Monday the person came to see me and broke into tears and said how disappointed they were that I would write a letter to them they’d always felt that I was a person who understood things and so on but but this was this was ahh I taken this other persons side that I didn’t fully understand what they’d gone through and that they were very hurt by it particularly where I’d said that it wasn’t in harmony with the Christian ethos of the school umm because they felt that they’d proven with her umm and umm and in fact ahh this person said I’m representing the others but we really I in in the letter I’d said I don’t I’d predicated what they’d do I said I don’t wish to talk about this for a week I’d like you to think about what I’ve written if at the end of that week you would individually like to come and talk with me I’d welcome that that was very much on the advice of a couple of the senior management cause they said if they come as a group people hide behind the main spokesman and and the main spokesman would and so I that’s how it was anyway the main spokesman came to see me on the Monday and said look they weren’t prepared to come and see me individually because they couldn’t express but what they want to do was to write down write down no she she said but we’d like to come and see as a group. Ahh I said well look I’ll have to think about that you know that’s not what asked them to do umm anyway I talked it over and and in the end I agreed to meet them as a group to talk and to listen to them when the morning I was due to meet them the leader told me that not only would they be coming but ahh the union representative would be coming up and joining them. I suppose I I didn’t really react properly or not then I said well that’s not what I agreed too yesterday that’s a new factor I’ll have to think about whether I’m prepared to do that because umm I agreed yesterday to meet you on this one anyway and I was told that a chap was on his way anyway up to meet with them and so so umm they meet they had a meeting with the union rep took time off ahh and then the union person came to see me and ahh oh they their leader came back and said the union person would like to see you and I said well that’s not what I agreed too yesterday that’s a new factor I’ll have to think about whether I’m prepared to do that because umm I agreed yesterday to meet you on this one anyway and I was told that a chap was on his way anywhere up to meet with them and so so umm they meet they had a meeting with the union rep took time off ahh and then the union person came to see me and ahh oh they their leader came back and said the union person would like to see you are you prepared to see him and I said yes I will so I saw him and he basically said to me look this group need to talk with you they are hurting they are and I said do you know the whole history of it well I’ve heard from them and and I he said look I understand what your saying but I think probably really it would be best if you did talk to them if you heard what they got to say though they are very appreciative of you and what you’ve done here but they feel hurt because they feel you’ve let them down and umm so they came in with the union rep and ah I got another staff member to come with me so that I had ahh somebody there as a witness and what they’d done was that each one of them had written out a thing and they just read these out to me and ahh there were tears and everything and it was very much expressing their hurt that they had been very wronged by this person that they that this person umm and that I had and senior management had umm had taken the persons side on this instance. Ummm

Q – Can I interrupt and just ask the question to this point did you feel at that time that you had taken anyone’s side?
I didn’t feel I guess I guess I’d have to say that throughout the whole episode that had gone on for two years I could see fault on both sides I I could I could hear what each one was saying but I couldn’t really get either either of them to see that umm and and I would say that probably in my in my general in my association with just around the school and so on I had probably always felt myself even more comfortable with the with the group people as individuals than I did with this person but I guess as time went on I became more and more concerned that that the isolation of this person was not fair and wasn’t right and so I guess and and I used to meet with this person you know every fortnight or so because of the role as part of the senior management team umm yeah so I I was yeah I was hurt I guess umm the other person that I took in with me for that meeting where they all read out their stuff said to me afterward she she just just about she felt she wanted to say hang on hang on stop this this you are you are giving this man hell here and he doesn’t deserve it and she’d been aware of it all along the way but what you are doing is almost taking out all your vindictiveness and all your bitterness and all your anger against him rather than looking at the the situation that that in a sense you have created and which only you can sort out. I listened I didn’t at the end of it I I really didn’t respond I said well I hear I’ve heard what you were saying I guess umm I guess that’s the way you see it umm I still stand by my by what I wrote in that letter I still stand by it. Umm so where did we go in the letter I’d said I hope that the person involved was still going to be with us for another month and and had children in the school and I said I I really hope that there’s no way in which the next month is made difficult for the person. It it wasn’t too bad I think I think in fact the person said probably it was that she was given more improved more than in the time but umm I wondered how it would work out I wondered what there would be as a result of it umm I think I did I’ve got a feeling M that I did actually write another letter as a just reflecting on what they had to say on that in which I said yeah pretty much that ahh upon reflection I I and I said I I am sorry if you went through and and and for all the things that you mention because I don’t like to see anybody hurt however I still draw your attention back to what I the points I made in the letter because I still believe that is how I see it and and I still ask you reflect on the way this developed and the way it was handled and and also from as Christians how could and and I said I’m certainly doing that how could I have responded in a way that could have saved all that hurt and pain because I said you were hurt but I know how much the other person was going through too. Then I said what I’d like to do now is put this behind us let’s let’s put this behind us umm and lets start next year on a making sure that we are going to work together umm I still value the work you do and I’ve emphasised that I value the work you do in this school and I value the umm the the way you do support me and other staff here you are crucial to the smooth running of our school umm since that time ahh a new person was appointed a different sex a different gender and all is calm all is peaceful. Umm
Q – Look that’s quite a story ahh and I can understand why its still with you. One or two questions that one one of the things that stands out in my mind is that you are actually you actually umm refused to be a judge and make a decision you kept putting it back on the people can you just elaborate as to why you didn’t make a decision why you put it back on the people involved/

