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## ETHICAL DECISION MAKING: IS PERSONAL MORAL INTEGRITY THE MISSING LINK?

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### Introduction

Ever since Foster (1989) so insightfully declared that; “Leadership must be ethical [because] it carries a responsibility not just to be personally moral, but to be a cause of ‘civic moral education’ which leads to both self-knowledge and community awareness” (p. 284), tertiary institutions throughout the world have striven to inculcate ethical decision making units into their educational leadership courses. Yet our current educational leadership literature is still brimming with calls to recognize the place of ethics in the professional development of leaders (Begley, 2006; Duignan, 2006; Fullan, 2003; Greenfield, 2004; Hollimon, Basinger, Smith, & Leonard, 2009; Richmon, 2003; Starratt, 2003; Tuana, 2007). Why, after 20 years of knowing that ethical decision making is integral to appropriate leadership behaviour, does it still remain a major concern within our educational leadership literature? Surely, this is a clear indication that we have yet to find the most effective way to help prepare our current and future educational leaders for being able to confidently and effectively deal with their complex, problematic and unavoidable ethical decision making responsibilities.

To this end, this article proposes that our failure to date to adequately prepare our current and future educational leaders for being able to effectively deal with ethical decision making responsibilities is caused by an inherent oversight in our existing ethical decision making frameworks. Essentially, these frameworks do not cater for the pivotal role played by personal moral integrity in every ethical decision. Hence, this article seeks to redress this oversight by, first, describing the role of moral integrity within every ethical decision; secondly, explaining the nature of personal moral integrity, and, finally, describing how our educational leadership development programs associated with ethical decision making can be easily adjusted so as to cater for the concurrent development of the leader’s crucially important personal moral integrity component.

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### *The Role of Personal Moral Integrity*

The use of case studies as a means of being able to confidently and effectively analyse ethical dilemmas has been the cornerstone of ethical leadership development. Shapiro and Hassinger (2007) strongly support the use of this methodology and claim that “the use of a case study, framed as an ethical dilemma, can be especially effective to help students understand a concept, such as social justice, as well as extend their moral literacy in general” (p. 452). More specifically, it is argued by Tuana (2007) that by, first, being provided with the necessary knowledge and skills required to be able to recognise, evaluate and assess ethical dilemmas, the person is then able to comprehensively discuss the ethical dilemmas inherent within each real-life situation. As described by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), these case studies are designed with the intention “to make certain that students and other readers are exposed to differing paradigms and diverse voices – of justice, rights, and law; care, concern, and connectedness; critique and possibility; and [where applicable] professionalism”. In this way, this methodology will “not only lead to stimulating conversations, but that they will also encourage reflection and guidance for wise [and ethical] decision-making in the future” (pp. 29–30).

*Ethical Leadership and Decision Making in Education: Applying Theoretical Perspectives to Complex Dilemmas*, written by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) is widely acclaimed as providing a comprehensive guide for effectively attending to the complexities and challenges of ethical decision making. This text is based on the earlier work by Starratt (1994) who suggested the importance of the three ethics of justice, critique, and care in his approach to educational leadership. To these three ethics, Shapiro and Stefkovich have added a fourth lens or perspective, the ethic of the profession. Finally, in this article is added a fifth perspective, the ethic of personal moral integrity, based on the research of Branson (2007). Largely informed by the writings of Shapiro and Hassinger (2007), these five ethics are described as follows:

*The ethic of justice.* The ethic of justice focuses on rights, law, and policies. This perspective is concerned with concepts that include fairness, equality, and individual freedom and leads to questions, such as: Is there a law, right, or policy that would be appropriate for resolving a particular ethical dilemma? Why is this law, right, or policy the correct one for this particular case? How should the law, right, or policy be implemented?

*The ethic of critique.* The ethic of critique asks us to redefine and reframe categories such as privilege, power, culture, language, and, in particular, social justice. This ethic requires leaders to deal with the hard questions regarding class, race, gender, and other areas of difference,

including: Who makes the laws, rules, or policies? Who benefits from these laws, rules, or policies? Who has the power? And who are the silenced voices?

*The ethic of care.* The ethic of care seeks to challenge the dominant and/or patriarchal ethic of justice in our society. It seeks to make leadership a “human enterprise” (Starratt, 1991, p. 195). Attention to this ethic can lead to discussions of concepts such as loyalty, trust, and empowerment. This ethic asks that individuals consider the consequences of their decisions and actions. It asks them to take into account questions, such as: Who will benefit from what I decide? Who will be hurt by my actions? What are the long-term effects of a decision I make today? And if I am helped by someone now, what should I do in the future about giving back to this individual or to society in general?

