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The Social and Political Structuring of Faculty Ethicality in Education

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Abstract This study examined the experience of faculty ethicality in education. Research questions focused on faculty characterizations of professional ethics, related socialization experiences, and responses to dilemmas. Interviews were conducted with 32 faculty members and analyzed using the constant comparative method. Findings describe the experiential dimensions of faculty ethicality and the influence of a higher education ethos on professional reasoning and decision making. The tenure and promotion process is the most influential dimension; but faculty reward systems in general, as well as personal and family identification, also help to structure ethicality. Four elements of academic ethicality are discussed: standard, information, diversity, and integrity.

Key words faculty · ethics · higher education · socialization

Higher education embodies an ideal institution, symbolizing for many the principles of professional integrity and social responsibility. In its everyday practice, it is expected to be a place "where the highest ethical ideals are held and routinely practiced" (Keith-Speigel et al. 2002, p. xv), responding without bias to a tripartite mission of teaching, research, and service. Lincoln (2000) echoed this sentiment, specifically in terms of the professorate. Higher

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education, she said, can and should be a community "that nourishes the human spirit and fosters growth" (p. 249).

The academy, though, is not exempt from problems. Some claim higher education faces a crisis of integrity, pointing to diminishing public trust and heightened demands for accountability (see U.S. Department of Education 2006). Along with growing scrutiny of higher education in general, there has been a surge in attention to faculty members' work across their academic roles (Bruhn et al. 2002; Fairweather 1996; Hamilton 2002; Robin 2004). This scrutiny goes back at least two decades. Lincoln claimed much criticism aimed at faculty ethicality is unfair as it "tars with a large brush thousands of individuals who have given their lives to teaching, research, academic advising, collegial governance, and service and have done so, as the Lakota Sioux say, 'with a good heart'" (p. 241).

Caught between ideal and critique, the academy is a complex social and political structure that does generate a number of potential ethical snares, including asymmetrical relationships, scarce resources, and changing policies (Keith-Speigel et al. 2002). Ethical breaches in the academy are not difficult to find since attention to integrity in higher education has been rising. For example, Steneck (2000) reported that a considerable number of prospective faculty members exaggerate their professional credentials to enhance career options; and, even more disturbing, some knowingly sacrifice teaching excellence for increased research productivity (Keith-Speigel et al. 2002). In extreme cases, Steneck maintained, some even commit fraud to establish their scholarly reputation. Others, such as Hamilton (2002) and Robin (2004), reported similar "academic misdeeds" (Lechuga 2005, p. 134). Tenure, promotion, merit pay, research support, and teaching standards all present situations of possible ethical conflict.

Extreme cases of misconduct in higher education—particularly those that are deliberate—are the most obvious breaches of academic integrity. While intentional disregard for ethicality may be the most apparent, it may not be the most problematic. The literature on faculty preparation and development points to a lack of training in ethical reasoning as a principal source of inadvertent misconduct in the academy (Gaff et al. 2000). Early career faculty members may be even more vulnerable to professional dilemmas because of the inordinate stresses associated with the tenure and promotion process.

Ethical reasoning requires an understanding of professional guidelines, but Ozar (1993) claimed most professionals cannot articulate the ethical standards of their profession; recent research suggests faculty members are no exception (Gaff et al. 2000; Keith-Speigel et al. 2002; Reybold 2003–2004). Early career faculty members, having little training and even less experience, are left to rely on personal standards of integrity when faced with professional dilemmas.

Reasoning has long been known to be situated in local contexts (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) and influenced by cultural markers such as gender and ethnicity (see Gilligan 1993; Luttrell 1989). Culture and context shape *how* we know, not just *what* we know (Reybold 2002); and ways of knowing, in turn, influence behavior (Geertz 1973). Research specific to faculty identity also acknowledges the influence of personal and local cultures on professional reasoning, particularly in relation to tenure and promotion experiences (Johnsrud 1993; Laden and Hagedorn 2000; Lindholm 2003, 2004; Olsen et al. 1995; Ropers-Huilman 2000). From this perspective, faculty reasoning is situated and dynamic, pointing toward an intersection of context and ethicality.

Idealistic notions of the academy disregard the complexity and mutability of academic culture and romanticize decision-making in higher education. This article explores faculty members' perceptions of the impact of institutional and personal contexts on their professional ethicality. For clarity, I define ethics as principles or standards related to moral conduct and

ethicality as how one conforms to those principles and standards (Corey et al. 1998). In the next section, I present an overview of various discourses on faculty ethics, followed by a discussion of professional socialization of faculty into local academic communities of practice.