Yeah that’s a good question. Probably probably because I’m too I’m too umm you could you could say it’s a weakness or a strength I don’t know some people would say that and P often calls me Enos the peacemakers, Enos you take if you’ve got an upset tummy you take Enos and x says you you always you always try to get a resolution where everybody is is happy and and and sometimes you can’t and I guess umm I think I didn’t want to really judge as I said I could see fault on both sides umm and to have made a decision I think in that case to have made a decision would have been to to have taken a side I guess or if the decision had have been well okay we’re going to keep a record of anything that happens again and if you step out of line you’re going to be gone umm I mean in a sense that’s what a couple of people said to me ahh who were closely connected with it this won’t be resolved until one or at least two people leave because it is and and I guess yeah I I didn’t want to umm force that issue I’m not sure if that was a good or a bad thing.

Q – What are your drawing on what are you thinking about when you consider it that way. When you were thinking about it at the time you know why were you wanting peace why were you umm putting it back to people you said could find fault on both sides did you refer the ethos of the school all of those things.

I guess I guess its I mean it seems to me that that everything that happens in a Lutheran school or in a Christian school should should umm bear in mind the gospel message and the fact that we say we are distinctive if if its Lutheran schools we’re in education and and we’ve got to do that that’s our that’s what the government pays gives us grants for but we say we offer it in in a distinctive way and a distinctive environment which is is motivated and undergirded by our Christian faith and particularly the gospel message and it seems to me that the gospel message is a message of peace it’s a message its it does cause division but these people to all intents and purposes were telling me and by their actions that they were Christians and I believe that and in the Bible we are told if your brother sins against you go and talk to him alone and then if you can’t get another one and I suppose we were trying to get them to do that we probably hoping and praying that that without without having to to like a make a decision make a judgement umm which was which was difficult I mean one of the problems with something like that is that a lot of what you are told has been happening happens very subtly happens very quietly when there’s nobody around it is ahh and and so in a sense what we had was was two different sides of the story and and probably witnesses to back up each side but nobody other than I don’t know somebody who who ahh had the wisdom of Solomon I suppose to just to say well if if somebody has to go its its you or its you because you’ve been more the person so I suppose in a way and I mean I’m I’m making it sound as if if each a judgement or a decision was made it had to be for someone to leave but I think that’s where it had got
to from from umm yeah and I I wasn’t confident enough I suppose to be or sure
enough that in making that having made that decision first of all whether it would
stand up if the person contested it and it went you know and you have all sorts of
umm unfair dismissal and sort of things and that’s I means that’s always there umm it
didn’t it didn’t sort of enter my mind that that might happen but yeah.

Q - So you wanted somebody to make a decision but you didn’t feel it should
be you?