*The ethic of the profession.* The ethic of the profession places the student at the centre of the decision making process. It takes into account not only the standards of the profession, but the ethics of the community (Furman, 2004), the personal and professional codes of an educational leader, and the professional codes of a number of educational organizations (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2005). Using the lens of the ethic of the profession to resolve or solve an ethical dilemma raises questions such as these: What is in the best interests of the student? What are the personal and professional codes of an educational leader? What professional organizations’ codes of ethics should be considered? What does the local community think about this issue? And what is the appropriate way for a professional to act in this particular situation, based on the standards of the profession?

*The ethic of personal moral integrity.* The introduction of the ethic of personal moral integrity acknowledges the awareness that the application of each of the previous ethical perspectives is more likely to provide a multiplicity of alternative actions rather than precipitate a singular best solution to the ethical dilemma. In other words, the leader still has to make a choice from all of the alternative options provided by each of the different ethical perspectives. Arguably, the leader is more informed but not, necessarily, more able to make the appropriate ethical decision. To fully complete the ethical decision making process, the leader must be able to make an ethically appropriate choice based on all of the information he/she now possesses. Moreover, for this to be an ethically appropriate choice it necessitates that the leader acts with moral integrity.

Moral integrity is about instinctively and consistently doing what is right for the good of others in the absence of incentives or sanctions. People often try to explain moral

behaviour by referring to a personal benefit, such as the good feeling we experience when we act ethically. But to characterize moral behaviour as conferring some form of personal benefit is a perverse way of seeing it. A more informed understanding of what constitutes moral acts are acts carried out for their own sake and not because the actor expects any benefit, psychic or otherwise. Hence, possessing moral integrity is about achieving a commitment where the interests of others, rather the self-interests, are the spontaneous motivation. Studies have shown that self-reflection and self-inquiry can play a large part in ensuring one's leadership actions reflect moral integrity (Branson, 2007; Holliman et al, 2009). Using the lens of the ethic of personal moral integrity to resolve or solve an ethical dilemma raises questions such as these: How am I affected by the likely outcome generated by this multi ethical perspective? What is my motivation? What are my feelings, beliefs, and biases? What benefits do I gain? Will I benefit most? What strengths do I bring? How are my weaknesses affecting the situation? How has my analysis of each of the other ethics been influenced by my own views? How do my personal preferences differ from the knowledge gained from the other ethical perspectives? How do my personal preferences interfere with the assigning of priority to the knowledge provided by each of the other ethical perspectives?

### *The Nature of Personal Moral Integrity*

Despite all of the tumultuous happenings around our world today, at our core, humans very much remain moral beings (Branson, 2009). We cannot help but to judge everything in moral terms. Every story in our newspapers is suffused with ethical meaning; we measure our leaders less by their effectiveness than by their perceived virtue. We are outraged by business leaders who show scant moral concern so as to maximise organisational profits and personal incomes. Nothing raises our passions more than when another's behaviour appears to undermine our own moral expectations. Moral behaviour is still very relevant in today's world — it remains our ideal. We just have to look at how readily we reward the unexpected 'hero' who puts their own life at risk to save others to see how much we hunger for moral behaviour. Everyone wants it, especially from others, even though they may not abide by it themselves.

However, as Ferré (2001) so rightly points out, our preference for people to act morally is only as good as the level of motivation it provides us to act morally. Today, it is still held to be true that people need some form of strong persuasion or incentive in order to personally commit to adopting a particular moral point of view. Generally, a commitment to moral integrity won't happen automatically. It is true that under particularly dangerous,

life-threatening circumstances certain individuals will act with extraordinary selflessness for the benefit of another. While this clearly shows that humans are not adverse towards embracing moral behaviour, it does not prove that every person is motivated to act with moral integrity.

Batson (2008) discusses some recent moral motivation research that sheds interesting light on this issue. Data from this research supports the view that, by-and-large, people are not really motivated to act morally. Rather, most people are moral hypocrites because "they try to appear moral yet, if possible, avoid the cost of being moral" (p. 51). The link between this apparent lack of moral integrity and moral motivation is made clear by Batson.