Ethical Principles for Faculty

General ethical standards for professionals assume a proclivity toward ethical reasoning. In other words, these standards are for those who *choose* to reason and act ethically. The most obvious set of ethical guidelines for faculty practice is The American Association of Professors *Statement on Professional Ethics* (AAUP), revised in 1987. The five-point Statement addresses multiple facets of faculty work, including academic roles, collegial interaction, and community engagement. Its initial focus is on faculty responsibility to the discipline, specifically scholarly competence, critical self-discipline, intellectual honesty, and freedom of inquiry (American Association of University Professors 1987). As teachers, faculty should "encourage the free pursuit of learning" (para. 2) by respecting students and adhering to their roles as intellectual guides. Ethical teachers foster honest academic conduct, ensure fair evaluations, respect confidentiality, and avoid harming students by such behaviors as exploitation, harassment, or discrimination. Further, faculty members are obligated to the community of scholars, particularly with respect to collegial interactions and shared governance. As employees of specific academic institutions, they should observe stated regulations—as long as these regulations do not contravene academic freedom. In other words, faculty members are expected to maintain their right to criticize and seek revision while giving due regard to institutional responsibilities. Finally, they are to be responsible community members who "have the rights and responsibilities of other citizens" (para. 5), thus balancing community and professional obligations.

Other academic associations also have well-articulated and accepted codes of ethics related to faculty work (e.g., the American Psychological Association, the Association for the Study of Higher Education, and the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education). In some cases, these associations target some specific faculty role such as research or teaching, while in other cases the principles are supplemental to broader ethical guidelines.

I will focus on two issues regarding this discussion about standards for faculty ethics: the inadequacy of universal standards in response to dilemmatic reasoning and the dynamic nature of ethicality in relation to professional identity.

The Limitations of Ethical Standards

While standards for faculty ethics, such as those offered by the AAUP, are comprehensive in scope, their application to faculty practice is tenuous. As idealized standards, they call attention to areas of ethicality; but in reality they are not codes for conduct, particularly since they are intentionally subjective. These standards are descriptive rather than prescriptive, justifiably deferring to specific contexts and individual choice.

When the literature on academic ethicality shifts focus to faculty behavior rather than descriptive standards, we see that most practical standards for faculty ethics are specific to research or teaching roles. For example, Reybold (2003–2004) explored differential standards for ethical research, ranging from methodological precision and principled discovery to epistemological soundness. Some methodologists argue that research quality depends on technical validity and reliability (Fraenkel and Wallen 1996); others express

concern about the researcher's relationship with the researched and broader community (Fine 1994; Grafanaki 1996; Heshusius 1990). Reybold (2003–2004), in addition to these standards for research quality, identified power issues as central to the experience of ethical dilemmas related to research, calling into question an abstract application of standards and rules.

As for discussions about ethical teaching in the academy, standards for faculty usually are limited to professor–student relationships, neutrality in assessment, preparation, content coverage, and other classroom-associated tasks (e.g., Markie 1994). In this conventional approach, the ethics of teaching are reduced to method or behavior. Wilcox and Ebbs (1992) highlighted various faculty roles and their related moral obligations yet still emphasized role-based activities and behaviors associated with ethicality. Their discussion is thought provoking, and they do situate ethicality in the culture of higher education and the organizational structure of institutions. Their argument for the development of moral communities in higher education is positioned around the core curriculum, collaboration, love for learning, and administrative leadership. From this perspective, faculty ethicality—as part of academic morality in general—is not a choice but an outcome of socialization into an institutional ethos.

Bruhn et al. (2002) noted with some dismay that, in general, the faculty work contract "does not address the question of professionalism in the academy" (p. 468) beyond faculty roles and responsibilities. Professionalism refers to membership in the broader academic community and implies knowledge of and adherence to ethical standards. Most faculty members are contracted for a certain teaching and/or research workload, but academic citizenship and professionalism "cannot be reduced to a set of written and binding terms" (p. 470). Questioning how to respond to ethical breaches without some determinate criteria, Bruhn et al. offered a typology of ethics failure in academia that characterizes that failure in terms of origin of offense and seriousness of action; and the authors suggested it may be used to initiate an institutional response to those problems. While this typology is useful, method and behavior are outcomes of ethical reasoning; and a faculty member's decision whether to act ethically begins much earlier than the dilemma. Additionally, both the problem and response are situated in context. From this perspective, ethicality is a more than a consequence of choice; it is the process of making that choice, and both are social and political.

Escobar et al. (1994), in their critique of the utilitarian nature of the academy, further argued for a critical position on ethical reasoning and behavior. Likewise, McLaren (1994) argued that the university is a moral agent that defies neutral and objective reasoning strategies. From this perspective, faculty members are cultural workers who, like all humans, are accountable to the politics of education. The academy is a political site where faculty must develop a vision "that is not content with adapting individuals to a world of oppressive social relations but is dedicated to transforming the very conditions that promote such conditions" (McLaren 1994, p. xxxiii). The very nature of faculty work—teaching, research, and service—is an ethical issue. Whether challenging uncritical thinking in the classroom or contributing to a much-honored core of literature, faculty members work at the borders of knowledge and knowing.

Professional ethicality is a "public good on which the welfare of all depends, but which cannot be ordered into existence simply by manipulating sanctions or rewards" (Sullivan 2005, p. 261). Professional ethicality cannot be prescribed, but "it can be nurtured, given favorable institutional contexts, only among free human agents who come to find an important part of their identity and meaning in the work they undertake" (p. 261). Without these conditions, Sullivan warned that ethicality may be undermined by opportunism, cynicism, and demoralization.

