Business Executives' Perceptions of Ethical Leadership and Its Development

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Abstract This paper summarized the findings of a qualitative study that examines the perceptions of ethical leadership held by those who perceived themselves to be ethical leaders, and how life experiences shaped the values called upon when making ethical decisions. The experiences of 28 business executives were shared with the researcher, beginning with the recollection of a critical incident that detailed an ethical issue with which each executive had been involved. With the critical incident in mind, each executive told the personal story that explained the development of the values he or she called upon when resolving the ethical issue described. The stories were analyzed through the use of constant comparison, which resulted in the development of two models: (1) a framework for ethical leadership illuminating valued aspects of ethical leaderships and the value perspectives called upon when making ethical decisions, and (2) a model explaining how the executives' ethical frameworks developed. The paper concludes with a brief discussion on virtue ethics, experiential learning, and human resource development.

Keywords Ethics · Virtue · Leadership · Action learning

Introduction

As the daily news carries allegations of corrupt behavior in all arenas of life, the world's attention is focused on the behavior of leaders in government, business, social, and even religious institutions. The courts selectively prosecute high profile-offenders, the Catholic Church sends priests into retirement, and political candidates challenge one another's records for signs of moral weakness. Legislation, in the form of the Sarbanes–Oxley Act of 2002, passed by the United States Congress following the Enron, Tyco and Worldcom scandals, has been enacted, but the scandals continue.

Both executives and scholars are realizing that while legislation is necessary, leadership may be the primary determinant in ethical action. Gini (1998) stressed, "The ethics of leadership—whether it be good or bad, positive or negative—affects the ethos of the workplace and thereby helps to form the ethical choices and decisions of the workers in the workplace" (p. 28). Pollard (2005) stated, "While rules may bring a higher standard of accountability and add the 'stick' of more penalties, they cannot determine the honesty, character, or integrity of the people involved" (p. 14).

Lavengood (Pollard 2005) conceded that where public policy leaves off, leadership must assist with the development of a moral community that shapes human character and behavior. Gough (1998) concurred and explained that when caught in an internal struggle with regards to getting ahead or doing the right thing, "The determining factor is nothing less than the strengths and the weaknesses of your character" (p. 43).

Badaracco (2006) emphasized, "Questions of character are not simply useful … they are crucial to successful leadership…." (pp. 8–9). Quinn (2004) indicated that as leaders become more inwardly focused on their values, their inner and outer worlds become aligned, significantly impacting organizational behavior. He expounded, "We also become less self-focused and more other-focused" (p. 22).

The study summarized in this paper examined the ethical character of leadership in today's organizations by

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assisting executives in turning inward and uncovering the values upon which they base their most difficult business decisions, and listening to them reveal clues pertaining to the development of a framework for ethical leadership. This study can be differentiated from other studies that are predominantly quantitative and utilize a measurable approach that begins with existing research on values, such as that of Rokeach (1973), Schwartz (1992, 1994, 2000), or research on values embedded in existing leadership models (Kanungo 2001; Mendonca 2001; Bass and Steidlmeier 1999; Greenleaf 1970/1991). Based on Rokeach (1973), Hood (2003) connected leadership values with business ethics in a study that measured, by means of a Likert scale, the relationship of 14 of the Rokeach values with transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles (Burns 1978, 2003). Based on a modified version of Schwartz's instrument (1994) developed by Stern et al. (1998), Sosik (2005) used multisource field data collected in five organizations to examine links among managers' personal values, charismatic leadership of managers, and three outcome measures. Also, employing the tool developed by Stern et al. (1998), Fritzsche and Oz (2007) related personal values to ethical dilemmas, by means of a Likert scale, to determine the extent to which personal values inform ethical decisions. To assess the impact of the exposure of foreign culture on the development of leaders' values, Chang and Lin (2008) used a modified version of Schwartz's Likert based Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) (Schwartz 2005, 2006). Graf et al. (2011) also made use of the PVQ in their assessment of the effects of ideal and counter-ideal values (Van Quaquebeke et al. 2010) between leaders and followers. Recent empirical studies that examine leader values through indirect values frameworks embedded in leadership models include Groves and LaRocca (2011) and Reed et al. (2011). Groves and LaRocca (2011) utilized the historic ethical philosophies of teleology and deontology as associated with models of transformational and transactional leadership (Kanungo 2001; Mendonca 2001; Bass and Steidlmeier 1999) to examine leader ethical values. Reed et al. (2011) examined ethical leader values implicited within the servant leadership model (Greenleaf 1970/1991).

While the import of quantitative methods in determining statistical relationships between the variables of human values and ethical leadership must be acknowledged, the need for a more interpretative approach to understanding the immeasurable aspects of ethical leadership, as represented in the current study, is emerging. A number of researchers (Trevino et al. 2003; April et al. 2010; Resick et al. 2011) have approached the topic by means of qualitative methods. Trevino et al. (2003) conducted inductive research by interviewing corporate ethics officers and senior executives to examine "the perceived content

domain of executive ethical leadership" (p. 5), including values and behaviors. April et al. (2010) had middle managers, enrolled in MBA programs in South Africa and the Netherlands, self-report enablers (values), and stumbling blocks to ethical action. Resick et al. (2011) used qualitative methods to identify attributes (values are included) and behaviors that managers from Asia, America, and Europe ascribe to ethical and unethical leaders. Although their findings were consistent with the GLOBE (House et al. 2004) framework of values across culture, the Resick et al. (2011) did not design the study with the GLOBE framework in mind. The three above-mentioned qualitative studies explored particular phenomenon and did not attempt to correlate findings to particular models or frameworks, unlike the quantitative studies. These qualitative studies differ from the quantitative studies in that they do not measure known variables; they explore perceptions of each study's participants through open-ended questions. They do not generalize externally (Maxwell 2002), rather they explore multiple perspectives and meanings in an attempt to understand the complex phenomenon of ethical leadership within a particular, internally generalizable, context (Maxwell 2002). The qualitative studies are not designed to measure variation; they are more concerned with "describing in detail what survey questionnaire results do not permit to be described—the assumptions, behaviors, and attitudes of a very special set [of participants]…." (Freidson 1975, pp. 272–273).

The study summarized in this paper utilized a qualitative approach to add to the growing knowledge base that clarifies and expands the concept of ethical leadership. However, unlike the qualitative studies described above, this study investigated not only the phenomenon of ethical leadership, but also examined how ethical leadership develops. The context of the study was senior executives, in American businesses ranging from small entrepreneurial ventures to large multi-national corporations, who were perceived by others, and identified themselves as ethical leaders. The field of research on ethical leadership is young and the topic broad and complex (Trevino et al. 2003), providing ample territory for a constructivist theory-building approach (Creswell 2003). Further, due to the subjective nature of ethical leadership (Conger 1998) a qualitative exploration may prove more suitable than post-positivist empirical observation and measurement (Creswell 2003).