Most people are adept at moral rationalization, at justifying to themselves — if not to others — why a situation that benefits them or those they care about does not violate their principles. ... The abstractness of most moral principles makes such rationalization especially easy. Principles may be used more reactively than proactively, more to justify or condemn action than to motivate it. (p. 52)

Batson adds that if people can convince themselves that serving their own interests does not violate their moral principles, then they can honestly appear moral and so avoid detection without paying the price of actually upholding the principles. In this form of moral masquerade, self-deception may be an asset, making it easier to look genuine while actually deceiving others.

But, the prevalence of moral masquerading raises a serious threat to the possibility of being able to develop a truly effective ethical decision making process. If moral masquerading is a natural and prevalent human trait, then the development of moral integrity and, thereby, truly effective ethical decision making, is an unrealistic expectation. If moral integrity cannot be realistically nurtured and developed then the achievement of truly effective ethical decision making is merely a tantalising dream. Conversely, if we hope to be able to enhance moral integrity and develop truly effective ethical decision making then we need to know how to reduce the prevalence of moral masquerading. Hence, the difficulty is in finding an authentic and powerful source for moral motivation. There is no point in aligning ethical leadership behaviour with moral integrity if we cannot point to what it means to be moral and why people should aspire to achieve it.

To this end, it is interesting to note the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's famous claim in his moral treatise, contained in *Beyond Good and Evil*, that "there are no facts, only interpretations" (see Solomon, 1999, p. 196).

Nietzsche was an early critic of modernity's over-reliance on reason and rationality and pressed for the acknowledgement of the integral role of perspective in human affairs. Here, Nietzsche was not suggesting that all moral decisions are merely individualised viewpoints but, rather, that the decision-making process by necessity involves the interpretation of reality as formed by the person making the decision.

This did not mean that Nietzsche advocated complete autonomy and, therefore, adhocism in the moral decision-making process. On the contrary, he held a dual understanding of the concept of perspective. First, he acknowledged that a moral decision is made from the perspective of the person making the decision. However, secondly, he also acknowledged that the person making the decision is also aware that the outcome from the decision will be morally judged from the perspective of those observing the outcome. Each of these perspectives is subject to individual interpretation by the person making the decision and reasoning helps the person to balance his/her own desires with the perceived moral expectations of others. In achieving this balance between his/her own desires and the perceived expectations of others does not mean that the person's moral commitment was directly aligned with the moral expectations of those observing the behaviour; it just meant that they appeared so. In this way, Nietzsche pointed to the unreliability of reasoning within moral integrity and pressed for the need to use whatever means possible to better understand the way humans make interpretations so as to reduce the prevalence of moral masquerades and, thereby, enhance moral integrity.

In other words, Nietzsche points us towards the realization that all ethical decisions are based on the interplay between our rational, objective knowledge and our interpretive, subjective knowledge. To truly understand ethical decision making we must follow Nietzsche's lead and acknowledge the integral role of both subjective and objective thinking in the ethical decision making process. These two separate sources of data together and equally influence the person's single ethical decision-making component of his/her being – his/her consciousness. If we are to understand the nature of personal moral integrity and ethical decision making, we must better understand human consciousness. We must better understand how our subjective and objective thinking combine together within our consciousness and how this can help us to act with greater ethical intention.

What this means is that, when it comes to the making of ethical decisions, it is our consciousness that determines what knowledge is important and how the leader will respond to that knowledge (Branson, 2009). Our

consciousness weighs up all of the objective and subjective data available to it and then decides what, out of all this data, is important and what should immediately happen in response to the perceived importance of the data. Hence, the role of consciousness in ethical decisions means that the leader's search for knowledge to guide his/her decision-making process is not a rigid process that seeks to uncover pre-existing solutions but, rather, it is as an interactive process in which a personal interpretation of knowledge is created from all the data.

Moreover, ethical decision making, first and foremost, is in the being of the leader and not in his/her doing (Branson, 2009). The leader becomes an ethical person in order to act ethically. In order to become an ethical person, the leader, first, examines his/her being, essence, and consciousness. A leader aspiring to become more adept in ethical decision making must strive to expand his/her considered awareness and to extend his/her contemplated consciousness. Ethical decision making depends on the clarity and accuracy of the voice of the leader's own consciousness and willingness to authentically follow its advice. Through consciousness examining itself, the leader's authenticity can be reinforced. Reinforced authenticity reinvigorates inner freedom and, ultimately, strengthens moral integrity. Having an enduring and resolute commitment to maintaining their moral integrity means that the leader's actions will always be in the best interests of others. Their leadership behaviour will be ethical.