Socialization to Ethical Practice: The Role of Context

Ethicality is a function of a well-developed professional identity (Bruss and Kopala 1993; Sullivan 2005). Thus ethical behavior results from a conscious and deliberate commitment to one's role expectations. Sullivan, discussing the historical standards for professionals in general, noted that the professional operated from a position of public responsibility for the social good. This concept of an *ethic of vocation* requires "responsible engagement and self-regulation" (Sullivan 2005, p. 261). This is not to say there is any one conceptualization of ethics, only that professional integrity is a function of professional identity. As such, professional identity encompasses professional reasoning.

Ethicality as a professional requires the skills, attitudes, and competencies necessary to make reflective and consistent decisions when confronted with ill-structured work-related problems. For faculty members, these aspects of professional identity begin to form during graduate training and early career socialization (Mentkowsi et al. 2000; Reybold 2003–2004; Slevin 1992). This socialization is a tacit apprenticeship rooted in the everyday experience of academe (Reybold 2003), and for many these apprenticeships are quite effective. Lave and Wenger (1991) described the apprenticeship process, in general, as situated learning in relation to communities of practice. In terms of faculty socialization, this process contributes to the meaning associated with being a faculty member, demarcating professional beliefs and values, as well as expected behaviors (Reybold 2003).

The construction of faculty identity does not end with graduate socialization. According to Dyer and Keller-Cohen (2000), professors continue to construct their professional identities "by positioning themselves in relation to others" (p. 288). Positioning, in this sense, refers to a process of locating oneself to others in the profession through narrative[1]. It would make sense, then, that professional integrity, as a component of professional identity, also is co-constructed relative to socialization into a specific community of practice. For members of the academy, that process occurs across multiple contexts, from the anticipatory socialization of the doctoral program to the organizational socialization of the hiring institution (Tierney and Rhoads 1993; Weidman et al. 2001). Standards of ethical practice for faculty members do not account for these diverse but intersecting contexts.

Design and Methodology of the Study

This study examined the experience of faculty ethicality in education. Research questions focused on definitions and characterizations of faculty ethics; encounters with ethical problems; and socialization to ethicality, particularly during faculty preparation and early career development. The assumption is that professional ethics are situated in local contexts, with local referring to the qualitative emphasis on participants' perceptions and experiences of ethicality.

The study is part of a longitudinal investigation of faculty identity development in education (Reybold 2003, 2003–2004, 2005). The 55 participants—doctoral students and faculty members—in the larger study were identified through network sampling that follows the development of professional networks across institutional contexts and academic transitions. Originally, I selected doctoral student participants at two universities. In turn, they identified other participants through programmatic and professional associations, including faculty mentors at their previous and current institutions.

[1] For an in-depth discussion of positioning, see Davies and Harré (1990) and Shotter (1993).

Participants have come to represent 31 institutions as some of the students graduated and accepted faculty positions at other institutions; also several faculty participants moved to other institutions. Based on the 2005 Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement for Teaching (2006) ranking system, these institutions include nine RU/VH (research university/very high research activity), nine RU/H (research university/high research activity, three DRU (doctoral research university), and ten Master's L (master's colleges and universities/larger programs). Participants represent an array of disciplines such as adult education, counseling education, educational administration, higher education, teacher education, and technology education.

The analysis for the study reported here focuses on faculty definitions of ethics, experiences dealing with ethical problems or dilemmas, and perceptions of institutional and programmatic factors that might influence professional reasoning relating to ethicality. The data include multiple interviews with the 32 faculty participants in the longitudinal study. Of these faculty participants, 24 are female and 8 are male. Doctoral participant data were not included in this analysis since the focus was on faculty definitions, experiences, and perceptions. The majority of the faculty participants was European American; however, one-third of the participants was African American, Black (Caribbean), Hispanic, or multi-ethnic. Participants represent all faculty ranks: assistant (n=13), associate (n=15), and full (n=4). (See Table I for participant demographics.)

Most of the current faculty members in the study have participated in several interviews since the study's inception; some were unavailable on an annual basis and others chose to withdraw from the study after only one or two interviews. The majority actually began participation as a student and transitioned to faculty while in the study. I conducted a total of 69 in-depth interviews with these participants. I analyzed the interviews using the constant comparative method of analysis (Corbin and Strauss 1990). Through initial coding, I identified faculty narratives of professional ethicality, noting both abstract definitions and concrete experiences. Subsequent coding revealed four dimensions of how faculty experience and characterize professional ethicality: standard, information, diversity, and integrity. Each participant narrative was then reviewed specifically for these dimensions of ethicality, as well as personal and institutional influences on professional reasoning and conduct.