Problem Statement and Purpose

Based on the premise that leadership is a fundamental determinant in ethical action, the study summarized in this

paper examined both executives' perceptions of the frameworks that guided their ethical decisions and their thoughts on how those frameworks came into existence. As previously mentioned, a modicum of research linking values and business ethics exists (April et al. 2010; Chang and Lin 2008; Graf et al. 2011; Groves and LaRocca 2011; Fritzsche and Oz 2007; Hood 2003; Resick et al. 2011; Sosik 2005; Trevino et al. 2003), but little has been done to draw upon the actual perceptions of the business leader as to what life experiences have fostered the development of values and character. The growth of virtue ethics as an aspect of the business leadership development provides new opportunity for research that explores the link between the growth of personal values and leadership development. As Donaldson (2003) stated, "at no time has the legitimacy of business depended so heavily on clarifying its connection to human values" (p. 365). Further, virtue ethics is seen to develop through experience (Brewer 1997; Hartman 2011; MacIntyre 1984), hence examining the experiences of those who perceive themselves to be ethical may add to our understanding of ethical leadership development. This study, in its attempt to clarify that connection between the development of personal values and ethical leadership behavior, took its participants on a journey in which they discussed their values in the context of ethical issues with which they had struggled. It allowed them to take the time to tell their personal stories regarding their understanding of the dimensions of their ethical frameworks and the development of the values upon which those frameworks were based. Specifically, this study contributes not only to the emerging knowledge on ethical leadership but also the nascent field of ethical leadership development.

Research Questions

Two overarching questions guided this study.

1. What aspects of ethical leadership are valued by those who consider themselves ethical leaders?
2. In what ways do the life experiences of those who perceive themselves to be ethical leaders inform the understanding of the process of ethical leadership development?

Theoretic Framework

In recent years, business ethicists have begun to investigate the merit of the inclusion of virtue ethics, based on values, in business ethics education (Whetstone 2001, 2003). Miller and Collier (2010) cited Crockett (2005) to explain

virtue ethics in the Aristotelian sense: virtues "…are meant to be exercised in practical judgments, habitualized with frequent use and gradually adopted as a stable part of one's character" (Crockett 2005, p. 199). This is in keeping with Aristotle who described ethics as a habit of virtue that is modeled and developed through practice" (Miller and Collier 2010, p. 83). Similarly, Morrell and Clark (2010) explained, "virtue ethics has at its heart the habits and character of key actors—who become virtuous through carrying out right actions, acting in a manner that communicates the importance of considering the means by which outcomes are achieved" (p. 257).

This turn toward the character perspective comes as a result of research that shows that the teleological and deontological cognitive decision-making approaches alone have not had sufficient impact (Rest and Narvaez 1994), and that ethical decisions are ultimately an expression of the decision maker's value system. Further, "by shifting the focus from the act to the agent, virtue ethics overcomes these problems [problems posed by act-centered teleological and deontological approaches to ethics]" (Dawson and Bartholomew 2003, p. 127). Bastons (2008) discussed the cardinal virtues as personal decision-making competencies and stresses, "… without these competences it is not possible to guarantee a decision is really optimal" (p. 399). As the focus of the research summarized in this paper was on the connection between leadership values and ethical decision-making, virtue ethics provided the study with a foundational framework due to its emphasis on character, rather than cognitive act-centered decision-making schema, in the exercise of ethical leadership.

One of the most recognized calls for a return to Aristotelian virtue ethics has come from Alasdair MacIntyre (1984). MacIntyre asserted that current ethical theory and practice are in a state of grave disorder brought on by the liberal individualism of the Enlightenment, most notably articulated by Nietzsche. He postulated that people can best remedy this disorder by reviving the Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics. Moore (2002, 2003) insisted that corporations can only resist the power of corrupting influences through incorporation of the virtues of those who represent the organization. A major tenet offered by MacIntyre's premise is that we discover our virtuous character only in acting it out in relationship within community—it is only through our association with virtue that we can become virtuous (Blum 1988). If the community itself is not virtuous, and MacIntyre struggled with the notion that the business organization could be virtuous, the actions of community members will be victim to the desires/morals of the community (Dobson 2009; Hine 2007). MacIntyre conceded, however, that individual members of the community are not necessarily bound by what he perceives to be the moral limitations inherent within business institutions operating within a capitalist society (Schwartz 2009).

Dawson and Bartholomew (2003) argued that in as much the business organization serves as community, it plays a significant role in encouraging and developing the virtues. Through his or her experience, then, "the manager would draw upon an ever increasing understanding of what constitutes the good" (Brewer 1997, p. 832). In Hartman's examination of the role of the Aristotelian virtues in business decision-making he suggested, "We learn through experience, and we may look to the insights of literature, including religious literature, to distill that experience and improve our moral imagination" (2011, p. 14.). Hence, moral education is at the heart of virtue ethics, and, in turn, virtue ethics provides a basis for understanding the experiential development of ethical leadership and supports the quest, undergirding this study, to comprehend the process by which executives develop their ethical frameworks. Understanding this process may provide clues for those engaged in the arduous task of not only leadership development, but also ethical leadership development.

Methodology

As previously mentioned, the design for the research undertaken in the present study is qualitative. As the study relied primarily upon the capability of the researcher to enter into dialog with the participants to extract meaning from lived experience (Maxwell 1996) in an inductive fashion, an interpretive approach, which is qualitative by nature, was required (Merriam et al. 2002). In addition, as the study was undertaken with the hopes that it would pave the way for new theory to emerge from the perceived reality of the participants rather than from the researcher's own perspective, a qualitative process assisted with the formulation of theory from the data as it unfolded (Morse and Richards 2002). The semi-structured data collection interviews were based on the following questions:

(1) Think of a time in your career in which you were confronted with a difficult business decision you considered to be an ethical dilemma.
(2) What was at stake?
(3) What did you decide?
(4) What process did you use in reaching that decision?
(5) Now—tell me some stories about how you developed the values that supported the decision.
(6) Which of these do you consider to be the most important influence(s) on your ethical perspective?

The constant comparison methods (Glaser and Strauss 1967), supplemented by critical incident technique (Flanagan 1954), were key elements of the data analysis. They provided the structure that allowed theory to evolve from the research process. First, the critical incident technique

was used to isolate the ethical dilemmas through which the executives told their stories. With the incident clearly in mind, each executive told stories of how he or she came to hold the values called upon when making the decision. Second, after the collection of data, the method of constant comparison was used to understand patterns among the stories that were shared.

Examples of the incidents detailed in the complete write up of the study are: (1) A bank executive recalled a time when he had been asked by his commanding officer to hire the future son-in-law of a powerful senator over a qualified internal candidate; (2) A vice president of human resources of a multi-national software corporation discussed a time when she was employed by a telecommunications company that was downsizing for the first time in its over 100 year history. She found herself needing to lay off employees in their 50s and 60s; and (3) A managing partner of a professional services firm talked about a time when he reached a decision to sell his small firm to a more financially secure competitor knowing that some of his employees would lose their jobs.