#### *The Development of Personal Moral Integrity*

But, how can we be sure that the leaders' consciousness will guide them to do what is ethical? Moral integrity can be defined as our capacity to instinctively and consistently do what is right for the good of others in the absence of incentives or sanctions (Branson 2009). Hence, possessing moral integrity is about achieving an inner victory where the interests of others, rather the self-interests, are the spontaneous motivation. In other words, our moral integrity is directly linked to the relative level of our self-control towards living up to our sincerely expressed beliefs about what it would be morally best to do. It depends on the degree to which we decide to act against our better judgment due to self-deception or impulsiveness. Every time our consciousness is influenced by a lack of self control, or by self-deception, or by impulsiveness our moral integrity is compromised and our selfish desires outweigh our moral arguments. When we succumb to these we sacrifice our inner freedom because outside forces have led us to do something we feel is wrong. These outside forces are not only other people or the state; they are also forces that we create ourselves through our beliefs, opinions, attitudes and values — forces we are not always conscious

of yet are powerful enough to cause us to disregard our true self and to compromise, to some degree, our moral integrity. We relinquish part of our inner freedom to such forces and, in so doing, we adversely affect our moral integrity. It is in this way that we can say our moral integrity resides in the realm of our inner freedom and its role is to adjudicate on the best course of action, taking account of our own interests and those of others represented by our moral values or commitments. These moral interests can include the personal standards of integrity we set for ourselves.

If our level of moral integrity is directly related to the degree to which we exercise our inner freedom, this means that any improvement in how we exercise our inner freedom will, simultaneously, enhance our moral integrity. If it is possible to reduce a leader's tendency to be influenced by self-deception, impulsiveness and a lack of self-control then not only is the leader's inner freedom reinforced but also his/her moral integrity is consolidated. The leader's capacity to act morally is improved.

In a diverse and chaotic world, moral integrity has to be at the very heart of leadership. In times of chaos, people expect leaders to bring certainty and order to their world. While leaders cannot offer control over the seemingly chaotic external world that is affecting their organisation, they can fill the need of their followers for stability by having moral integrity. A leader's moral integrity allows people to feel that there is order in their relationship with others. It provides a kind of internal order even when there is no external order. This is why there is so much concern over the moral integrity of leaders in all walks of life. We want to know and trust our leaders, rather than be dazzled by their charisma. We want our leaders to have moral integrity.

To this end, as claimed by Hamilton (2008), the foremost capacity allowing us to exercise inner freedom is conscious deliberation. What is implied is a particular type of introspection in which all self-interests, all pressures, and all rational considerations are cast aside and moral judgment occurs spontaneously. Similarly, Hayek (1960) refers to one's considered will or lasting conviction and says that, "to assert this will, as opposed to the caprice of passion or desire, requires no more than sober reflection and the courage to see one's actions governed by the conviction formed by it" (p. 15). Of course, it is not reason alone that provides the basis of our moral integrity. Instead, it is a full awareness of our ethical standards and an understanding of what contributes to our welfare in the longer term. What is required is an unambiguous process of honest, deliberative self-reflection and self-inquiry that

requires us to be under no misconceptions as to what we really want, so that when we achieve our aims we do not decide we were mistaken and want something else. In other words, this process of honest, deliberative self-reflection and self-inquiry is able to ensure that we are fully informed and have clear, unambiguous preferences. A leader's moral integrity can be enhanced by means of a coherent and comprehensive self-reflective process, which allows them to avoid falling victim to short-term urges and inappropriate manipulation of their desires.

Some may refer to this process of conscious deliberation as introspection. I personally prefer to use, self-reflection, but I acknowledge that, in the minds of some, the two terms could be interchangeable. For me, introspection is too close to the concept of inspection. Inspection conjures up an image of objective judgement — right/wrong, good/bad, true/false type thinking. This is not what is being proposed. As leaders reflect on their thinking they are endeavouring to see where and why their thinking has led to misinterpretation, misunderstanding, self-deception, and unhelpful actions. They are not judging themselves, they are analysing and interpreting their thinking. This is neither a natural or easy task; it takes effort, commitment and practice. To access our consciousness, we must deliberately exercise our consciousness.

The opportunity for us to engage in conscious deliberation through self-reflection and self-inquiry is always present, but the pure voice of the moral self is usually drowned out by the confusion and chatter that fills our minds (Branson, 2009). Rawls (1972) acknowledges that in practice we are rarely fully informed about the likely consequences of our actions but we do the best with the information that is readily available, so that the plan we then follow can be said to be subjectively rational. Gathering information and consciously deliberating involves effort, and the amount of effort to be expended on each decision is itself the subject of decision. In this rational mode we often unconsciously decide at some point that the possible benefit of more information and deliberation is less than the cost of the additional effort required. We can deceive ourselves into believing we have given our full attention to the issue.