Findings: The Structuring of Faculty Ethicality

There is an obvious disjuncture between how participants define and experience professional ethicality. The majority characterized professional ethics in relation to

Table I Participant Demographics

	Sex		Current Rank			Discipline		
	Male	Female	Asst.	Assoc.	Full	AHE	GSE	PSE
African American/Black	–	02	–	01	01	02	–	–
European American/White	05	19	11	12	01	06	10	08
Hispanic	02	01	02	01	–	–	03	–
Multi-ethnic[a]	01	02	–	01	02	–	01	02
Total	08	24	13	15	04	08	14	10

[a] I chose to use the term multi-ethnic for the three participants who identified themselves as bicultural, multicultural, or multiracial.

prescriptive yet abstract standards for practice, usually related to one or more of their faculty roles. For example, when asked how they define faculty ethics, several responded with maxims such as doing no harm to research participants, not taking advantage of students, and not lying to colleagues. These responses single out behavioral events that define ethics in terms of what not to do as a faculty member. Further, when asked if they were aware of general standards for faculty ethics, all but two were unable to identify any code or set of guidelines specific to the professorate. Several did mention institutional compliance training, and a few noted standards specific to their discipline (e.g., counseling). Most said they rely on religious or personal codes of conduct when dealing with an ethical problem as a faculty member.

When asked to describe their own ethical dilemmas though, participants recognized the fact that their professional decision making was situated in an academic system—both within and across institutional settings—which imposes a distinctive ethic on its members. In other words, higher education frames faculty responses to ethical dilemmas by structuring professional expectations and acceptable conduct. The tenure and promotion process is the most common example of this, but it is not the only case in point. Faculty reward systems in general, as well as personal and family identification, also help to structure professional ethicality. As noted, participants identified four ways of characterizing faculty ethicality: standard (codes, rules, policies), information (access, distribution, equity), diversity (inclusion, exclusion), and integrity (personal–professional balance, wholeness).

An Ethic of Standard

Faculty members are socialized into multiple institutional arenas, each with a tacit standard of practice. Primarily, their responsibilities are to their faculty roles and local university policies; yet, at the same time, they are accountable to their discipline and the professorate in general. For some participants, these responsibilities and related standards are a primary factor in their professional ethicality. Katrina, for example, had to decide whether or not to fail a student. As an assistant professor at a research institution, she ultimately relied on the standard of grades to make her decision. “There was a student who simply refused to produce anything! I told him, ‘You’ve got to come to class; you’ve got to produce. It’s a required class. I’m sorry if you don’t see it as valuable.’ So I ended up failing him.” Katrina did not make the decision easily to fail the student; but she said there was no other choice, given the standard for passing in her class. “I gave him ample opportunity, and I told him point blank, ‘You’ve got to do this, or I will fail you.’” The outcome was based on evidence, she said. “I opened up my grade book, put two sheets of paper down, and I saw his name and a whole row of zeroes. I said, ‘Do I have a choice?’” Katrina reviewed her decision with others, but ultimately concluded that she had to rule in favor of the standard.

> I’m pretty grounded, and when I’ve done everything I can do, then at that point, I go back to that old rule of, ‘There’s one way to walk a straight line. You’re either on it or you’re not.’ Well, he wasn’t on it, so he fails. Boom.

Other participants identify professional codes as their standard for ethicality. Based on first-year experiences as an assistant professor at a teaching institution, Maggie believes “[faculty members] are not trained in professional ethics; we usually rely on our personal sense of ethics to get us through a dilemma.” This is “problematic since a lot of people may not be ethical—and they don’t consider themselves unethical or just don’t care.” Maggie,

now an associate professor at a research institution, added that faculty conduct can be considered "good but not ethical—not in line with standards of the profession."

For some participants, it is the lack of standards that is the most obvious aspect of ethicality in their academic experiences. Kay, an assistant professor at a teaching institution, was told to abide by the Institutional Review Board policies of the university. That, she said, was the only mention of ethics in her program. "The human subjects [forms] are all that's ever been spoken about, and it's been spoken about in terms of, 'The University makes us do this.' We are not taught ethics; we are not encouraged to read about ethics; there's no follow through on ethics." Academic ethics, she said, are "sloughed off." For Kay, if she has "done the regulations," she is ethical; and she expects faculty decisions to be grounded in institutional standards.

Whether in accordance with professional codes or institutional standards, the ethic of standard highlights the role and force of authority in faculty reasoning. This dimension focuses on ethical reasoning as a personal choice that should align with certain codes and standards.

An Ethic of Information

Not surprisingly, the structure of tenure and promotion emerged as the most obvious event related to faculty ethics. In the words of participants, the tenure process is described with such words as *horror*, *unreal*, *power*, *unclear*, *safety*, *panic*, *distraction*, *risky*, *intense*, *calculating*, and a *ledge*. Overwhelmingly, participants believe the tenure and promotion process is political and unfair, and for many their experience fails the litmus test of academic ethicality. Basil, as an assistant professor at a teaching institution, was thinking ahead to her own upcoming bid for tenure:

> Who are the major players? Who really decides what goes down? See, that's all the political crap that I don't want to get into, but I'm going to have to if I need tenure somewhere. Who really decides? Who has the most influence within each chain in these concentric circles? In a department like [mine], I would imagine that the full professors have a lot of say. Everybody has a vote, but the discussion can be weighted. So you have to know who really matters in this process. It's not equal. People can pretend it is equal; but it's not.