I don’t know that I wanted somebody to make a decision on who was right and
who was wrong because I believe there was wrong on both sides

Q – no no

But I wanted I wanted I suppose deep down I wanted them to do what I
believe we as Christians are called to do and that is to to weigh up to consider what
we individually have done to love your neighbour as yourself to try and put yourself
into neighbours shoe and basically to take a backwards step and say I I think if I think
if we could have got those people to have admitted that they had contributed they’d
each contributed in their own way and and lets not talk about whose done most and
whose done less we have all contributed to this we all have things to seek forgiveness
for and we are prepared to give that forgiveness and we are now prepared to start
afresh its gunna be hard but we are going to put it behind us. That’s what I wanted to
happen. Umm

Q – Wow its powerful stuff

Yeah well it is but it didn’t work. Umm and yet I’ve seen it work I’ve seen it work with staff I guess one of the things that really made me think about this I have to
say its terrible that all the people involved in this were females and and we might say
this happens with males as well and and perhaps it does but in this case that is true
and that one of the things that probably contributed to it is that they all work in
very close proximity to each other umm I’ve never had to deal with that sort of
situation amongst the teaching staff and and I guess that was another thing that
probably umm at times I sort of thought to myself umm why has it happened at that
level and not at the level of teaching staff where where perhaps no I was going say
where perhaps there’s just as much chance that your going to not get on and and but
perhaps in teachers you move around more your not you could almost tell with this
group that the very presence of that lady walking through the office was almost
offensive at the end.

Q – You’re strong commitment to the ahh school reflecting its ethos and also
the methodologies that you used where do they come from is that from your
experience or or some other thing?

I I reckon they come from I think they come from the faith M umm simple as
that sounds I I think umm and please don’t get me wrong I I stuff up all the time and
and too often too often probably I don’t I don’t enough care and thought to sit down
and look at this with from a procedural way what should happen here from a from a
almost a legal or organisational way I’m I’m not strong on that and ahh thank
goodness I’ve got a couple of people around me who who remind me of those things.
I tend to simplistically I suppose say umm its all about relationships get the
relationships right and the rest will fall into line umm naïve and silly but but in many
ways because I feel that way when the relationships are stuffed up as they were here
umm perhaps I’m a bit of a bit of a loss then because I still want to get that working
through until we resolve it whereas perhaps perhaps umm I’m just rambling here but
trying think without trying to speak without thinking too much perhaps you you
follow that but if it they break down then there’s got to be some procedural things put
in place because the longer this one went it didn’t make it any better that’s for sure
umm and maybe it would have been better had it been resolved in some way earlier
though some procedural umm steps and so on I guess I’m little bit like that even with
the staff I suppose there are it is diverting a bit but perhaps it shows that character
wise there was a couple of staff we are heavily blessed with a wonderful staff but
there is a couple of staff we have who who umm bits of slackers in a way.

Q – You’re talking teachers now?

Teachers yeah teachers bit of slackers in a way who who really I know I’ve
been um our Director of Studies last year said we should put this person on a
performance management thing I don’t reckon and we were going to and we and he
thought a lot about it and uh and we never got around to it and why didn’t I ahh and I
think its probably because yeah the procedures and those sort of things I sort of
almost hold off with and lets try and sort it out just by talking and saying hey listen
come on pick up your game. Generally that’s worked for me and when it doesn’t it
falls down umm that’s when the weakness of that position shows up I think. But yeah
where it comes from certainly I suppose my experience has generally been that if you
if you can get talk with people and get em recognise umm that that wasn’t the way it
should be and and I myself will will admit to people look I’m sorry I let you down
there and I want you to know umm and generally I’ve found that that works it out. In
this case it did have an impact I don’t think I mean teaching staff were aware of it as I
said a few of them commented some of them were were quite surprised and and of
course it always polarised a bit because the the lady at the centre of it did have two or
three that she talked too who couldn’t believe some of the terrible things that were
being done to her umm some of the others just saw this going on umm a few of them
spoke to me about it and I tried to put it in its context with them and I think that
helped. It was a messy business.

Q – Well I want to thank you for sharing it with me ahh its been I think a
salutary one for you and you’ve still puzzling about it aren’t you?

