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What is This?

Five Ethical Paradigms for Community College Leaders: Toward Constructing and Considering Alternative Courses of Action in Ethical Decision Making

J. Luke Wood[1] and Adriel A. Hilton[2]

Abstract

This article encourages community college leaders to employ ethical paradigms when constructing and considering alternative courses of action in decision-making processes. The authors discuss four previously articulated paradigms (e.g., ethic of justice, ethic of critique, ethic of care, and ethic of the profession) and propose an additional paradigm—the ethic of local community. The ethic of local community is a communitarian and utilitarian frame embodied by the philosophical underpinnings and mission of the community college. Questions designed for praxis are proffered following a discourse on how each paradigm is defined and described in extant literature.

Keywords

community college mission, community college service districts, ethics, leadership

Leadership in the community college is an ethical enterprise, as leaders confront complex, multidimensional, and dynamic moral issues in their everyday practice (Hellmich, 2007; Nevarez & Wood, 2010; Vaughan, 1992). This sentiment is echoed by Furman

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(2004), who suggests that the field of educational leadership is "fundamentally a moral endeavor" (p. 215) and explains that literature on education administration indicates that the profession is embodied by a moral imperative. This imperative requires responsible stewardship over resources, personnel, and students (Fullan, 2003; Maxcy, 2002).

Responsible stewardship necessitates navigation around numerous potential pitfalls (Davis, 2007a, 2007b), which are compounded by ongoing change (e.g., dwindling resources, accountability, demographic shifts). As noted by Nevarez and Wood (2010), "responding to constant change and evolving with a rapidly shifting social landscape while maintaining the community colleges [sic] mission of access has been the challenge, call, and opportunity of community college leaders for more than a century" (p. 100). They stated that responding to change requires leaders to engage in ethical leadership and decision making. However, Beckner (2004) remarked that educational leaders rarely ground their decision making in ethical or philosophical theory; rather, they rely upon experiential knowledge and personal views. Ideally, theory and practice should coinform ethical leadership in the community college (Hellmich, 2007). This premise is the guiding motive of this article.

With this premise in mind, this manuscript encourages community college leaders to employ four ethical paradigms (ethic of justice, ethic of critique, ethic of care, and ethic of the profession) when constructing and considering alternative courses of action in decision-making processes (Shapiro & Gross, 2008; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). Furthermore, the authors of this manuscript propose the concept of *ethic of local community* as an additional frame to be used in decision making. This frame is embodied in the philosophical underpinnings and mission of the community college. Questions designed for praxis (the nexus of theory and practice) are proffered following a discourse on how each paradigm is defined and described in extant literature. The next section will discuss an ethical decision-making model for community college leaders.

A Model of Ethical Decision Making

Anderson and Davies (2000) articulated a six-stage ethical decision-making model for community college presidents and boards of trustees; though this model is designed for presidents and boards of trustees, Nevarez and Wood (2010) have suggested that the stages of this model are applicable to all community college leaders. Anderson and Davies stated that ethical issues are multifaceted, meaning that each stage in the model is fluid, dynamic, and multidimensional. Stage 1 consists of identifying the ethical issues or problems facing community college leaders. Anderson and Davies noted that problem identification is aided or stagnated by moral sensitivity. They observed that in addition to the ability to recognize signals of immoral acts, moral sensitivity includes an affective reaction to these acts and an understanding of how immorality impacts all individuals within an organization. Stage 2 includes the acquisition of data from multiple sources including advice from peers and attentiveness to one's affective response to the ethical breach. In particular, emphasis is placed on

consulting colleagues with no professional ties to the issue. Anderson and Davies stated that colleagues can provide suggestions for data gathering, serve as a safe outlet for discourse, and suggest potential resolutions. Stage 3 requires leaders to engage in critical questioning, including personal introspection of leaders' emotional responses to the ethical breach, examination of actions taken by leaders in similar circumstances, and investigating existing laws, codes, and policies relevant to the issue.

Stage 4 suggests that leaders should construct or consider alternative approaches to resolving the dilemma. Anderson and Davies suggested that leaders consider three planes of decision making when constructing alternatives. These planes are based upon Kohlberg's (1984) levels of moral judgment. At the first level, decision making occurs on a normative hierarchy where varying levels of powers are evident. At the next level, decision making illustrates collective caring, compassion for others, and support for societal cooperation. At the third level, hierarchical structures are eradicated and emphasis is placed on the importance of society while individual justice is fostered.