Basil believes distribution of information about tenure is sexist and racist. Requesting help from her colleagues, she was told there was no template or examples for her to follow. A male colleague, however, requested and received a template within a week. "Did I *not* ask that question last week? I'm standing here like I am *fucking* crazy!" Meanwhile, a colleague, an African American female, offered her own papers to Basil as a template. "I didn't have to struggle then [because] she had everything laid out." Having this template eased her concern about how to represent herself in the evaluation process; but, in her experience, minority and women faculty are subject to a different ethic of information, one that is constructed and maintained through systemic bias. Basil has since moved on to another university—a research institution—and is now an associate professor with tenure.

The issue of withholding information and obscure policy also was an ethical challenge for Maggie, particularly when it related to distribution of resources like graduate assistance or travel money to early career faculty. As an assistant professor, she said her former institutional culture socialized faculty to keep their resources secret, to "hide the things that you know are making money." She attributed her early resourcefulness to experiences as a doctoral student:

> I had previous experiences that taught me how to fill out travel requests, how to get money. No one [at my current institution] shared any of this. In fact, they kept the information secret, but I kept asking. I got a graduate assistant my first year; the other new people, unless I told them, had no idea they could get one. Travel money! I'm one of a few people who got travel money the first year because I put in my request immediately and got into the loop.

When searching for extra travel monies, Maggie said she was told by her dean to "submit a memo." She found out there was a group of faculty who know about this process, so money was essentially set aside for this group. She believed this was unethical; yet she wondered if she might be hurting herself by telling her colleagues about these resources. Maggie decided her colleagues "have as much right to the money," concluding, "it's about how information and secrets are kept and power is exerted through those secrets."

Carlos, an associate professor at an institution in transition from teaching to research intensive, also mentioned secrecy as an ethical issue, specifically in relation to tenure and promotion. "From my own experience [on college and department committees]," he said, "I have seen gross miscarriages of justice where undeserving people were promoted and tenured, at least in comparison to people who were judged to be insufficient." For Carlos, "there's no consistency in the decision making. I think part of what contributes to that is the culture of silence." He advocates for an open tenure review process:

> There is no reasonable basis for conducting promotion, tenure, or merit deliberations in private or in confidence. You know we are professionals and what we do, or a large part of what we do, is a matter of public record, professional record. So it seems to me very difficult to believe there might be something that shouldn't be subject to public purview.

Carlos believes all aspects of faculty work should be public information at his institution, including teaching evaluations, research accomplishments, and service commitments:

> The fact that we have a lot of silence and a lot of secrecy contributes to unethical practice. If I'm a senior faculty person and I'm out to get you because of something you did to me, the fact that I can do so in secret facilitates, enables that. If there was no secrecy, if I had to stand up in front of the committee—not only in front of the committee but any interested party who might wish to be an observer to the proceedings—and justify my decision to vote against you, then that's a very different thing all together. It would be very hard to say I'm going to vote against you because you complained about me or because I asked you to do something and you refused, or because I wanted to be first author on something that we did together. Those things are untenable.

The ethic of information emphasizes access to and distribution of resources vital to faculty work and rewards. This dimension equates institutional and interpersonal barriers to professional advancement with a lack of ethicality.

An Ethic of Diversity

Several women faculty members and faculty of color stated that higher education should honor diversity, stand against discrimination, and support the exchange of ideas. Yet, they say they have not experienced that aspect of higher education. In fact, Eve says she feels violated by a disregard for diversity in her department, college, and university. As an

African American full professor in a predominantly white institution, Eve's faculty experience has been a harsh reminder of the racism and sexism she experienced during her doctoral program. As a student, she "dealt with students who were hostile, and I thought—and still believe—tried to destroy me." Peers ridiculed her inquiry into black feminism, and classmates mocked her literature review. Her story is angry, replete with segregation as a person of color and a woman. In her classroom experience, Eve felt "overt hostility" from the other students and even some professors. She remains furious about the treatment of women and minorities in the academy. Her students—and sometimes her colleagues—do not respect her as a faculty member, she said. As a black woman, Eve believes she is seen as deficient academically and professionally. Eve chose to act on her ethic of diversity and concentrated her research and mentoring efforts toward reducing racism and sexism in the academy. While she has decided to exist "above the fray," Eve reflected on the continuing bias in the academy:

> I realize that there is a glass ceiling in academia. Very few African American faculty [at my university] have gotten past the associate level and gotten to the full level without suing the university. In the history of the college only two have gotten through at the university. Out of the 97 African American faculty, you have six at the rank of full; and most of those people, with the exception of two, had a very difficult time getting there, [they] had to go through the process of appeals and threatening law suits.

Like Eve, Iris felt isolated as the only black woman in her program. Iris, as an assistant professor at a research institution, said issues of personal identity were "cut from the discussion, and that's what was missing—me! I don't think my blackness and femaleness was acknowledged and validated. I think me as a scholar, maybe; but the person was not."

