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# Managing an Effective Way to Teach Business Ethics

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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John Walls

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Walden University

2015

Abstract

Managing an Effective Way to Teach Business Ethics

by

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MBA, California Baptist University, 2002

BA, California State University, Fullerton, 1983

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Leadership and Organizational Change

Walden University

December 2015

## Abstract

Unethical behavior is prominent in the business world and typically leads to negative consequences for people and the environment. Business ethics education acknowledges that ethics teaching has a positive effect on business decisions; however, the problem was the lack of information that is specific to the factors and strategies required to best educate students in business ethics. This lack of information is demonstrated by continued ethical lapses. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to research what is known and unknown on the subject of teaching business ethics through a design intended to understand the lived experiences of ethics instructors. The ethical framework for this study was based on the virtue and justice approaches as a technique for analyzing ethical aspects of a decision, with the goal of improving ethical outcomes. Data collection was completed via interview questions regarding a successful strategy of teaching business ethics. To accomplish this goal, 15 business ethics instructors were interviewed individually to record their lived experiences relating to teaching ethics. Information relating to ethics course design, along with missing components, was the topic of questions. Data analysis using open and axial coding generated 7 major theme clusters that include highlighting character and virtue ethics, increasing concern for stakeholders, and employing the teachings of Socrates and other classic scholars as a basis. The implications for positive social change point to an opportunity for business schools to produce socially conscious leaders who engage in ethical conduct.

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## Dedication

To God be the Glory. To my wife, Lea, for supporting this endeavor and for supplying unlimited encouragement over the past few years, and to my sons, Kevin and Matthew, who understood that dad was on to something special.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Most decisions have attributes that can be categorized. Drucker (2001) devised a sequential method of classifying decisions with not deciding whether a decision is acceptable, but rather what is ethically appropriate. Educating business students in ethical behavior, with an emphasis on ethical decision making when considering stakeholders, constitutes advancement in contributing to positive social change. Instilling ethical decision-making in the new generation of business leaders is important given the historically unethical conduct in businesses like Enron, AOL Time Warner, Adelphia, and Arthur Anderson (Patsuris, 2002).

Researchers have proposed teaching ethics as modules (Naimi, 2007), as stand-alone courses devoted to ethics (Gandz & Hayes, 1988; Rogers, 2011), as an integration of ethics into the various disciplines (accounting, finance, management, and marketing) studied in a school of business (Hartman & Werhane, 2009), or in the use of an analytical framework (Block & Cwik, 2007). Adding to this flux in strategy deployment is the objection to employing a given strategy. There is a lack of information relating to increased effectiveness in teaching business ethics. However, it is important to determine the most effective way to teach ethics without making it overly complex, and to secure faculty buy-in that ethics will be emphasized more in business schools.

Prior research on the teaching of ethics has some commonality, but also an array of differences. For example, both internal and external issues like faculty attitudes or availability of credit hours have an impact on the level of ethics being taught. Additionally, the point at which ethics should be taught or the *targeted output* of what is

being presented to students must be determined (Evans, Trevino, & Weaver, 2006; Felton & Sims, 2005). Teaching ethics as a stand-alone course as opposed to total integration of ethics into core disciplines is an ongoing debate, along with the incorporation of literature or case studies into the instruction of ethics (Gandz & Hayes, 1988; Von Weltzien Hoivik, 2009). The use of a modular approach to teaching ethics or advocating the use of a model curriculum as the recommended method is also up for debate (Hartman & Werhane, 2009; Naimi, 2007). There is the potential for confusion in the curriculum design of teaching ethics. Nonetheless, as suggested by Egri (2013), business schools have a social responsibility to instill students with an ethical framework before they are in business decision-makings. The incidence of unethical behavior in business continues to rise yearly, adding to many previous corporate scandals (Egri, 2013).

An effective, more user-friendly approach to teaching ethics can be developed. Appealing to basic moral principles such as conscience may make teaching ethics less daunting. Ritter (2006) posited that business schools, along with ethics professors, have grappled with how best to integrate ethics into the curriculum, but no solution currently exists. However, effectively teaching ethics would serve not only faculty members and students at the educational level, but also afford protection to society as a whole. ASQ and Manpower Professional (2010) emphasized the importance of ethical behavior internationally by stating that “social responsibility is the responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behavior” (p. 2). Nations, cultures, or societies may differ on what is considered the norm in handling people matters, but



stakeholders are present, nonetheless. Therefore, it is important to define a thought process that offers a consistent means of addressing ethical concerns that may surface at the time of decision-making.