Stage 5 necessitates that leaders evaluate the multiple alternative approaches identified in Stage 4. The criterion used by Anderson and Davies (2000) for evaluating alternatives is primarily situated in two domains. The first domain suggests that an analysis of alternatives should be based upon laws and existing codes of ethics. The second domain places virtues, particularly "autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, fidelity and justice" at the center for decision making (p. 723). In Stage 6, leaders select and enact an alternative based upon likely outcomes derived from the evaluation criteria. Enacting this decision may require leaders to make difficult choices that place ethics above immoral, and sometimes normative, behaviors.

This aforementioned model highlights several core elements of an ethical decision-making process. Nevarez and Wood (2010) stated that ethical decision-making models have four primary steps in common: identification of a problem, gathering data, conceptualizing and evaluating alternative courses of action, and implementing a course of action. They noted that Step 3 (constructing, considering, and evaluating alternative courses of action) encompasses Stages 4 and 5 of the model espoused by Anderson and Davies (2000). However, although Anderson and Davies provided some direction on how to evaluate potential courses of action, little attention is given to the process of constructing and considering alternative ethical approaches. Thus, this article provides an in-depth treatment of this process, suggesting the use of five ethical paradigms to be used to construct or consider potential approaches to resolving ethical dilemmas.

Ethical Paradigms

This section will examine five ethical paradigms (ethic of justice, ethic of critique, ethic of care, ethic of the profession, and ethic of local community). Each paradigm will be defined, described, and accompanied with questions for praxis. Figure 1 illustrates that they are distinct, though interrelated, concepts. According to Shapiro and
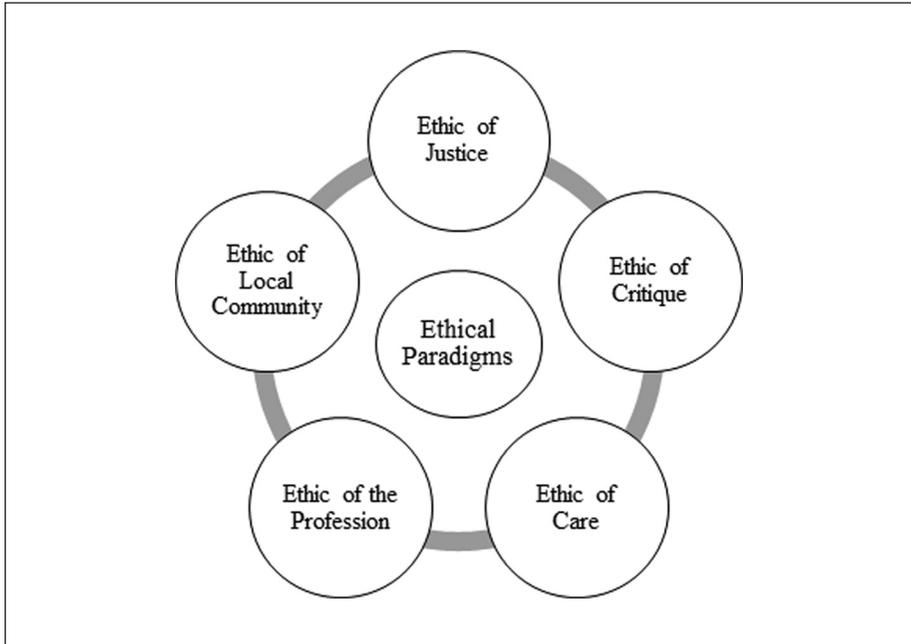
Figure 1. Ethical paradigms

Stefkovich (2005), ethical paradigms aid ethical decision making in several ways. Paradigms support leaders in examining the frames or "ways of thinking" that they are most inclined to use, contemplating actions outside their normative behaviors and approaches, considering more holistic steps to issue resolution, and engaging in reflexive practice. All ethical theories presented fall within three ethical metatheories: deontology, teleology, and axiology. In short, deontological-based theories focus on mechanisms by which decisions are made, and teleological-driven theories center on the outcomes of decision making. In a different conception, axiological theories are concerned with virtues that guide decision-making processes (Beckner, 2004).