Lisa also noted an ethic of diversity, pointing out she is an affirmative action advocate, particularly in terms of faculty hiring. Her teaching and research concentrate on critical issues of race, class, and gender; and she is generally vocal about diversity issues in both her personal and professional lives. Lisa, as an assistant professor at a Hispanic Serving Institution, admitted that she struggled with the boundaries of an ethic of diversity as a white faculty member. She recounted a hiring dilemma in which she was "told by a person in authority" to select only "Anglos and women" as candidates. Otherwise, "no matter what their qualifications, [the list] would be turned back to us to find another candidate." Lisa has long believed diversity hiring to be just and equitable in the long term, but she also believes the hiring process should not be managed only around race and sex. She chose not to speak up, claiming to have "weenied on this one." She personally supported a white male candidate as the "strongest person" interviewing for the position, but justified her reaction to the diversity mandate on the principle of affirmative action. "My reasoning was that person would be the kind of candidate I was looking for in the first place, so it wouldn't make a difference." Lisa regretted not reporting the incident, but justified the outcome:

> If I had been acting strictly in accordance with [general] ethics and with no other concerns, I would have reported that. Like I said, if two candidates are equal, and one's a man and one's a woman, I'll go with the woman every time, for numerous reasons. Women are on the margin, and the same thing with non-Anglo races.

For Paolo, being Hispanic has been the dominant lens for ethical reasoning and decision making across his life, but particularly as a faculty member. While he attributed ten percent of his "language of reasoning" to formal education, "the other 90% comes clearly from upbringing and watching things that you know are wrong but are told that's just the way it is." Paolo lived his childhood in "a place...much like Apartheid in South Africa in the 80s. You

had economic power in the hands of a few, which made the majority population [Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans] very much disenfranchised." Paolo, now an associate professor at a Hispanic Serving Institution, said "a part of me brings that to everything I see [in the academy]." In other words, his ethical reasoning as a faculty member, whether dealing with peer or student issues, is based on a sense of advocacy and equity.

The ethic of diversity is personal; most of the participants in the study feel disregarded or even abused due to systematic discrimination within the academy. This dimension emphasizes equality and equity, as well as the use of faculty membership to mediate the lack of diversity. These participants confront racism and sexism through their very presence in the academy.

An Ethic of Integrity

Ethicality, for some participants, is a sense of integrity across their personal and professional lives. In this sense, integrity refers to completeness or unity of self in which personal and professional goals are entwined. Andrew, as an assistant professor at a research institution, has encountered numerous dilemmas in the classroom with students who are conservative and religious. His objective, he said, is their intellectual development, but not at the expense of students' personal freedoms. Thus Andrew responds to ethical dilemmas from a position of purpose—to provoke critical thinking:

> When people bring up the Bible as their source of authority, it creates some real dilemmas for me in the classroom. On the one hand, I surely support people's right to affiliate. At the same time, I don't see Scripture as a functioning authority. So that becomes a bit of a problem when students have very narrowly prescribed, conservative, right-wing politics that are expressed in the classroom. I would be failing them as a facilitator for their learning if I didn't challenge them. At the same time it creates the dilemma of diverting the class, taking time away from what might be the actual subject matter at hand. When there is a tight time budget, I still go ahead and challenge.

For Andrew, his commitment to purpose also is evident in his community work, which he defined as an "ethical orientation." Just as in his teaching, Andrew's reasoning is grounded in principles of reflection and change, instilling in him a sense of integrity across his professional and personal lives:

> If you are really into critical work, it absolutely has to be a constant, even flow of acts and reflection. So, for me, the act is oriented toward some kind of change where the world is absolutely broken, and I want to work with others to help heal it.

Likewise, Emily situates herself in faculty work defined by engagement in community, creating an uneasy artificial boundary between herself as a practitioner or scholar. "Deciding on one over the other continues to be a very hard thing for me. I'm in the process of deciding whether I can bridge some of these struggles for myself by inviting people from the community to work with me on some research." Emily, an assistant professor at a research institution, purposefully tried to merge her personal convictions about participation and emancipation with her faculty roles as teacher and research. Like Andrew, she accomplished this through reflection:

> Everyone can bring and does bring their own realities, their own perspectives, their own baggage, assumptions, and values to the group and the culture. As academics, perhaps we

> try a little bit more to discuss it, to theorize about it and try to understand. We're just as nutty as the rest of the world, but we have a mandate, by definition [as faculty members], that we are going out there and leading and educating, that we should question our assumptions and work through them instead of just sticking with them and becoming our own club. How well are we doing that? I think that's the struggle.

Similarly, Bianca defined ethicality as "maintaining my integrity as an individual," both in and out of the workplace. She stressed the importance of congruence of personal and professional ethical values:

> When I think about ethics and the definition of ethics for me, it really is about how I play out my value system. So being clear about my value system is important. In thinking about ethics and professional practice, I really don't see a separation in terms of what I believe and my value system in how it's espoused in my work. I think that's got to be the same no matter where I am.

Bianca, who had just recently been tenured and promoted to associate, defined integrity as "the catch-all term that explains your ethicality. Integrity means the way you are maintaining your ethicality. It is that wholeness, that integration of your value system." She characterized this integration as a part of ongoing spiritual work in her personal life. "The deeper you go in [reflection], the more you see and the harder it is to accept some of the pieces of your life because they don't fit anymore. And so I think my struggle actually right now is looking at the person I am at the university, and how does that fit with the person who I am deep inside?" Ultimately, Bianca's goal is "an undivided life."