Decisions are not standardized in that what works in one instance may not be appropriate in another (Drucker, 2001). Donaldson and Werhane (1999) posited, “it is obvious that the kind of evidence required for an ethical decision is different from that needed to make a non-ethical one; but what is the nature of the difference?” (p. 1). It is necessary to seek out a method that includes the criteria by which a good ethical decision should be made (Donaldson & Werhane, 1999). The component missing in ethics education will serve as the nexus for simplifying the overall teaching process. The lack of a cornerstone element in designing ethics instruction demonstrates the need to eliminate the gap that exists in ethics instruction.

In order to gain an understanding of how to teach business ethics, stakeholders and their role must be considered. Stakeholders, regardless of position in the overall scheme of things, are a key component in the decision-making process from an input as well as an output perspective. However, the implications of unethical business behavior on stakeholders appear to be an ignored aspect of decision-making. Historically, many judgments have been rendered with little or no regard to the potential impact posed to stakeholders.

Greed, recognition, and power have been the criteria at the center of past decisions illustrate the need for improvement in ethics education. This chapter provides a background of the study, which demonstrates why the study needs to be conducted.

Additionally, the potential social implications of the study are discussed, further supporting the significance provided by the research.

### **Background of the Study**

Cavaliere, Mulvaney, and Swerdlow (2010) posited that ethics education, due to fallout from past financial crises, has an opportunity to influence the next generation; but, educators must be more effective in teaching business ethics if society is to benefit. Similarly, Allen, Bacdayan, Kowalski, and Roy (2005) surmised that current ethics education methods fail to reinforce the values required to affect ethical decision-making. The values that Allen et al. referenced in their research relate to matters of the heart as opposed to the mind-driven, logic based, and reason, only, approach pervasive in business schools. Bennis (2012) discussed the importance of character in terms of business ethics and the need for business schools to focus on increasing the awareness of conscience and empathy, key elements of character, as relates to decision-making. One such tool to increase awareness, as suggested by Bennis, is to include *Character 101* in the business curriculum, thus establishing early on the seriousness of ethical behavior within the business world. The goal, per Bennis, is to illuminate noncognitive skills (i.e., conscience, empathy), which has been lacking in existing courses.

In similar fashion, Nguyen, Basuray, Smith, Kopka, and McCulloh (2008) surmised that ethics education unequivocally predicts intent when faced with an ethical dilemma. Key to the conclusions of Nguyen et al. is increasing students' moral awareness and understanding of ethics through course content, discussion, and exposure to selected ethics-related scenarios. An emphasis on the concept of *contractualism* aids in raising the

moral awareness of students by focusing on an implied contract between business and society to do what is right. However, no single source of ethics training seems to exist that tends to accomplish the intended goal of minimizing unethical behavior (Nguyen et al., 2008).

In effect, this lack of emphasis on values perpetuates an imbalance between reason and compassion, which leads to potentially troublesome outcomes when ethical consequences are present. Juxtaposed to this line of thinking is the emphasis that society places on materialism and financial wealth, which serves to be the definition of organizational or personal success, even to the detriment of others. Schwartz (2007) asserted that materialism, individualism, and self-serving motives have all but crushed the values once present in considering what is best for the common good. Business schools may be trumpeting their accomplishments in ethics education, or it may be a timely form of pacification.

Rasche, Gilbert, and Schedel (2013) asserted that business schools are at risk of expanding the gap between the rhetoric of rosy accomplishments in ethics education and that, which is taught. This rhetoric-reality scenario seems to manifest itself following a typical lapse in ethical behavior at the hands of profit motive. Contributing to the rhetoric issue is the lack of emphasis placed on ethics across the curriculum; the majority of ethics courses are offered as electives, effectively diminishing the importance of business ethics (Rasche et al., 2013). To truly improve ethics education an overhaul of the curriculum is needed, not the traditional quick fix demonstrated by an increase in the number of courses available. Removing ethics courses from the status of elective to that of core

requirement reinforces the significance and weightiness of ethics education. Rasche et al. concluded that the current state of ethics education, particularly in the case of MBA programs, offers little reason for enthusiasm.