Participants

The participants whose stories informed the research were senior-level executives ranking from the level of director and above. The participants ranged in age from 38 to 73. The goal was to interview between 20 and 30 participants until the point of saturation was reached (Creswell 1998) and no new interpretative patterns emerge. 31 executives were interviewed and 28 of the interviews were utilized in this study. One of the 31 was eliminated due to his high public profile and concern as to whether his data could be kept confidential. Two others were eliminated after their interviews had been conducted and it was clear that they did not see themselves as having the power to make decisions that impacted their organizations and therefore no longer fit the selection criteria.

There are limitations to this study. The participants were selected through the technique of nomination by reputational-case selections in which individuals are selected on the recommendation of experts in the area to be studied (Goetz and LeCompte 1984). Initially, business leaders within this researcher's own network were contacted due to her belief that these leaders were ethical; they in turn nominated others for participation. There was no external, independent verification conducted to indicate that the participants were indeed ethical leaders. The participants perceived themselves to be ethical leaders, and that perception, together with their nomination, qualified them to participate in this study. Finally, the trustworthiness and transferability of the data generated by the participants, rest

upon the researcher's ability to write clearly and remain true to the participants' stories by providing rich, thick descriptive (Merriam et al. 2002) narrative to which the reader could relate. Initial feedback from the participants as well as practitioners and scholars indicates that the findings ring true.

Findings

Two models emerged from this study—a framework for ethical leadership and a model for its development. The supporting quotes contained within the following synopsis are representative of a much larger body of data that may be found in the original study.

A Framework for Ethical Leadership

In answering questions regarding the development of their ethical frameworks, the participants in the study also revealed what they most valued in their ongoing practice of ethical leadership. As the participants' insights merged, a framework for ethical leadership surfaced. The overall framework is made up of four value perspectives and each of the value perspectives is formed by approaches valued by the participants in their ongoing practice of ethical leadership. The term, *value perspective*, was developed to retain the integrity of both the study's purpose and the questions asked to generate the data. The first research question asks, "What aspects of ethical leadership are *valued* by those who consider themselves ethical leaders?" The participants were not asked about the development of their leadership qualities, behaviors, or competencies; the interview questions asked them to discuss how they had developed the *values* upon which their most difficult decisions were based. Hence, the data that emerged represented the participants' perspectives on what they valued in their exercise of ethical leadership. A *value perspective* is not a *value* in and of itself; it is a conduit through which the participants were able to connect their values with their decisions and actions. The concept of the value perspective may be one way in which this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on ethical leadership.

The data support the conclusion that the value perspectives of *mindfulness, engagement, authenticity*, and *sustainment* provide clues to the practice of ethical leadership. The value perspective of mindfulness, representing cognitive processes involved when acting ethically, is composed of the valued approaches of ethical leadership: observation, time for reflection, systems thinking, rational process, and dialog and questioning. The value perspective of engagement, representing involvement in ethical action, is composed of the valued approaches of ethical leadership:

embraces diversity, cultivates relationships, terminates relationships, and encourages risk taking. The value perspective of authenticity, representing character called upon in being ethical, is composed of the valued approaches of ethical leadership: personal integrity, self-knowledge, and author of one's own life. Sustainment is the term that represents the value perspective that anchors the framework, arising from the participants' narratives as the "that without which" of ethical leadership. The value perspective of sustainment is composed of the valued approaches of ethical leadership: no illusions, hope, and a holistic approach to work and life.

Mindfulness

The value perspective of *mindfulness* is supported through participants' stories that underscored the exercise of *observation*, *time for reflection*, *systems thinking*, *rational process,* and *questioning and dialog* in the practice of ethical leadership. A number of scholars (Boyatzis and McKee 2005; Fiol and O'Connor 2003; Hansen and Haas 2001; Langer 1989; Langer and Piper 1987; Marques 2012; Ruedy and Schweitzer 2010; Varela et al. 1991; Verhezen 2010; Weick 1995; Weick et al. 1999) have begun to investigate the concept of mindfulness in relationship to leadership activity in organizations. Ruedy and Schweitzer (2010) defined mindfulness as, "an individual's awareness of his or her present experience," (p. 73). The study participants highlighted the exercise of *observation* as practice for gaining awareness of the present. Observation was also seen as a method that could assist with moving beyond self to see and understand the experience of others. Accordingly, Hays (2007) expanded that definition, indicating that "mindfulness is a state of acute awareness, attentiveness, and perceptiveness in everything going on around oneself while minimizing the effect of self and ego" (Marques 2012). Verhezen (2010) indicated that mindfulness, as opposed to "moral muteness in a culture of silence" (p. 187), will lead not only to compliance with regulations but also to ethical innovations that demonstrate integrity and respect for all parties. Many of the study participants understood the importance of breaking the silence and stimulating *questioning and dialog* with those who held differing perspectives as a method for challenging their ego-bound assumptions, generating new ideas and approaches as well as honoring individuals. The importance of acknowledging and honoring individuals supports Marques (2012) understanding of mindfulness pointing not only to the practice of letting go of ego but also to the nurturing of kindness and compassion. Vanentine et al. (2010) surmised that "mindfulness is a positive characteristic that enables individuals to more effectively respond to environmental demands" (p. 457).

Mindfulness is akin to awareness that is active and constantly taking in, processing, and assimilating information. This dimension of mindfulness was acknowledged by many of the participants, as they stressed *time for reflection* as essential to remain vigilant to the constant flow of ideas and action. Marques (2012) suggested that in the workplace, mindfulness can lead to "greater concentration, more joy in the moment, the ability to remain calm in turbulent situations, and a greater ability to link occurrences with one another, which will help to detect patterns" (p. 34). The ability to link occurrences and detect patterns showed up in the participants' stories that highlighted the use of *rational process* and *systems thinking* as aspects of mindfulness.

Of the many stories shared by the participants, one in particular highlights many of the approaches of mindfulness that emerged from the data. This vice president of an international software consulting company *observed, took time to reflect, engaged in questioning and dialog, and worked at uncovering deep systematic patterns*. He also assisted his team with using the same approaches. He shared:

> This meeting had ended up with a sense that it didn't go anywhere, and the issues still remained with a lot of bottled-up passions and energy. People were really frustrated… I just kept thinking….A week later I called the team back. …I got everybody to process their feelings and emotions and then I asked everybody to get to the root of the dissatisfaction and unhappiness. I wanted us to know where that was coming from so we could figure out how to work with it and change it. I told them that, now that they were wiser with the experience of the last meeting, I wanted them to write down three things that we could do differently so the tone, nature, and product of our meetings would get us to where we needed to be. That was a great leadership moment.

As witnessed by the study participants, leadership is enhanced through the practice of mindfulness: observation, reflection, questioning and dialog, rational process, and an understanding of patterns [systems thinking]. While the participants spoke to the need of developing a mindful perspective in the practice of ethical leadership, the purpose behind the value perspective of mindfulness was to prepare the leader to engage in ethical action.