The ethic of integrity accentuates wholeness of the faculty identity and a sense of harmony between goals and activities. This dimension focuses on ethicality as faculty practice consistent with a personal state of being.

Institutional Influence: Structuring Faculty Ethicality

For all participants, ethicality is a personal choice structured in institutional settings. "Organizational climate," Carlos said, "plays an important role in influencing the determination and exercise of ethics. I think people are more likely to behave ethically in an organization where they feel that kind of behavior is supported and valued and nurtured." In higher education, though, he believes "that what drives many of my colleagues is recognition. Pay. I think it's important that we recognize and reward people for good work, but I don't think that's the reason we should be doing the things we do." Carlos noted his growing frustration with this aspect of higher education and concluded that, "unfortunately, that *is* why we do the things that we do, and that's codified in our merit process."

Lisa, an associate professor, summed up her perspective of ethics in general as respect for others. "In the broadest sense ethics means that I treat everyone as a fellow human and in accordance with human dignity and respect." The very nature of institutions, though, distorts or even prevents ethical decision making in the academy, she said. "I think that our institutions are unethical—not that individuals choose to be unethical, but because of the structure of the universities and the play of power about the universities, its practices are." Lisa, a critical theorist, believes higher education is "hierarchical and bureaucratic, and subject to the pressures of power." She related a hypothetical example of institutional restrictions on decision making:

> In the dean's position, the dean doesn't have the freedom to make the decisions best for her faculty and the students because there is a structure and people she has to answer to. If she doesn't answer to the people in that structure, she gets fired. And I think sometimes [that structure] puts people in a position where they wouldn't make

> those decisions if they were acting as individuals. They make the decisions that they feel forced to make, and those [decisions] are sometimes dehumanizing.

Lisa did not limit the structuring of ethicality to universities; she said "the problem is interwoven and embedded in society." She cited higher education's reliance on external support as evidence. "The university is not autonomous. The university, first of all, is always trying to get funding. And they are also teaming with the legislature to get money; so the university itself is not always autonomous." Most of her colleagues, Lisa said, "try to be ethical but I also think that it's easy for people to make decisions that are self-serving because if you serve yourself, you are more than likely to get promoted than if you don't." From her perspective, faculty members internalize the social ethic of the institution and then externalize it in terms of power and relations. "It's not power operating top–down. It's power operating top–up and from outside that I think influences the making of ethical decisions."

Several participants identified how race and power are structured as ethical issues in the academy. Reflecting on her experiences with discrimination, Basil began several of her sentences with the phrase, "I know this sounds cold...." I asked her to explain that statement, and Basil admitted that she was surprised at her own cynicism. "I feel like I wouldn't be that calculating." She blamed an academic system that tolerates and rewards bias:

> There's some sadness for me that I recognize the reality of getting promoted and surviving the system. But it's a horrible, emotional process with race, class, and gender biases. The white boys get—first of all, there's a different standard; secondly, they get the help for their lower standard.

Noting differential treatment of colleagues within her former department, Basil was angry that "when we go to faculty meetings, the accomplishments of men are lauded and praised, and the accomplishments of women are maybe noticed. I think there is a real, real discrimination in the press that these guys get." White men at that institution, she said, "have published absolutely nothing and got tenure." Black women, on the other hand, who published two peer-reviewed journal articles here a year, have had to fight for tenure."

Emily also believes there is "a fair amount of racism [in higher education]." She, too, argued this is an ethical problem structured by academic systems of higher education but mostly ignored by her peers and colleagues:

> I think there is a lot of propaganda about how equal we are, how we accept people. But if you look at the constitution of our program in terms of faculty mix, we are not representative of the larger culture, ethically speaking. The power, by and large, is still given to the males, as evidenced by the higher positions and who holds them. [Interviewer: And who gives that power to the males?] I think that it is just taken. Power is not given.

Emily, when trying to point out racist or sexist comments made by others in her department, found there is a tacit rule that she was not to "step over the customary boundaries of helping administrative departments in the university take a look at their processes and procedures." She said the "unspoken rule in academic culture is you don't point out, 'Hey mister, you just made a racist comment.' When you do that, it grows very silent." Emily has "overstepped these boundaries" but not without penalty. "Passion comes back to you in silence."

Discussion: Is there an Ethical Ideal?

What does it mean to be ethical? Simply defined, ethics may be considered a matter of right or wrong. Ethics, though, are not so simple in their application, as they require evaluation and choice, often between competing options, and always are situated in complex social and institutional contexts. For professionals such as faculty members, those options may be

bounded by codes or standards, coupled with a requisite expectation for self monitoring. The assumption though is that professionals are aware of ethical conventions and that they know how to use them in difficult situations. For the faculty members in this study, personal and institutional values scaffold their professional decision making and conduct, particularly when confronted with an ethical problem; yet there was no ideal route to ethicality. Instead, they enacted dimensions of ethicality in response to specific issues and experiences.