Yes its an interesting one just as a little postscript to it umm the lady involved
said I’m I’m leaving the position but I certainly not leaving the the school umm her
eldest son completed year 12 with us and is now over at the Defense Academy in
Canberra and is doing doing very well and their very proud of him umm she
continued on our Appeals and Promotions committee and ahh has worked very
closely with the person who replaced her in the position just recently we ahh we
started our procedure to for staff and students to choose student leaders for next year
umm this lady’s second son is in year 11 and umm this year they needed two students
if they wished to be considered for student leaders we changed the process they
needed to actually apply they needed to write out e gave them the criteria they needed
to write out an application letter umm and then they were interviewed I wasn’t part of
that process I I allowed not allowed the other people in the senior management team
followed it through because I was doing interviews and things umm but I was aware
of what was going on umm this persons umm son wasn’t going to apply umm she
basically talked him into it I know that now umm and he wrote out a written
application and he was interviewed he missed his first appointment then came the
next time and didn’t interview terribly well because he’s not an outgoing person he
was not one of the students that was chosen then of the 17 or 18 who put in
applications to go forward for umm onto the ballot paper and she was furious and
she sent me an email telling me how unchristian it was that that the lad had done what
we’d ask to do and we should have put all the names up in front of the students and let
them decide we shouldn’t be choosing, it was a quite a personally at me but then I
think in a sense it was fair perhaps I did speak to her I saw her at school and and
were drawing from all things in schools we are drawing that too I saw picking up her
child the other day and I deliberately went down and spoke to her and we had a
twenty minute chat I suppose but it was I tried to to show her that that she could still
use it as a positive experience her main worry I think was that that she had told the lad
he wasn’t going to do it she had told him it would be an experience he should do it I
think and this is being forgive me Lord but I think she also thought it would look
good if he put it there on the CV and everything when he went out umm and he didn’t
find it a positive experience he he’d failed we regretted him and I was trying to tell
her how it wasn’t rejection when you apply for things you got to accept that
sometimes you but nothing would change umm and she said to me really M it was the
straw that broke the camels back it was the straw that broke the camels back and and
so all of that past come forward and and I guess I guess in some ways I saw or could
umm feel and sense some of the things that had caused the problems back earlier.
Umm and and I’d have to say that probably and that’s the other tricky thing probably
had been on my mind really from the first day that she had started at the school
APPENDIX D
PERMISSION LETTER OF PRESIDENT
LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

12 April 2001

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter will serve to confirm that Mr Kenneth Albinger has permission to approach you as a principal of a Lutheran secondary school in order to carry out his research project.

I am satisfied that the ethical protocols will protect the confidentiality of the information and the identities of the participants.

I have recommended that Mr Albinger consult with the National Director for Lutheran Schools and the regional directors before approaching principals.

I am supporting Mr Albinger’s approach because I can see that the research has the potential to add useful knowledge for the Lutheran Church of Australia in its preparation of those who will serve as principals.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

MICHAEL P SEMMLER
President

MPS:jrw
01:11/RI
APPENDIX E

PERMISSION LETTER OF DISTRICT DIRECTOR, SOUTH AUSTRALIA, NORTHERN TERRITORY & WESTERN AUSTRALIA

9 May 2001

To: Principals of Lutheran Secondary Schools SA/NT/WA

Re: PROPOSED RESEARCH BY KEN ALBINGER

This is to inform you that Ken Albinger has talked with me concerning his research proposal and shown me the letter he intends to address to you.

I endorse the intent of the proposal. It is also my opinion that sufficient attention has been given to protecting you, as an individual, within the research report so that it will not be possible for you to be identified.

As the results of the study will be valuable for leadership within the Lutheran school sector, I encourage your support.

Yours faithfully,

Barry J Kahl
Director

Enc.
APPENDIX F

PERMISSION LETTER OF DISTRICT DIRECTOR SOUTHEAST REGION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The Director of Educational Programs, Luther Seminary, Mr Ken Albinger, has requested approval for an approach to be made to principals in the SE Region to be involved in his doctoral project.

I have viewed a summary of the research project: "What beliefs, values and knowledge inform the world view that Australian Lutheran secondary school principals bring to their consideration of moral dilemmas encountered in their work?"

I commend the project, and encourage participation in the project to principals. I welcome your assistance to Ken in the conduct of the project.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Alan Wiebusch
Director for Lutheran Schools
SE Region.

25th May 2001
APPENDIX G

PERMISSION LETTER OF DIRECTOR QUEENSLAND

LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA
QUEENSLAND DISTRICT SCHOOLS DEPARTMENT

ABN 93 527 332 340

1st June 2001

Dear Colleague

Research Study Request

I am pleased to let you know that the study in which you are being invited to participate is known to me – and I would like to make the following points about it:

(i) It has the potential to assist us in understanding the total work and responsibilities of principals;

(ii) It meets the stringent requirements of Griffith University's Human Research Ethics Committee, and has been approved by the Committee; and

(iii) The highest standard of confidentiality is in place.