Ethic of Justice

The ethic of justice is an ethical frame that conceptualizes issues, holds confidence in, and enacts decisions based upon "the rule of law and the more abstract concepts of fairness, equity, and justice" (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2005, p. 13). From this perspective, leaders' decisions are guided through extant laws, rules, policies, codes, and procedures. Beckner (2004) has referred to this "rule-based" decision making as a morally objective, deontological, nonconsequentialist manner of contextualizing ethical dilemmas. This approach is morally objective in that preestablished principles, rules, and laws guide leaders' conceptions of dilemmas. Thus, this paradigm may be

perceived as an objective way to resolve dilemmas, because it is devoid of personal or cultural inclinations. This is an important notion for moral objectivists who adhere to the conception that truth "exists prior to and apart from observation and thought" (Nash, 1996, p. 49).

The ethic of justice is deontological in that leaders have a duty, obligation, and responsibility to adhere to the rules governing their profession (Maxcy, 2002). Therefore, the intent of their action in adhering to these rules is paramount (Stedham, Yamamura, & Beekun, 2007). Because intent rather than outcome (or means as opposed to ends) is of cardinal importance, the ethic of justice is nonconsequentialist (Beckner, 2004). As a nonconsequentialist approach, leaders should not consider the consequences, or ends, of their actions (Northouse, 2007; Strike, Haller & Soltis, 2005). Instead, they should make objective decisions based upon predetermined rules and principles. However, Delgado (1995) extended that this approach does not suggest that leaders operating from an ethic of justice always believe that laws or rules are always "right." Rather, they acknowledge the imperfection of these laws, but enforce them while operating under the conviction that law is improved over time. Further, they work to change laws and rules believed to be inadequate or inequitable. However, enforcement of law occurs until modifications have been enacted.

Maxcy (2002) stated that the ethic of justice is best conceptualized through the work of John Rawls (1971), who equated justice to fairness, advocating that decisions be made through a veil of ignorance. A veil of ignorance suggests that decision making should be blind to (or ignorant of) preconceptions and inequities while maximizing benefits for all parties (Hendrix, 2005). Further, Rawls's perspective on justice was grounded in two primary principles: (a) that every person engaged in or affected by an action should be given treatment equal to that of others engaged in or affected by the action, and (b) all individuals should have reasonably equal access to advantage and decision-making authority; otherwise, injustice and inequity have occurred. Key to Rawls's conception of justice is that individual liberties should not be substituted for the good of the community (Sucher, 2008). This notion contrasts Aristotelian, Rousseauian, and Deweyian philosophical views in which societal good is emphasized over individual good (Shapiro & Gross, 2008; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005).

It is important to consider that justice exists in several primary forms. Chryssides and Kaler (1996) identified five primary types of justice: procedural, substantive, retributive, remedial, and distributive. Procedural justice is the treatment of individuals in applying law in an impartial, unbiased, and fair manner (e.g., due process). Although procedural justice examines the fairness of the application of law, substantive justice focuses on the fairness of laws themselves. In essence, substantive justice critically examines whether laws serve to uphold parity or produce inequities. Retributive justice centers on receiving "retribution" for wrongs through the enactment of punishments for those who violate existing laws and codes. Remedial justice also focuses on addressing wrongs, but through remediation or reparations to address and counterbalance injustices that have occurred. Finally, distributive justice centers on the advantages and disadvantages of laws, resources, and

power. Distributive justice is concerned with whether advantages and disadvantages are equally distributed. As discussed by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), when operating from an ethic of justice "ethical issues such as due process and privacy rights are often balanced against the need for civility and the good of the majority" (p. 13). As a result, although the ethic of justice addresses the five forms of justice, there is a focus on procedural justice (e.g., due process) and distributive justice (e.g., the good of the majority).

Numerous laws, codes, policies, and procedures affect leadership in the community college. As discussed by Nevarez and Wood (2010), community college leadership is affected by rules emerging from the federal level (e.g., judicial rulings, accreditation, federal aid policies, federal acts), the state level (e.g., governors, legislatures, commissions), and system level (e.g., governing and coordinating boards or commissions). In addition, they discussed how rules from local entities (e.g., trustees, oversight councils, local government) and campus entities (e.g., shared governance, academic senates involving faculty and staff, faculty or staff unions) also affect leadership. Given the complexity of governance structures in community colleges, which vary greatly by state (Tollefson, 1999, 2009), community college leaders are accountable to a number of constituencies and oversight bodies. Thus, from an ethic of justice perspective, college leaders have a responsibility to learn, understand, and abide by rules, codes, and procedures. As a result, when leaders encounter ethical dilemmas, they may consider several questions that may aid in constructing or considering alternatives from an ethic-of-justice standpoint: What are the rules, codes, policies, and procedures relevant to this dilemma? Of these rules, are some more pertinent or important to an issue than others? What are the implications for this issue with respect to society (Caldwell, Shapiro, & Gross, 2007; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005)?