In 2006, Branson published a model for guiding structured self-reflection, which utilizes the understanding that a deeper awareness of one's self can be gleaned from a self-directed inquiry into one's self-concept, self-esteem, motives, values, beliefs and behaviours associated with a particular situation. Adapting this framework to the exploration of a particular ethical dilemma would produce the following framework:

COMPONENT OF SELF	QUESTIONS FOR SELF-REFLECTION
Self-concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will I be affected by the likely outcome generated by all of the other ethical perspectives?</li> <li>• What are my true feelings about this outcome?</li> <li>• What is the source of these feelings?</li> <li>• Are these feelings based on the immediate issue or from past experiences?</li> </ul>
Self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What strengths or previous knowledge do I bring to this issue? Will this influence my thinking appropriately? Is this strength or knowledge truly relevant?</li> <li>• What weaknesses or lack of knowledge do I bring to this issue? Will this influence my thinking appropriately? Is this perceived weakness or lack of knowledge truly relevant?</li> </ul>
Motives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is my primary motive in resolving this issue?</li> <li>• Is my thinking unquestionably aligned with this motive?</li> <li>• What outcome do I personally prefer? Why?</li> <li>• What outcome do I personally dislike? Why?</li> <li>• Are my actions reflecting a commitment to self-control?</li> </ul>
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do I personally benefit in any way from a particular outcome?</li> <li>• Which values or principles do I want guiding my decision?</li> <li>• Is my thinking free from self-interest, self-deception and impulsiveness?</li> </ul>
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What personal biases do I bring to this issue?</li> <li>• What is my regular outlook towards those who will benefit most from each possible outcome? Has this influenced my thinking?</li> <li>• What is my regular outlook towards those who will be adversely affected by each possible outcome? Has this influenced my thinking? How could these adverse effects be minimized or negated?</li> <li>• Is my thinking more influenced by personal beliefs rather than an unbiased assessment of the knowledge gained from each of the other ethical perspectives?</li> </ul>
Behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has my analysis of each ethical perspective been influenced by my own views?</li> <li>• How can the outcome be implemented in the most ethical, respectful and empathic way?</li> <li>• Will the implementation of the intended outcome reflect all of the values and principles that I wanted guiding my decision process?</li> </ul>

The good news is that we can easily redress any pre-existing limitations on our ability to fully engage in conscious deliberation. We can readily learn self-reflective techniques that enable us to become more aware of any sources of self-deception, impulsiveness and a lack of self-

control. As Christian de Quincey (2002) reminds us, we can train a person's brain in order to change his/her behaviour, but we need to dialogue with the consciousness, the mind, if we want them to change his/her beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and perceptions. Until the leader is capable of deeply and honestly exploring his/her own physical and cognitive reactions to their experiences, they will still be prone to self-deception, impulsiveness, and a lack of self-control. It is essential that the leader can become aware of any personal modes of deception or coercion that is limiting his/her inner freedom. They need to learn how to challenge their usual and natural way of thinking and to get in touch with their habitual ways of reacting. Rather than noting their thoughts, they need to understand and critique their own thinking. They need to understand how and why they are constructing their reality as they are doing. This is not a natural or simple task. For the leader to be able to gain such deep and genuine self-knowledge, it depends solely on them avoiding being false to their real self and this requires deep personal honesty and arduous effort and this may not be possible, in the first instance, without the critical input from another person, a mentor.

## Discussion

While the benefits to be gained in ethical decision making from such self-reflection can only be really assessed in their actual application to a real situation, Starratt's (2004) insights are noteworthy and encouraging. His analysis of what constitutes ethical leadership claims that there are three qualities of a truly ethical leader; autonomy, connectedness, and transcendence. First, striving for autonomy as a means of enhancing one's moral integrity is about developing "self-truth" (Starratt, 2004) or "self-determining freedom" (Taylor, 2003) or "inner freedom" (Branson, 2009). As individuals become more conscious of all the factors that are impacting on their moral judgements they are less controlled by their self-centred desires and have more possibility of making an autonomous conscious moral choice. They become free to direct their life from their self-reflective moral consciousness because they are freed from self-deception, impulsiveness, and a lack of self-control. O'Murchu (1997) claims that the greatest source of influence over the behaviour of a person comes from his/her inner self where unconscious motives, values, and beliefs influences at least 70% of daily behaviour. A person's will is not free when it is being largely controlled by unconscious influences. This is manipulated will rather than free will. Hence, the development of a leader's autonomy is dependent upon bringing these normally powerful unconscious instinctual influences into consciousness and under direct control. This is about nurturing their inner freedom through self-reflection.