In all counts I commend the study to you, for your consideration.

With Christian greetings
Yours sincerely

[Signature]

(Dr) Roger Hunter
Director for Schools
Lutheran Church of Australia - Queensland District
APPENDIX H

REQUEST LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

12 June, 2001
Address

Dear

I am currently completing the requirements for a Doctor of Education Degree within the School of Curricula Teaching and Learning. To that end I am conducting a research project under the supervision of Professor Neil Dempster. The project must conform to the ethical guidelines for human research as adopted by Griffith University. I am writing to you to request your participation as a subject in the research. In order for you to make an informed decision regarding your willingness to assist it is important that you consider carefully the possible implications of your participation. Therefore, could you please carefully read the information that follows.

- **Project Title:** The nature and impact of world view on the professional acts of principals facing ethical dilemmas

- **Chief Investigator (Supervisor)**  Prof Neil Dempster, Ph D  
  School of Curriculum Teaching and Learning  
  Phone: (07) 3875 5785

Investigator (Ed D Candidate)  Mr Kenneth Albinger, M Ed  
St. Luther Seminary, North Adelaide  
Phone: (07) 8267 7367

Professor Dempster is currently the head of the school of Curriculum Teaching and Learning. He has extensive experience in research conducted in the area of education both in Australia, and overseas.

- I am interested in the thinking that informs the professional actions of school leaders. In this project I am investigating the nature and sources of the values held by Lutheran secondary principals as they take professional actions. I would like to interview you in order to have you relate an incident that presented an ethical dilemma. The interview would be tape recorded. It would take from thirty to sixty minutes of your time. In addition, I would ask you to review the transcript of your interview, and if necessary note any changes you would like to add in order to have it reflect exactly what your thinking was. This could take an additional hour. I would then ask you to read the preliminary write up of the data developed from your interview. This would require a further hour of your time.

- Given the small number of Lutheran secondary school principals in Australia, and the fact that you are all known to each other, it is important from an ethical standpoint to ensure confidentiality for you, and take every measure to prevent your personal identification as a participant in this study. To achieve this, I would suggest that you consider carefully who you would inform of your participation. I would conduct your interview away from your school, at a place of your choosing. I would also ensure that any reference to a school or members of its community are not included in any published reports of the project. The transcripts of interviews and computer files will be kept in locked storage both during the study, and afterward.

- Since I am conducting this research in terms of you as an individual, I do not believe it necessary to inform your school governing body. I have sought and received permission to conduct this
research from the President of the Lutheran Church of Australia, and from the relevant Directors for Lutheran Schools. Copies of their letters are included for your perusal.

- I believe this research can provide several benefits to our understanding of leadership in Lutheran schools. Recent studies of effective leadership for schools suggest a clear relationship between beliefs, values, theoretical knowledge and the work of principals. In schools of the Lutheran Church of Australia the challenge is complicated by expectations that principals will be operating with a Lutheran Christian world view. The precise nature of the role of world view in determining professional action has not been fully researched. This study seeks explanation of the impact of a world view on meaning and decision in ethically challenging situations. Any findings will provide a basis for further research and will also be of interest to those who lead and those who prepare people for leadership in Lutheran schooling.

- Participation in this research is voluntary and your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. If you decide to participate, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or without providing an explanation.

- As a participant of the project, you will receive a copy of the research report for your personal library.

- If you wish to consult further before reaching a decision, you may contact me or Professor Neil Dempster at the phone numbers listed above.

- The University requires that all participants be made aware that if they have any complaints concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted they may be given to the researcher, the supervisor or, if an independent person is preferred, either

  the University's Research Ethics Officer, Office for Research, Bray Centre, Griffith University, Kessels Road, Nathan, Qld 4111, telephone (07) 3875 6618;
  or

  the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Administration), Bray Centre, Griffith University, Kessels Road, Nathan, Qld 4111, telephone (07) 3875 7343

Having read the above information, I invite you to complete the enclosed consent form and return it in the stamped, addressed envelope provided. If you decide to participate, I thank you on behalf of the university for your willingness to contribute to this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Ken Albinger
APPENDIX I

CONSENT FORM  (copies on file for each subject)