Ethic of Critique

The ethic of critique is juxtaposed to the ethic of justice in that it "critiques" moral problems caused by the ethic of justice (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). The ethic of justice recognizes that laws and codes may be imperfect but that leaders are to maintain these laws until changed. In contrast, the ethic of critique views laws as providing an advantage to certain groups over others. In this light, law is seen as a support of social hierarchies based upon race, class, and gender (Caldwell, et al., 2007; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). With respect to the community college, this conception is rooted, at least in part, in its historical underpinnings. Witt, Wattenbarger, Gollattscheck, and Suppiger (1994) extended that community colleges were designed to address two polarized ends: to advantage the privileged by separating the elitists from the general public and to satisfy populists who saw the community college as a mechanism for social progress.

From the perspective of an ethic of critique, law is seen as distinct from ethics. Examples of slavery, Nazi eugenics, and separate-but-equal policies illustrate how laws can uphold hegemonic practices; with this in mind, adhering to laws can

(at times) be viewed as unethical. As adeptly stated by Starratt (2004), "if the ethic of justice looks towards fairness, the ethic of critique looks toward barriers to fairness" (p. 47). The ethic of critique emerges from the epistemological values of critical theory, which, according to McLaren (2003), adheres to the notion that power, privilege, injustice, and inequities are ubiquitous and imbedded within the social order. The underlying assumption of this perspective is that fairness cannot be acquired through extant social systems (Starratt, 2004). Thus, critical theorists (and those operating from an ethic of critique) work to challenge the social order. As such, leaders operating from an ethic of critique view law and policy as social structures reinforcing inequities. Furthermore, the language and multiple meanings derived from law and policy are seen as contributing to inequities and subjugated realities (Yanow, 2000).

Unlike an ethic of justice orientation, which seeks equal treatment, leaders operating from an ethic of critique may consider whether equitable treatment may necessitate unbalanced actions (means) in the pursuit of equality (ends) (Shapiro & Gross, 2008). Accordingly, Shapiro and Gross defined the ethic of critique as a critical consequentialist perspective that identifies laws, policies, and structures that disadvantage certain groups and the promotion of action to address identified inequities. Consequentialism is the notion that consequences of actions are prioritized in decision making. Or, more simply, the "ends" justify the "means" (Beckner, 2004). As such, the ethic of critique emerges from a teleological tradition which affirms that the guiding motive of decision making is the intended outcome.

The ethic of critique is a morally based paradigm. Often, this paradigm is employed by individuals who strive to create parity for others who have been disadvantaged by society (Starratt, 2004). However, just as there are many sublenses to critical theory (e.g., critical race theory, Marxist theory, critical feminist theory), there are multiple sublenses to take into account when considering dilemmas from an ethic of justice standpoint (Maxcy, 1991; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). Leaders considering dilemmas from an ethic-of-critique standpoint should investigate how rules have served to disaffect and disadvantage women, communities of color (e.g., students of color, faculty of color, staff or administrators of color), low income communities, the disabled, and older students (Schulte & Cochrane, 1995). This is a particularly important point for community college leaders. Since the 1960s the community college has grown exponentially (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). Rapid growth has been coupled with increasing student diversity and marked representation from nontraditional student populations, such as minorities, part-timers, older students, and the socioeconomically disadvantaged (Kasper, 2002-03; O'Banion, 1989; Planty et al., 2009; Provasnik & Planty, 2008). Thus, the ethic of critique enables leaders and decision makers to become more attuned to the needs of multiple groups and constituencies.

Community college leaders engaged in decision making from an ethic of critique should consider several questions: Does one group have certain advantages over others? If so, how are these advantages sustained? What are the ramifications of these advantages? Does one (or more) group(s) lack access and voice in the decision-making process? What assumptions are at play? What are the known and

unknown values within these assumptions (Caldwell, et al., 2007; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005)?