Engagement

The value perspective of *engagement* is supported through participants' stories that underscored the exercise of *embracing diversity*, *cultivating relationships, terminating relationships,* and *encouragement of risk-taking* in the practice of ethical leadership. While mindfulness refers to the preparation of the ethical leader, engagement describes the visible activity that can be observed when watching the leader exercise power in performance of the leadership function. Mindfulness provides the inner clarity that allows the leader to fully engage self and others in purposeful action (Buckingham 2005). The value perspective of engagement introduces the ethical dimension where the leader is fully involved—transparently living before those being led, and freeing others to risk the same degree of openness and transparency throughout the organization (Ladkin 2006). Ladkin stated,

> A leader striving to find an ethical way forward within a multidimensional and multi- stakeholder situation will learn far more from the nuances and textures of the territory through engaging with it. Through doing so, completely novel and previously unimagined paths could unfold, especially if the leader is willing to be influenced by emerging insights and perspectives. (p. 95).

Further, active ethical engagement is not only about interacting with the situation but also with the people that are touched (Ladkin 2006); engagement does not take place at a distance but from deep within the locale of the problem.

The overall tenor of the data reverberates with the notion of engagement. The participants' experiences support the concept of engagement from deep within the situation, through the valued approaches of *embracing diversity* and *taking risks*. Ladkin (2006) stated, "this approach necessitates putting 'knowing' to one side and trusting that good ways forward will emerge through open and engaged interactions with those involved in the situation" (p. 96). A representative story came from a vice president of business operations for a multinational software consulting company who recalled a time where risk taking required that he embrace diversity:

> But there I was in the Philippines. I didn't even know how the phones worked or how to use the money. I became a minority overnight–even more so when I was in India. And I wasn't the guy anymore, with all of my skills and knowledge; in many ways what I knew just wasn't applicable. And I learned to rely on others, and I learned humility, and I learned not to judge or to assume moral superiority… It was sink or swim, but I wouldn't give that experience back.

A story shared by a vice president of large marketing for a manufacturing company represents well the valued approach of *building relationships* with the people who are touched (Ladkin 2006) by the situation. He recalled:

While in Malaysia I had an employee whose five-year-old son developed a heart problem. So we flew him to the United States for surgery. He came through with flying colors, but died two days later. We were all devastated, but that employee came back, and he still works for us. You never saw a more loyal employee.

While relationship building was an essential aspect of leading ethically, the importance of knowing when and how to terminate a relationship was also stressed by a number of the study participants. One example came from a vice president of global sales and marketing for a five star resort:

She was a long-term employee, and I didn't want to lose her, but she just didn't care anymore. She needed a change, but she wouldn't take the step herself. Instead she made everyone else miserable, and treated her colleagues with disrespect. I counseled her over a period of about a year, but I finally had to let her go. It was the right thing for us and for her, and you know what, she agrees with that. And now she is happy in her new life. But I agonized over that decision, but it was the ethical thing to do.

While engagement with people was discussed as a part of many of the participants' ethical frameworks, many of them also discussed engagement with task and the importance of *taking risks* (Ladkin 2006). One example that represents the data came from the vice president of a financial institution who was previously a career military officer. He told a story about standing up to his commanding officer after being asked to hire a powerful senator's future son-in law over a well-qualified internal candidate:

Needless to say, this just wasn't right. And I had a two-star [general] agree with me on this all the way, and the two of us went over to the three-star's [general] office and said, you can't do this. If you go through with this we are resigning, and that's pretty heavy stuff when you're still a couple of years from retirement. And I never forgot the look on his face… And we went out of that office thinking this might be the end. He decided he would find another job for this guy. Oh, and I forget to say that the three-star was counting on the senator for an appointment for his son to the air academy.

As noted by the study participants, ethical leadership is enhanced through the practice of engagement: embracing diversity, cultivating and terminating relationships, and encouraging risk taking. Whereas, the value perspective of mindfulness focused on the preparation for action, the value perspective of engagement underscored the capability to engage from deep within the situation with real-life human matters. The participants also spoke about the need for personal authenticity.

Authenticity

The value perspective of *authenticity* is supported through participants' stories that underscored the exercise of *personal integrity*, *self knowledge*, and being the *author of one's own life*. In the framework for ethical leadership, just as engagement is not possible without mindfulness, authenticity at the heart of the ethical leader provides the moral courage (Hannah et al. 2011) to submit to the discipline of mindfulness and the ability to engage people in the organization with empathy. As "inauthenticity is a refusal of engagement and reflection … is a practice of getting lost in the busyness of everyday living and expresses itself as disconnected… and divorced from being present in situations" (Segal 2011, p. 476), the reverse may be seen as true. Authenticity upholds the value perspectives of engagement and mindfulness, and allows the leader to take on the moral ambiguity of complex situations. The participants in this study discussed not only the mental processes involved with mindfulness and ethical action of engagement, but also outlined specific qualities pointing to the character of leadership that allowed them to make ethical choices when in the midst of ambiguous and complex situations.

In the search for the appropriate terminology to represent the data that pointed to character, *authenticity* (Avolio and Gardner 2005; Freeman and Auster 2011; George 2003; George et al. 2007; Hannah et al. 2011; Ladkin and Taylor 2010; Luthans and Avolio 2003; Sparrowe 2005; Walumbwa et al. 2008) emerged as the term that best portrayed the value perspective represented by the data, as the participants honed in on a self-referential aspect of leadership, based on self-knowledge to which the leader remains true, and personal convictions that are not swayed by public pressure (Avolio and Gardner 2005). In addition, "Authenticity points us toward a more self-responsible form of life. It allows us to live (potentially) a fuller and more differentiated life, because [our life is] more fully appropriated as our own" (Taylor 1991, p. 74). At the same time, the findings of this study, which include a model for the development of ethical leadership, support the developmental nature of authentic leadership: "the essential nature of authenticity is developmental—it is a process of continually becoming" (Liedtka 2008, p. 238). Freeman and Auster (2011) stated,

We see being authentic as an ongoing process of conversation that not only starts with perceived

values but also involves one's history, relationships with others, and aspirations. Authenticity entails acting on these values for individuals and organizations and thus also becomes a necessary starting point for ethics" (p. 15).

Developing *self-knowledge*, or self-awareness, and being the *author of one's life* (Sparrowe 2005) were themes that emerged through many of the interviews. Both are core aspects of authentic leadership theory (Ericksen 2009); both are developmental and ongoing. The managing director of a large retail location provided an example that represents the valued approaches of developing self-knowledge and being the author of one's life: "Who am I now when so much of my life I defined myself by the person who completed me?" she asked herself. "I had to figure out who I was through my own judgment, not someone else's. I had to stop thinking about myself as incomplete. I had to accept that being a woman was OK, that it was good." Another participant, a vice president of human resources at a large manufacturing company, provided a clear example of the data on self-authorship:

One day, after my dad passed away, I woke up, and I said, "You are better than that,"… I went back to school and got my B.A. and my M.B.A. I knew that if I didn't take charge of my destiny, nobody else would, and it was time. I spent so many years accepting what others thought of me, or at least how others made me feel. I couldn't succeed until I realized that I was in the driver's seat—nobody else.