Secondly, the pivotal role of connectedness in personal moral integrity, claims Harris (2002, p. 215), can be clearly seen by examining the roots of the word, consciousness, the source of our ethical decision making processes. Here, it is found that consciousness comes from the Latin *con*, which means “with”, and *scio*, which means “to know”. Consciousness is “*knowing with*” and this makes it a relational activity. Consciousness requires an “I” and a “We”; two distinct entities capable of forming a relationship. Developing personal moral integrity is not only about coming to know ourselves, but it is also about knowing how to relate to others in a more mutually beneficial and rewarding way. A person’s morality, urges Taylor (2003), crucially depends on dialogical relations with others. In particular, developing moral integrity is about realising that we all create self-fulfilling prophecies in our interactions with others. “We expect people to behave according to our projective expectations and without intending it we elicit in them reactions that confirm those expectations”, writes Frattaroli (2001, p. 231). Hence, an important aspect of nurturing an ethic of personal moral integrity is about recognising personal, unconscious, self-imposed relationship inhibitors. Once these are made conscious they can be removed in order to expand the range of people with whom we can empathise and whom we can recognise as part of our moral responsibility. The process of self-reflection, as presented above, enables the leader to become aware of, and strive to overcome, any personal, unconscious, self-imposed relationship inhibitors

Finally, the concept of transcendence within the context of personal moral integrity encapsulates the essential commitment to continually strive to be a better person. To this end, Wilber (2000) proposes that “increasing interiorization = increasing autonomy = decreasing narcissism” (p. 264). In other words, the more self-knowledge individuals have of their inner self then the more detached from that self they become, the more they can rise above that self’s limited perspective, and so the less self-centred they become. The more clearly and faithfully individuals can subjectively reflect on their self, the more they can transcend their innate personal desires in order to consider what is in the best interests of others. This is supported by Taylor’s (2003) concept of “horizons of importance” where he suggests that,

The ideal of self-choice supposes that there are other issues of significance beyond self-choice. The ideal couldn’t stand alone, because it requires a horizon of importance, which help define the respects in which self-making is significant. Unless some options are more significant than others, the very idea of self-choice falls into triviality and hence

incoherence. Self-choice as an ideal makes sense only because some issues are more significant than others. (p. 39)

As long as most of the inner influences on our behaviour remain within our unconscious there is little choice in how we respond to ethical dilemmas. However, by making these inner influences part of our consciousness, then we do have self-choice in regard to whether or not they are appropriate. As unconscious influences, our inner influences automatically seek largely self-interests. On the other hand, as conscious influences, our inner influences can be controlled and directed towards seeking horizons of greater importance where consideration is given to what is ultimately in the best interest of all. In this way, such transcended behaviour achieves moral outcomes. When applied to educational leadership, this understanding necessitates that ethical leaders need to become conscious of how their inner dimensions of their self can be controlled and redirected towards achieving better, more transcendental, consequences. Moreover, it is only through a commitment to self-reflection that such conscious awareness can be nurtured and enhanced.

### Conclusion

Figure 1 is a representation of the practical approach to ethical decision making that is proposed in this article. It not only displays the five ethical perspectives of justice, care, critique, the profession, and personal moral integrity but it also shows that these interlock thereby showing that some may impact on others. In other words, the ethical leader will have to analyse and judge which ethical knowledge must take precedence. Hence, the ethic of personal moral integrity is at the centre of this diagram since it is this perspective that will ultimately guide the leader in making the most ethical choice.



Figure 1. An illustration of the multiple ethical perspective approach to guiding ethical leadership as described in this article (Adapted from Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 27).

Indeed, because the final act associated with ethical decision making is a matter of choice based on the knowledge provided by all the other ethical perspectives, the ethic of personal moral integrity may not be just another perspective, it could be the very essence of ethical decision making. It could be the missing link in our present approaches to developing effective ethical decision making capabilities in our current and future educational leaders and, thereby, be the reason why our current educational leadership literature is able to still present the view that we are yet to do enough in this vitally important arena.

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