Ethic of Care

Similar to the ethic of critique, the ethic of care is also juxtaposed to the ethic of justice (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005) and is also consequentialist in nature (Caldwell et. al., 2007). Furthermore critiquing the ethic of justice, Noddings (2003) noted that the ethic of care values people as opposed to principles. As conceptualized by Gilligan (1982), the ethic of care is compassion oriented and is concerned with how decisions, issues, and circumstances serve to hurt others. As such, an ethic of care is characterized by virtues such as compassion, understanding, and trust (Shapiro & Gross, 2008). Consequently, it is also axiological in nature as guided by these virtues. Leaders employing an ethic of care are encouraged to foster understanding of multiple sociocultural realities (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005), with the purpose of improving the standpoint of others.

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) stated that the ethic of care has its origin in feminist literature, which is highly critical of the ethic of justice. These scholars have suggested that the ethic of justice is a masculinist frame that decenters care and concern for others, valuing instead, objective rules that may cause harm to the disadvantaged (Caldwell et al., 2007). In this vein, scholarship on ethical frames has illustrated that women are more likely to employ an ethic of care than men. This is not to suggest that all women operate from an ethic of care, or that all men do not; rather, it connotes the importance for leaders to be aware of what frames they tend to employ (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 2003; Pratt, Diessner, Hunsberger, Pancer, & Savoy, 1991; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Turiel, 1998).

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) noted that an ethic of care reinforces the importance of students and their development, focusing particularly on aiding students in achieving their educational and career goals. Further, an ethic of care is also concerned with the individual development of employees. According to Sullivan (2001), community college leaders operating from this standpoint value mentoring, building community, and empowering institutional affiliates. Furthermore, Sullivan stated that leaders operating from this ethic understand the importance of social ties and associations, recognizing and being attentive to the manner in which issues impact organizations.

Literature on the ethic of care has used the Ethic of Care Interview (ECI) to classify ethical responses at three primary levels (Pratt, Skoe, & Arnold, 2004; Skoe, 2010; Skoe & Marcia, 1991; Skoe, Cumberland, Eisenberg, Hansen, & Perry, 2002). At Level 1, individuals are concerned with their own progress, contentment, and well-being. In some ways, this stage is akin to egoism in that an individual's primary concern is protecting their self-interest. However, the motivation for protecting oneself is to avoid pain, discomfort, or harm (Skoe, Pratt, Matthews, & Curror, 1996). Between Level 1 and Level 2 (referred to as Level 1.5), individuals begin transitioning to an approach that is more thoughtful of others. In this transition stage, awareness and a

sense of moral duty for the well-being of others is developed. However, at this stage, personal benefit is still of chief concern.

At Level 2, the individual's primary concern is shifted toward the well-being and happiness of others. At this stage, altruism is believed to be the right course of action (Skoe, 1998). As a result, "goodness" is externally situated in concern for others, sometimes to the point of personal detriment. Between Levels 2 and 3 (referred to as Level 2.5), individuals begin developing an understanding of the importance of balance between egoism and altruism; however, negotiating this does not occur as there is a tendency towards otherness.. At Level 3, individuals develop a healthy ethic of care that balances personal needs and otherness. Balance between egoism and altruism is negotiated through an understanding of connectivity with others (Skoe & Diessner, 1994; Skoe, et al., 1999).

Examining alternative courses of action from an ethic of care can help community college leaders build an environment of collegiality and support. Williams (2002) stated that leaders who imbue an ethic of care allow for the development of social ties that cause students to feel valued. Developing an environment that fosters care and affirms the value of students is imperative, as it can lead to enhanced student success (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991). Furthermore, an ethic of care requires community college leaders to attend to issues of student success (Rosenthal, 2006), thereby placing the focus of otherness on the best interests of students (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007).

With this in mind, community college leaders employing an ethic of care should consider several questions: How will an issue or potential resolution affect all members of the institution? What are the implications of this issue for community and interconnectivity among institutional affiliates? Will a decision cause harm to one group or entity? In what way (if any) does this issue or potential resolution impact organizational morale? How will (or does) this issue affect the individual's personal goals and development? What level of reciprocity should be given or received from others (Caldwell et al., 2007; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005)?