Living out of *personal integrity* was another theme generated by the data that supports the aspect of authentic leadership based on personal convictions to which the leader remains true (Avolio and Gardner 2005) and the self-responsible, differentiated life (Taylor 1991).

An example from the data comes from a vice president of a large manufacturing company and founder of a non-profit serving HIV infected children, emphasized,

… when I see people in situations where an ethical decision needs to be made…, I look at how it is a particular gain or loss to that person both personally and professionally. I look at it as sort of being who those people are. What they do at work either enhances or diminishes who they are in their personal lives. Start making compromises and you become a compromised person, and who wants that? So, continuing to behave ethically helps you to continue to act ethically.

Authenticity, as articulated above, is not only about the internal being of the leader, but also about acknowledging a unique identity formed by values that are visibly lived and cultivated within the organizational culture (Hess and Cameron 2006). Whereas, mindfulness spoke to the preparation of the ethical leader, and engagement surfaced as that which was necessary to be involved with real-life human matters, authenticity described the leader's moral anchor.

…authentic leaders are anchored by their own deep sense of self; they know where they stand on important issues, values and beliefs. With that base they stay their course and convey to others, often-times through actions, not just words, what they represent in terms of principles, values and ethics (Avolio and Gardner 2005, pp. 329–330).

Authentic leaders know themselves; they are aware of their talents, skills, strengths, and weaknesses. They have the courage to admit their weaknesses and, perhaps even more importantly, have the courage to author their own stories, and by so doing, lead others in the development of strong, authentic organizations. However, in that "it is through the recognition and acceptance of personal guilt that we can take up an authentic stance" (Gardiner 2011, p. 101), authenticity, with its ongoing acknowledgement of imperfections and the no blinders approach to reality, may be difficult to sustain as a form of leadership (Ford and Harding 2011; Lips-Wiersma and Morris 2009).

Sustainment

The value perspective of *sustainment* is supported through participants' stories that underscored living with *no illusions*, living *with hope*, and *having a holistic approach to work and life* in the practice of ethical leadership. The value perspective of sustainment is the final value perspective that allows the framework to endure. Sustainment unifies the other three value perspectives. It is the glue that melds disciplined mindfulness, empathetic engagement, and courageous authenticity into a substantial force for ethical action; it reconciles the paradoxical forces of autonomy and community (Elliott and Turnbull 2003). The term sustainment was chosen to represent this enduring force of ethical leadership, as this term refers to the aspect of ethical leadership without which the others could not function. Mindfulness includes the ability to think through long-term implications of decisions with regard to the sustainment of the outcomes. The ability to sustain relationships is a fundamental requirement for the engagement of the ethical leader, and authenticity cannot exist without the consistency and reliability of character with constancy of purpose and vision. Sustainment should not be confused with sustainability, which has become synonymous with environmental ethics (Des Jardins 1993;

Hatcher 2002). An international software group's CEO's image of a tree helps explain the value perspective of sustainment. He stressed,

> Values are like the roots of the tree, and you don't really see them, but they are there. What you see are the leaves and the tree grows branches and the branches fall off and shit happens above the ground. But the root system is consistent and continues to grow deeper beneath the ground.

Sustainment, like the roots of the tree, is the value perspective that allows the other value perspectives to continue to grow and thrive. The gardener is one metaphor provided by Wheatley (1999) to visualize the dynamic of one who leads from the perspective of sustainment. One role of the gardener is insuring that plants flourish in the soil and climate in which they've been planted. The gardener will never plant the seeds if there is no hope for growth; the gardener has no illusions; the gardener's hope is not just wishful thinking but is grounded in reality.

> Realistic hope … is based on the attempt to understand the concrete conditions of reality, to see one's own role in it realistically, and to engage in such efforts of thoughtful Realistic hope … is based on the attempt to understand the concrete conditions of reality, to see one's own role in it realistically, and to engage in such efforts of thoughtful action as might be expected to bring about the hoped-for change (Menninger et al. 1963, pp. 285–286).

The data indicated that to maintain an ongoing ethical perspective, a leader needed to have hope, yet have no illusions about life. Being grounded in reality, with no illusions, was a highly valued element to a number of the participants' ethical approaches. The CEO who provided the tree image, spoke about having hope without illusions. He elaborated, "… you have to be open to and acknowledge your reality, whatever the hell it is. The success comes from affirming that and saying yes to it and then seeing the possibility that rests within it." A vice president of a large software consulting company shared a story that demonstrates living within reality, without illusions, and maintaining hope as an approach to sustainment:

> In Germany I knew, or at least I suspected, that I would need a visa, but our Brussels staff kept telling me "you don't need a visa." And you see over in Brussels they are accustomed to dealing with American and the Europeans, they never really realized that an Indian is not like an American, and an Indian needs a visa even to go to the bathroom, but they didn't realize this. So there I was without a visa, getting thrown off trains in the middle of the night.

And you feel a horrible humiliation when you have to go through that, and you start blaming this and that and all of that. But then you realize that being an Indian, you know you have to go through all of these things. … It's not what you want, but we are in a global reality and it's bound to be there and I don't think, as long as you know inside you have not done anything wrong, ultimately it will right itself…as long as I know, as long as I am living out of my integrity, I firmly believe, that that's another thing, I think, it will correct itself. It may not happen in my lifetime, it may not happen for me, but it will…. Because there is absolutely nothing that is not natural that can survive…. Human beings might want it, human beings might force it, human beings might cultivate it for a while, but it will not sustain itself. It will not live.

While many of the participants expressed in different ways their ability to maintain hope in the midst of the sometimes overwhelming current realty, they acknowledged additional pitfalls to which they saw a holistic approach to work and life as a remedy. The trap that may defeat the leader, even when hope is present, is the dedication to the vision of the organization, at the expense of a home life.

The words of a vice president of world wide sales for a major resort represent the value of a holistic approach to work and life as discussed by the participants. He emphasized,

> I catch myself so often, even at home, thinking about the way I'm managing in a particular situation and it's like, hey, wait a minute here, let's make sure that I'm doing the right approach. Is this the time to address this, or do we just chill for a second and address it later, and this is how I teach my children… I can't be one person at home and another person at work. But we have to be aware of the impact of work on home when, I mean, you're putting in 50 h a week, and the waking hours I have at home are obviously much less than that, so the influence of work transcends your marriage, your parents, your family, and your friends. Better be the person you want to be at work, or you won't be that person at home, either.

The data generated during the interviews indicates that to be sustained as an ethical leader, hope balanced by reality and a work life balanced by a life outside of work are essential. The value perspectives of mindfulness, engagement, and authenticity cannot endure unless connected to one another and sustained by a realistic vision and a balanced lifestyle.