Principles Versus Standards

Landau and Osmo (2003) agreed that "professionals bring their own individual values with them" (p. 42), calling into question any profession-specific ethic. While ethical codes may influence professional values, "their application reflects the individual's understanding of the world" (p. 47). This suggests professionals may choose careers that fit their personal understanding of ethicality, thus matching their work life to their personal values. Ethics also are social. Professionals interpret and apply ethical principles based on context-specific situations (Landau and Osmo 2003; Rest 1984). This does not mean that professional reasoning is random or indiscriminate, but it does allow for the possibility of contradiction between personal values and professional ethical reasoning.

The faculty members in this study were aware of abstract ethical values as professors; few, though, could point to any specific code or set of ethics for the professorate or specific faculty roles. However, some—particularly the counseling faculty–were aware of codes of ethics for their discipline. These faculty members assume their discipline-specific codes are sufficient for ethical reasoning across their faculty roles. Yet, when making ethical decisions about teaching and research, they did not turn to these codes for guidance; instead, they relied primarily on their personal value system.

Kitchener (1986) discussed the ambiguity and inadequacy of any set of standards for professional ethics, noting that an individual may be associated with more than one profession. This is particularly true for faculty members, whose professional membership includes, at the very least, the professorate and the discipline. Kitchener (1984), though, did not argue in favor of an absolute reliance on one's personal value system; this intuitive level of moral reasoning includes an individual's beliefs, knowledge, and assumptions–and when available–professional codes of ethics. Instead, she said, professionals should take a critical-evaluative stance to moral reasoning, particularly in the case of conflicting standards.

Tools for Thinking

Landau and Osmo (2003) insisted that "pre-established conventions cannot always anticipate issues that arise" (p. 47). Professionals must develop tools for thinking that encourage critical evaluation and interpretation (Kitchener 1986). Codes and standards, then, become a catalyst for professional decision making and ethicality, not an evaluative benchmark. Kitchener (1986) reviewed four components of moral proficiency that are the basis for a proposed ethics curriculum[2]. To develop moral proficiency, she said individuals must be able to: a) interpret a situation as an ethical issue, b) develop a justifiable course of

[2] While her work is focused on counselor education, Kitchener's model is appropriate across professions because it attends to the more abstract issues of reasoning rather than being discipline specific.

action, c) decide whether to take action, and d) implement that action. All of this points to the need for educating professionals about their responsibility for ethicality:

> It is not enough to be aware of and concerned about ethical issues, nor is it enough to think wisely about ethical issues. Professional practice requires that individuals take responsibility for acting and for the consequences of their actions (p. 308)

The participants in this study characterized ethicality along four dimensions—standard, information, diversity, and integrity. While they all have a clear sense of what they believe to be ethical and unethical, most were unable to connect that to professional principles or ethical guidelines for faculty. This was true even for those who claimed an ethic of standard. These data suggest conventional faculty socialization practices do not meet this need, supporting recommendations for reform of faculty preparation and development. Faculty members should be aware of the professional standards for faculty ethicality, not to impose a set of rules for decision making and behavior, but as guidelines for continuous reflection on the nature of ethicality in relation to the broader academic community.

Still, faculty awareness of ethical standards does not mitigate the political milieu of higher education, both at the micro and macro levels. Gee (2000), in a discussion of social and cultural movements, argued that contexts are “rarely static or uniform” (p. 190); rather, “they are actively created, sustained, negotiated, resisted, and transformed moment-by-moment through ongoing *work*” (p. 190). This he termed recognition and enactment work, commenting that our professional lives consist of trying to convince others of the meaning and value of our efforts. Some participants in this study were convinced that the meaning of their work, indeed even the meaning of themselves as faculty members and humans, was disregarded systematically by the structuring of ethicality in terms of diversity. A few worked to align their decisions with personal standards for ethicality; others strove to merge their personal and professional ethics.

Which milieu–personal or institutional–determines the ethicality of faculty work? Both arenas are essential to meaning making, and both influence professional reasoning and conduct. For example, participants emphasized organizational maintenance of information and institutional distribution of resources. The lack of information about tenure and resources also proved troubling for quite a few participants, as did ambiguous policy and documentation. While these institutional issues raised ethical concerns, so did personal orientations to academic issues. Emily believes her community work has considerable value to her discipline of adult education; but she does not think all of her colleagues ascribe that same value to community engagement. Likewise, some participants, like Eve and Basil, struggle with ethical issues common across higher education settings: bias and discrimination. They experience these constructs both personally and professionally.

Conclusion

Sundberg and Fried (1997) claimed “there has been too little dialogue about the process of creating ethical communities on campus” (p. 68). The call for the creation of ethical communities in higher education is a noble one. However, the emphasis has been primarily on leadership and evaluation of conduct in specific organizational cultures (see Brown and Krager 1985; Cooper 1998). While leaders can and should support the development of ethical communities, particularly through educational and development opportunities for its members, ethicality remains a personal interpretation of right and wrong, good and bad. In other words, there can be no ideal faculty ethic, only faculty members who continue to make ideal choices.

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