Ethic of the Profession

The ethic of the profession acknowledges that there are guiding values (e.g., principles, codes, assumptions, mores, and expected behaviors) within each profession. Thus, adhering to these values is an obligatory duty to a leader's craft. In particular, professional codes of ethics are paramount to honoring the ethic of the profession (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). With this in mind, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) defined the ethic of the profession as professional codes and mores underpinning a profession. According to Shapiro and Stefkovich, leaders operating from this standpoint should view and adhere to professional codes of ethics through the lens of their practical experience in the community college, or more generally, in education; be cognizant of their own personal beliefs, convictions, and values in relationship to those within the field; consider the standards and needs of the local community; and place students at the center of the decision-making process.

As a whole, the the ethic of the profession is deontological and axiological in nature, in that the predetermined codes and values guiding the profession serve as a marker for ethical conduct. For community college leaders, codes of ethics can originate from the local level (campus), the system or state level (governing boards), and the national level (associations). In particular, the *Recommended Code of Ethics for Chief Executive Officers of Community Colleges*, adopted by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) in 2005, serves as the standard of behavior for the profession. Although designed for leaders in executive roles, the tenets of this code of ethics guide, inform, and shape the conduct of all community college leaders (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). The code identifies four principles: "1. Trust and respect for all individuals; 2. Honesty in all actions; 3. Just and fair treatment of all people; 4. Integrity in all actions" (Core Values section, para. 1).

The AACC (2005) code of ethics provides leaders with guidelines in five primary areas. First, leaders have a duty to their board members. This includes providing members with accurate information that is timely and that fully depicts impending issues. Furthermore, leaders have an obligation to carry out board mandates and accurately relate their conversations and the spirit of their intentions to followers. Leaders are also charged with working collaboratively with board members to foster an environment of collegiality. Although not all community college leaders report directly to board members, all organizational personnel (e.g., administration, faculty, staff) have a responsibility to superiors (Starratt, 2004). Nevarez and Wood (2010) noted that all leaders (regardless of rank) should work to provide their superiors with accurate information, portray their decisions and perceptions accurately, and facilitate an environment of collegiality.

Second, leaders have a duty to their institutional personnel (e.g., administration, faculty, staff) and should establish high standards for performance while working to achieve an environment of support, collegiality, and mutual respect. As chief institutional officers, leaders should model the behaviors, mores, and values they desire in others. As such, leaders must avoid abuse of their positional power and avoid seeking personal gain from others. In addition, they should model adherence to organizational policies and procedures (AACC, 2005).

Third, the AACC (2005) code of ethics states that community college leaders have several responsibilities to the students that they serve. Leaders are expected to promote institutional diversity as well as mutual respect and affirmation of differences. Student success as achieved through open access, high expectations, and educational opportunity are of paramount concern. As such, the provision of resources to achieve these ends is needed to support student-success operations. In addition, leaders should be responsive and provide a platform for students to voice their opinions, concerns, and recommendations. Overall, leaders will work to establish an intellectually, emotionally, and physically affirming environment in which students feel safe and supported (Starratt, 2004). Regardless of rank, all community college leaders have an obligation to create a supportive environment for students by establishing and main-

taining standards of excellence, fostering a culture of collaboration, and acting responsibly with their vested institutional authority (Nevarez & Wood, 2010).

Fourth, leaders have obligations to other secondary and postsecondary institutions. Leaders will establish collegial relationships with other educational institutions. This includes providing these institutions with accurate and timely information, informing them of developments that will affect their operations, and honoring memorandums of understanding and other formal or informal agreements. In all, leaders should consider how their relationships with other educational institutions affect existing, potential, and future relationships with those entities.

Fifth, the AACC (2005) code of ethics notes that leaders also have responsibilities to local businesses, organizations, and the general public. This necessitates that leaders work to address local needs, embrace praise and constructive criticism, address confusing organizational channels or policies, and facilitate college-community ties. In addition, leaders are expected to adhere to all local policies and regulations that affect the operation of the college.

With this code in mind, community college leaders employing an ethic of the profession should consider the following questions: What guidance does the AACC and other community college codes of ethics provide? How would colleagues and peers approach ethical issues? What are the implications of these issues or potential courses of action for the local community? What student-related considerations do these issues or potential resolutions raise?