Fig. 1 Framework for ethical
leadership

The short stories shared above are examples of the data generated in the interviews that came together to form a framework for Ethical Leadership (Fig. 1). Ethical leadership has a value perspective of mindfulness that allows the leaders to develop the discipline to prepare to lead ethically through practicing observation, taking time for reflection, comprehending the systems within which they operate, approaching work as process, and understanding multiple perspectives through dialog and questioning. In addition, the value perspective of engagement provides for action, generated through empathy, that pays particular attention to the cultivation of multiple and diverse relationships, fosters risk taking, yet knows when it is time for relationships to end. Further, as leaders think, plan, and engage in the business of the organization, they develop the courage to act out of a value perspective of authenticity based on personal integrity, self-knowledge, and the ability to author their own lives. Finally, ethical leaders have a value perspective of sustainment which is rooted in a balanced lifestyle. While they have no illusions about the reality within which they operate, they maintain hope in the future. With a clear understanding of reality and a supple mind that does not resist future possibilities; ethical leadership can grow and endure. The combination of all the value perspectives within the framework of ethical leadership answers the research question: "What aspects of ethical leadership are valued by those who consider themselves to be ethical leaders?"
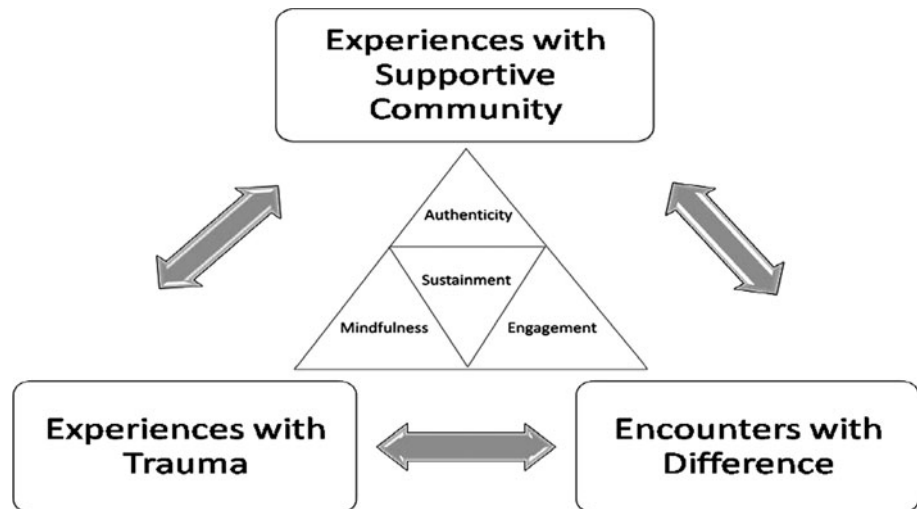
A Model for the Development of Ethical Leadership

After a framework for ethical leadership became apparent, attention was turned to the experiential development model formed by the common elements of the development journey. Portions of the participants' journeys occurred in childhood and adolescence, while other parts took place in adulthood. Events and people influenced development at

different times and in many ways, but a consistent pattern emerged that can be used to explain a common journey. The blueprint for the journey involved experiences with trauma (defined as events that had a significant emotional impact), that shaped an awareness of the contingencies of life, the support of a community of people who provided challenge and encouragement along the way allowing for continued exploration and growth, and encounters with difference that expanded their understanding of identity to include relationships with those quite different from themselves.

It is important to note that Fig. 2 is drawn with arrows pointing in both directions to indicate the cyclical, non-linear nature of this model. The experience can start anywhere, and continues back and forth among the three types of experiences. Some of the participants experienced trauma at an early age through the death of a loved one or physical abuse, but others did not experience the limits presented by trauma until later in life when confronted with divorce, termination of employment, or a near-death experience. Similarly, although the experience of love and acceptance was a critical aspect of the narratives, some of the participants grew up in supportive, loving families, and others did not. For some, an accepting and supportive, loving relationship did not occur until someone reached out to them as they were going through a crisis or until they discovered a loving presence in their marriages. Some of the participants did not encounter diversity until their employment sent them out of the country, while others grew up as minorities and were intimately familiar with the dynamics of difference from an early age. What is important to keep in mind is not the sequencing of events, but the coming together of the three types of experiences to create the reservoir of knowledge from which learning takes place. It is through the development model, presented in Fig. 2, that the answer to the research question, "In what ways do the life experiences of those who perceive

Fig. 2 A model for the development of ethical leadership

themselves to be ethical leaders inform the understanding of the process of ethical leadership development?" can be found.

Experiences with Trauma

As the data was examined, it became evident that most of the participants in this study mentioned a specific life-altering event as critical to the development of their ethical perspectives. The adjective "traumatic" was used to describe these experiences because they were considered by the participants to be life-changing events. It may be of interest to note that, in his research on the development of leadership wholeness, Thakadipuram (2010) uses the word "crisis" to explain a dynamic similar to that which was discussed by participants in the current study. The participants did not simply learn something through mental cognition; they were also affected psychologically by their encounters.

Some events involved the death or absence of a parent or the suicide of a friend, while others were concerned with a sacrifice made by a loved one. Others included a culturally taboo observation, relocation to a new culture, or experience as being a member of a minority group. Adult onset of trauma occurred in response to divorce, termination of employment, and, in one instance, an encounter with death. In each instance, the event brought about the onset of a new awareness that triggered an appreciation for life's contingencies.

One of many stories that indicated an experience with trauma came from a vice president of sales for a manufacturing company. When talking about her father's death and her mother's remarriage she confided,

She remarried when I was 5 years old. He was an alcoholic and…he was also a sexual abuser. He was

so violent; he used to beat her. We had the police over and it was very bad.

A managing partner for a global HR consulting firm recalled a childhood incident:

… my parents were asleep, and I heard what I first thought were fireworks, but then I became curious because it was past the 4th of July. So I wondered why people would be blowing off fireworks. So I went down out of the apartment, down the stairs, through this hall, into the next side of the building, which was the tavern, and I saw this guy on the floor of the tavern and there was, you could see the smoke in the air. And I said to myself, "Please God, don't let it be my uncle." But it wasn't my uncle, but the guy was shot right between the eyes, and so I looked around for my uncle, and he comes out of the back with a mop and a bucket. I think he was in shock.

The two previous stories are examples of the many traumatic events, shared by the participants, in their discussion of the events that formed their values. They coped, and with the help of others, matured and developed greater self-knowledge. The next section, therefore, moves on from experiences with trauma, and begins to reflect on the necessity of a supportive community or the role that others play in the development of ethical leadership.

Experiences with Supportive Community

Although trauma played a role in the lives of the study participants, the data also indicated that the participants realized that, with the help of others, life goes on and provides opportunities for exploration and growth. Parents, grandparents, spouses, in-laws, teachers, priests, nuns, pastors, and mentors were given credit for helping the study participants grasp the possibilities that were open to

them and recognize the freedom that comes from not being bound by limitations imposed by trauma. For some, the experience of affirmation and support laid the foundation for handling life's challenges, while for others, love and support emerged following a particular event.