Ethic of Local Community

The ethic of local community is proposed by the authors as a neoutilitarian frame and additional paradigm for decision making. The ethic of local community is grounded in the notion that community colleges must serve the needs, interests, and public good of the local community, defined as the service region of the institution. This concept is firmly grounded in both the historical and contemporary literature on the community college (Baker, Dudziak, & Tyler, 1994; Bogue, 1950; Cohen, 2001; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Eells, 1931, 1941; Mills, 2003; Monroe, 1977; Vaughan, 2006).

An ethic of local community situates the best interests of the local community as a cardinal principle in decision making. Because the focus of decision making is on outcomes that serve the best interests of the community, as opposed to a focus on the mechanisms for achieving such outcomes, this ethic is consequentialist in nature. Furthermore, the ethic of local community has roots in utilitarianism and communitarianism, perspectives that emphasize best courses of action that prioritize society over those of the individual (Arthur, 1998; Beckner, 2004; Strike, 2007; Sucher, 2008).

Traditional utilitarianism is associated with the work of John Stuart Mill (1863/2003), who held that the right course of action is that which promotes the greatest "good" for the greatest number of people. Mill defined "good" as happiness in terms of reducing pain and enhancing pleasure. Extending this idea of good beyond physical pain and pleasure to aesthetic pleasures and intellectual and social

enjoyments, Mill's position was that the best course of action in a given situation is one that yields the greatest good (or happiness) for the greatest number.

The ethic of local community differs somewhat from traditional utilitarianism in that actions taken by community college leaders resulting in the greatest good for the greatest number necessarily are targeted to the local community. As locally controlled institutions designed to serve local needs, community colleges logically adhere to locally based decision making. Their chief concern is given to local needs (i.e., social, cultural, and economic), workforce development, as well as the advancement of human or intellectual capital.

Since their inception, community colleges have served local needs: they have provided greater access to higher education (Cohen & Brawer, 2003), and they have provided educational programming designed to develop and foster local capital (Vaughan, 2006). Because the scope of the greatest good for the greatest number is confined to a more narrow focus than that implied by traditional utilitarianism, it may be more appropriate to characterize the ethic of local community as neoutilitarian. Thus, when leaders encounter ethical dilemmas they consider courses of action that promote the best interest or greatest good for the local community (Starratt, 2004).

In addition to utilitarianism, the ethic of local community also shares ties with communitarianism. Communitarianism is a philosophical tradition that places the concept of community at the center of any value analysis. This is inclusive of community culture, social practices, languages, history, and mores (Etzioni, 2003). In this perception, ethical standards vary based on the contexts of communities; in essence, the community itself is the standard of morality (Bell, 2010). Communitarians adhere to the notion that society relies upon the interdependence of the people within. This perspective suggests that community members must recognize and carry out community responsibilities to maintain social order.

Discussions of the communitarian tradition often revolve around the question of what constitutes a community (Etzioni, 2003). At the center of these discussions are arguments that definitions of community (which are numerous) are too ambiguous (Bell & Newby, 1973; Stacey, 1994). In an attempt to provide a comprehensive definition of community, Etzioni (2003), a primary proponent of communitarianism, argued that communities have two primary characteristics: They are composed of relationships which are "affect-laden" between a group of individuals; and they maintain shared commitments to values, mores, and identity. However, even this conception of community seems ambiguous. In contrast, the ethic of community presents a clear definition of community as constituting the service region of a given community college.

Furthermore, Noddings (2003) noted that communitarianism diverges from a Rawlsian perspective in that communitarians believe that all rights are derived from the community, with no standard of good or justice predating or superseding the community. In this light, communitarianism advocates a community-based relativism. The ethic of local community perspective diverges from this viewpoint, which suggests that the mechanisms by which the best interests of the community are sought must be

approached through one or more of the historical functions of the community college. These functions include transfer, terminal degrees, remedial or developmental education, vocational training, and continuing education (Nevarez & Wood, 2010; Tillery & Deegan, 1985; Vaughan, 2006). More simply, the best interests of the local community are primarily restricted to educational activities and programming.

The ethic of local community adheres to a community-based decision-making process. Thus, decision making at national, state, and district levels has lower value than decision making concerning local community needs. This perspective acknowledges that localized decision making can better account for local challenges and context than decision making at higher levels. Furthermore, bureaucracy is lessened when this occurs, allowing for a more expeditious response to community needs. This notion does not suggest that individual colleges should act in isolation. On the contrary, community colleges must operate as "united communities" on policies, general curricula, systems, processes, articulations, and decisions that require centralization. However, this should not circumvent the right of colleges to engage community-oriented decision making to address the unique needs of each locale.

The ethic of local community is evident in the historical tradition of the community college. According to Witt et al. (1994) the populist movement of the late 1800s was guided by the philosophical notion that education, at every level, should be available to all members of society. As such, the populists sought to gain open access to education. As successes were gained at successive levels of schooling (e.g., elementary, middle, high school), the populists expanded their focus to higher education. They supported the community-college (then called junior college) model, which supported local community access at a reasonable cost (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Griffith & Blackstone, 1945; Monroe, 1977). Since that time, serving the community has been a central tenet of the community college mission. This necessitates that community colleges be responsible to the academic, workforce development and sociocultural needs of the local communities in which they serve (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Nevarez & Wood, 2010; Vaughan, 2006; Witt, et al., 1994).

Community colleges are designed to serve the needs of the local community and receive support through local tax bases; hence the word *community* in the name *community college* (Bogue, 1950; Frye, 1992; Nevarez & Wood, 2010; Vaughan, 2006). In 1947, President Truman's Commission on Higher Education released a report that extolled the importance of junior colleges in addressing local needs (Gleazer, 1994; Medsker, 1960). Vaughan (1983) indicated that the Truman Commission used the term *community college* to illustrate that these institutions were locally controlled. This term became increasingly popular, even leading the American Association of Junior Colleges to be renamed as the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, now the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2009). This is not to infer that other postsecondary institutions do not bear a commitment to their local communities; rather, the intent is to emphasize that this notion is the philosophical underpinning (Witt et al., 1994) and mission of the community college (Vaughan, 2006).

Questions that come to mind when community college leaders operate from the ethic of local community are the following: What are the implications or ramifications for the local community of this or that dilemma? What potential courses of action would promote the best interest or greatest good for the local community? How will the community perceive or react to the issues and potential courses of action?

Conclusion

In summary, the decision-making model developed by Anderson and Davies (2000) suggested that leaders engage in six steps when making decisions: problem identification, data gathering, asking questions, considering alternative approaches and courses of action, evaluating the outcome of each action, and engaging a selected action. The ethical paradigms discussed in this manuscript can inform community college leaders when engaging the fourth step in this model.

As noted earlier, each paradigm is associated with an overarching ethical metatheory (e.g., deontology, axiology, teleology). From a deontological perspective, an ethic of justice requires leaders to guide decision making by rules, laws, and codes. Given the need to reduce institutional liability and maintain in good standing with governing boards, accrediting bodies, and federal guidelines, adherence to this ethic is imperative. Also within a deontological frame, the ethic of the profession requires leaders to consider the codes of conduct and values of the profession as the primary drivers of their decisions. Often, these codes advance beyond articulations of legal actions and provide guidance for agreed upon norms of acceptable behaviors within leaders' respective professions. These professional codes situate leaders within the context of a larger leadership community.

Employing a teleological orientation, the ethic of critique allows leaders to consider the outcomes of their decisions, with a focus on reducing marginalization of disadvantage. The importance of this ethic is underscored by the history of the community college in providing educational opportunities for underserved students and communities (O'Banion, 1989; Richardson, 1987). On the nexus of teleology and axiology exists the ethic of care. An ethic of care places compassion, concern, and otherness as the chief virtues and outcomes guiding decision making. As an organization that serves the needs of students and communities, community college leaders must place these "others" at the center of their decision making. The last paradigm discussed was the ethic of local community. This ethic places the local community served by community colleges at the center of decision-making processes. This ethic was discussed in light of two similar ethical theories, utilitarianism and communitarianism. The authors argued that this ethic is integral to decision making in community colleges given the historical legacy of these institutions in serving local community needs. Altogether, the ethical paradigms discussed in this article can enable leaders as they construct and consider alternative courses of action in ethical decision-making processes.

The practice of ethical decision making requires leaders to view issues that they encounter through multiple ethical lenses before making decisions. This will allow leaders to take more thoughtful actions that are less influenced by personal bias (Caldwell et al., 2007; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). Over time, employing considerations from multiple paradigms will become second nature to leaders, thereby increasing the time required to employ ethical frames (Velasquez et al., 2009). By considering holistic approaches to issue resolution, community college leaders may better serve the students, faculty, staff, administrators, and local communities under their authority and stewardship.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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