One of the stories about the role of supportive community came from a vice president of a large telecommunications company who in her youth had skated competitively. She recalled,

> My mother was on edge and could snap at me and pushed me to be overly competitive with my skating. My father had been more balanced and when he died, my grandmother helped me a lot and stayed with me while I was doing my training and provided that support. She wanted me to do my best, "I will support you however I can," but she was not overbearing. She wanted me to make my own choices…

A vice president for a national retail organization spoke about the support of his teacher:

> That night we were having a pizza party with Ms. Hammerstrom, my teacher. She called me and said, "Do you want me to pick you up?" I told her what just happened [death of his grandfather], and she said, "Well, why don't I pick you up a little early, and you and I can talk a little bit about it?" She urged me to go and we had a really good conversation.

The above stories are only a few examples of the participants who had memories of being cared for, being singled out to receive special attention, or being the recipient of someone's ongoing love and affection. Often they sought out the relationship, but when looking back, they frequently discovered that the support was not solicited, but freely given.

Encounters with Diversity

The third dynamic involved with the development of ethical leadership, as described by the study participants, was an encounter with difference that expanded their understanding of identity to include relationships with those quite different from themselves. Some of the encounters took place during visits or assignments to other countries or meeting members of minority groups within their own country. Some occurred in response to involvement with subcultures within their own country and still others through the act of falling in love. New linkages developed and bonding took place that created new possibilities and purposes in the external world, while at the same time shaping a new awareness of life—its obligations and rewards. The expanded worldview came about through openness and connection to others.

The participant, who in the previous section spoke about the support of his teacher, also discussed the impact of her difference:

> She was from England, drove a Volkswagen bug, and she was kind of zany and hip and bright. And she took a liking to me, and she spent extra time with me…. She focused on what I did really well and gave me a tremendous amount of confidence. She also helped me become more of a world mental traveler; she taught us about England and Europe in a different way than just a map on a board.

A vice president of marketing for a large manufacturing company spoke about his experience with difference while working in Malaysia.

> A good relationship depends on finding out what you respect in one another, what you trust in one another. It can't be artificial or superficial….You have to examine your own biases. Does the color of the uniform really matter? I could give someone a different color uniform if our standard colors were offensive to him. At the end of the day, when you've got it figured out, there is so much satisfaction from having connected.

The two stories shared above are examples of what many of the participants included in their narratives—times time during which they became conscious of the power of diversity through encounters with people quite different from themselves. The lessons were not about coping with diversity; they were about recognizing a larger reality than their own and understanding that while differences must be respected. There are commonalities that can unite those with vastly differing perspectives. From the perspective of this study's participants, ethical leaders become so partially through their cognizance of differences, and the power that comes from understanding the intricate interrelationships that connect people and allows them to learn and benefit from one another.

Based on the experiences of the participants in this study, the attainment of ethical leadership was gradual and took place over many years. The participants revealed that at numerous points throughout their careers, they made conscious choices to lead ethically, and the ability to make those choices was rooted in an understanding of life that acknowledges uncertainty and human frailty, knows the redemptive power of love, and realizes the web of connection that holds together even the most diverse perspectives. The choice to lead ethically came as a result of the development of the leaders' characters; therefore, ethical leadership development was intricately involved with the moral development of the leaders. Figure 2 depicts the journey that was shared by the participants in this study. It

may serve to help cultivate ethical leaders as moral agents. The awareness required to lead ethically culminated over a lifetime and was a result of learning from multiple experiences.

Discussion

Virtue Ethics

The development of ethical leadership is multifaceted and involves a variety of forces, over some of which the leader has no control. It also involves not only processes of meaning making that take place as an internal quest but also in dialog with members of the community within which the leader operates. As previously articulated, for the purpose of this study, it was determined that virtue ethics best encompassed the complexities of ethical leadership in a corporate environment due to its focus on character and the connection between personal values and ethical activity of those possessing considerable organizational decision-making power. This study attempted to clarify the role of virtue ethics in a business environment, more specifically, the role of virtue in determining ethical leadership behavior. In that, virtue ethics is character-oriented rather than act-oriented, this study examined executives' perceptions of themselves as ethical leaders rather than as ethical decision makers. Although the interviews began with the recollection of a particular ethical decision, the interview questions that followed were not intended to elicit how the decision was made, rather how the participant developed the values out of which the decision was made. Gough (1998) stated, "the all important connecting link between knowing right and good and doing right and good will always be having the character to do what is right and good" (p. 53). The findings of this study indicate that the participants have a similar belief, as the framework for ethical leadership that emerged from the data depicts the importance of the value perspectives of mindfulness (knowing right and good), engagement (doing right and good), and authenticity (having the character to do what is right and good) linked together through a perspective that values the sustainment of the framework over time.

The emergence in this study of the concept of value perspectives also supports virtue theory as a prominent ethical foundation for organizational leadership. A value perspective, is not the same thing as a value, or a set of values; rather, it is a conduit through which an individual who chooses to lead from an ethical vantage point may connect personal values with actions. Leaders may call upon differing values based on their religious, political, and cultural backgrounds and experiences, but the four value perspectives defined by this research clarify a common

approach for leading ethically in the complex, global world of business. Through the process of making ethical decisions, leaders call upon the four value perspectives, any one alone of which may not lead to a sound ethical decision. Each value perspective is only one piece of an overall ethical worldview grounded in virtue.

The ethical framework containing the four value perspectives aligns itself with virtue theory in that when making an ethical choice the leader does not simply examine the consequences or the rightness or wrongness of a decision. Rather, the leader asks, "Am I approaching this decision from a perspective of mindfulness, from a perspective of engagement, from a perspective of authenticity, and from a perspective of sustainment?" The act-oriented teleological theories may be relied upon in the mindful exploration of an issue (mindfulness) as the analysis of an issue, through the use of systems thinking and/or rational process, will take into consideration the impact of specific actions and the ensuing consequences to the organization as a whole. In addition, the act-oriented deontological theories may come into play as the leader is engaged in the determination of what is right, or what is just, with regard to human organizational concerns (engagement). The use, however, of such consequential or nonconsequential thinking is encompassed within a series of value perspectives, including authenticity and sustainment, which determine an overall ethical worldview that allows the leader to operate from the outlook of virtue. Ultimately, in calling upon the complete framework that unites the four value perspectives, the leader desires to be an ethical leader, not just to act ethically.

It is in the combination of all the value perspectives within the framework of ethical leadership that an answer to the research question of, "What aspects of ethical leadership are valued by those who consider themselves to be ethical leaders ?" can be answered. While one might suppose that the clue is found in the value perspective of authenticity due to its focus on the virtues of an individual's character, MacIntyre (1984) warned that individual transcendence without regard for the social world within which the leader operates results in decisions made in solitude without regard for the thoughts or actions of others. MacIntyre suggested that the leader who believes he or she lays claim to some kind of objective morality "cannot enter into relationships mediated by appeal to shared standards or virtues or goods; he is his own only authority and his relationships to others have to be exercises of that authority" (p. 258). He continued,

> To cut oneself off from shared activity in which one has initially to learn obediently as an apprentice learns, to isolate oneself from the communities which find their point and purpose in such activities, will be

to debar oneself from finding any good outside of oneself. (p. 258)

While the value perspective of authenticity is a strong element of a framework for ethical leadership, authenticity is not found outside of community. The value perspective of mindfulness suggests that mental models are developed not only through solitary observation and reflection, but also in dialog with others and through seeking out diverse perspectives. In addition, the value perspective of engagement implies that action occurs in association with others who not only inform, but are also impacted by, the leader's decisions and actions. Finally, the complete framework of ethical leadership is sustained by hope that is grounded in, not separate from, the real world within which the leader lives and works.

The framework of ethical leadership proposed in this study emerged in response to participants' thoughts and reflections on how they developed as ethical leaders. While as individuals their ethical decisions were not all necessarily made from the perspective of virtue ethics, the framework is rooted in the virtue, as discussed by MacIntyre (1984), which takes into account relationships and the societal context within which the leader operates.

Experiential Learning

The model for the development of ethical leadership, as it emerged in this study, is based on the understanding that adults develop, grow, and learn through experience. As the virtues develop through experience (Brewer 1997; Hartman 2011; MacIntyre 1984), a natural synergy exists between the two models. The second model presented in this study answers the research question: In what ways do the life experiences of those who perceive themselves to be ethical leaders inform the understanding of the process of ethical leadership development?

Experiential learning as an aspect of adult development was touted as early as 1926 when Lindeman (1926/1961) declared that "the resource of highest value in adult education is the learner's experience. If education is life, then life is also education…. Experience is the adult learner's living textbook" (pp. 6–7). Another notable authority on adult learning, Knowles (1970/1980), stated, "As people grow and develop, they accumulate an increasing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning" (p. 44). And Jarvis (1987) went so far as to claim, "All learning begins with experience" (p. 16). Fenwick (2003) said similarly, "All of learning is experience-based" (p. ix).

The three double-ended arrows (See Fig. 2) create what Knowles (1970/1980) referred to as reservoir of experience that forms the framework for ethical leadership. The

presence of the reservoir is a critical aspect of the model. Dewey (1938) indicated that if learning from experience is to happen then continuity of experience and interaction with the environment must be involved. The reservoir allows the executives' experiences to collect and build upon one another, rather than to be used and discarded as incidents isolated in time. As the reservoir fills, the framework for ethical leadership is available to the executive as he or she engages with new situations that occur in day-to-day interactions within the workplace.

Learning was required in order for the experiences, expressed in Fig. 2, to inform the development of the value perspectives contained within the ethical framework, depicted in Fig. 1. Learning occurred as a result of having processed the experiences through what some have called as the reflective practice (Merriam and Caffarella 1999). This ability to interpret life's experiences and make meaning of them is what Mezirow (1996) called as the transformative learning. "Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (p. 162). Not only do the findings of this study indicate that learning takes place through a process of relational learning through experiences with a supportive community, but also reveal that learning is the result of involvement with the other two types of experiences represented in the model presented represented in Fig. 2: traumatic experiences and encounters with difference. Both of these types of experiences give credence to Mezirow's (1991) concept of a disorienting dilemma, originally conceived by Mezirow as a single dramatic event that has evolved to be understood as a gradual process of multiple events that build upon one another (Taylor 2000). The nonlinear nature of the Model for the Development of Ethical Leadership represented in Fig. 2 is also supported by current views on transformational learning that have progressed from Mezirow's initial conception of transformational learning as a linear process to include more complex, less rational means of growth involving thoughts and feelings (Baumgartner 2001).

This learning that leads to awareness, however, is not necessarily as given. The expansion of awareness requires motivation on the part of the leader to learn and grow. Merriam and Caffarella's (1999) assumptions of reflective practice indicate why business executives may be inherently motivated due to the demands of their positions: (1) They are in situations in which they are committed to both problem finding and problem solving; (2) they are constantly required to make judgments about which action to take; and (3) action is the intended result of their decisions, even when the decision made is not to act.

Relationship cultivation, critical to the engagement value perspective in the framework for ethical leadership,

may also enhance motivation to expand awareness based on lived experience. Throughout this study, the participants relayed some evidence that supported their beliefs in the importance of ongoing learning as they discussed their handling of life's crises, their willingness to explore their identities and values because they knew they were loved, and their encounters with others who challenged their assumptions by calling their worldviews into question.

The ability to remain vigilant in one's self-development, according to McClusky's (1963) theory of margin, is dependent upon the balance represented by the ratio between load (the problems and difficulties encountered) and power (the support one has to overcome the load). Throughout this chapter, the experiences of love and support articulated by the participants are detailed. McClusky's theory suggests that to cope with an increasing load, as that which business executives face in a complex business environment, that power must also be increased, or the heavy load will handicap the executives' abilities to continue learning. Internal awareness, in light of McClusky's theory, is dependent not only upon critical thinking, but also on the continued presence of a support network, confirming the importance of the presence of experiences that provide love and acceptance as well as those that present limits. The experiences of limitations (defined as trauma in this study) also must continue or the resulting unchecked power can lead to arrogance and a loss of the vulnerability essential for continued growth.

Human Resource Development (HRD)

If HRD professionals are able to associate the complex inter-relationships among mindfulness, engagement, authenticity, and sustainment, as portrayed in Fig. 1, with ethics, they would strive to develop a training agenda, moving well beyond Kohlbergian dilemma scenarios (Rest et al. (1999). Such an agenda may include a focus on training in systems thinking and relationship building; Systems thinking may help develop the aptitude to think critically (mindfulness) and relationship building would enhance the ability to connect with others (engagement) who are a part of the overall intricate set of linkages in and between systems. It is more difficult to suggest how trainers might involve themselves in the development of authenticity and sustainability; the valued approaches of ethical leadership contained within those two value perspectives are more likely to be influenced by an organization's leadership and its culture through the ongoing interactions that take place as business is conducted. As Hatcher (2002) indicated, it is essential that leadership take responsibility for establishing a climate of integrity. Finally, as the results of this study point strongly in the direction of experiential learning, formal classroom training may have little impact on ethical leadership development.

It follows that one HRD approach to ethical leadership development warranting further investigation is action learning (Bierema 1998; Dilworth 1998; Dixon 1998; Marquardt 1999, 2004; Raelin 2006). Similar to the process depicted in Fig. 2, action learning relies on experiential approaches based on the conscious application of coaching and mentoring for potential leaders as they operate within the context of their real business environments. Using action learning, the intentional use of diverse teams in international locations assigned to solve complex business problems within limited time frames will likely provide experiences with trauma while providing encounters with difference. Manufacturing artificial traumatic situations is not encouraged, but learners should be able to process challenges as they arise. At least one study on developing responsible global leaders through international assignments (Pless et al. 2011) supports that overcoming the substantial challenges present in international encounters may be one aspect of the development of ethical leaders. Further, as indicated by the finding of the current study, the difficulty of such a project will lead to significant learning, only if leadership supports the process by providing compassionate coaches who encourage openness and dialog, and champion learning through processes while holding accountability for business outcomes.

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