Accreditation organizations such as The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB, 2003) and The Accreditation Council of Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP, 2010) offer basic guidelines or recommendations on ethics content within a curriculum; but, these efforts fall short. Unethical behavior exhibited by businesses has continued, usually attributed to profit maximization. Bakan (2004) claimed that some people believed that the Great Depression was the result of mismanagement or corporate greed. The recent housing debacle has also been claimed to be the result of corporate unethical behavior. Freidman (1970) supported the virtues of capitalism, asserting that it would be a dereliction of duty if profits were not emphasized. However, it is important to define the trade-off between ethical behavior and financial gain.

There is a connection between profit motive and unethical business dealings. Abusing the capitalist economic model does harm the economic system, particularly within the international community. Block and Cwik (2007) constructed a system to categorize the prevailing economic philosophies that are practiced throughout the world. In the United States, which employs the monetarist view of economic philosophy, unethical-related cases began in U.S. corporations, due to greed-based profit maximization. Rajeev (2012) suggested that unethical behavior in U.S. corporations has been a result of amassing excessive profit through greed. Hence, business school

curricula in the United States must be revised to mitigate the unethical behavior of some of those trained in U.S. schools of business.

The Ethics Education Task Forced (EETF), in disseminating information to member schools, emphasized the need for institutions and their faculties reawaken and rejuvenate their commitment to responsible ethics in business. To accomplish this exhortation, the EETF recommended a theoretical framework be developed to assist students in solving ethical dilemmas that may crop-up, regardless of the business discipline involved. However, as well intentioned as the EETF recommendations appear to be, little guidance on curricula development has been provided by the EETF, or other recognized, governing bodies.

Existing strategies deployed on teaching business ethics have come in various forms with differing emphases. One proposed method includes designing an ethics course around the goal of instruction, or the targeted output (Felton & Sims, 2005; Sims & Felton, 2006). In a study of accounting students, Dellaportas, Cooper, and Leung (2006) discovered that students' moral awareness in terms of ethical issues was increased following the use of hypothetical social dilemmas. Yet, another variation includes integrating fundamentals of ethics into all courses typically offered in a school of business (Gandz & Hays, 1988; Rogers, 2011), particularly those considered core in content (e.g., marketing and accounting) as opposed to instruction only (Hartman & Werhane, 2009). Options exist, but neither complete integration nor classes alone will achieve the desired outcome (Windsor, 2004). No matter the method of instruction, teaching students to adhere to ethically acceptable behavior is the goal.

To this point, background information relating to teaching business ethics has been discussed and it is apparent that no consensus exists as to the best approach to take in doing so. Hooker (2004) concluded that numerous arguments exist that directly oppose the teaching of business ethics, further adding to the confusion on the subject as a whole. For instance, as examined by Hooker, uncertainty is perpetuated through arguments such as

- The Milton Friedman argument, or the ethical duty of business leaders is profit maximization.
- The argument from incentives, or use of financial and legal incentives to encourage ethical behavior.
- The gut feeling argument, or one either has ethics, or they do not.
- The moral development argument, or moral character is formed early in life and is not likely to change once in business school.
- The motivational argument, or students are not serious about ethics and are, therefore, not motivated to study them.

Hooker exposed each of the above arguments in terms of their weaknesses and befuddlement as offered in support of not against teaching ethics in business schools, but the overriding factor is that ethics education does make a difference (Lau, 2010).

Dzurainin, Shortridge, and Smith (2013) concluded that a critical need of teaching ethics is discovering what should be included in the materials that are used. Not only is this a challenging task, but the basis for many an argument within teaching circles. New, improved teaching materials should contain components that address the changing nature

of ethical lapses that occur relating to corporate dealings. Dean (2013) suggested that ethics education is more challenging than originally thought because students entering at the beginning level have no concept of what degree of responsibility is expected of them as business leaders. The pervasiveness of materialism opposes the values that are requisite to moral decision-making (Dean, 2013). Business students' perception of what business does is misshaped as a result. Indeed, devising an effective approach to teaching business ethics may serve to reshape the sense of what is truly expected of leaders in the business world.

Few, if any, will argue that there is no need to educate business leaders and decision-makers on the subject of ethical behavior in business and beyond. At issue is how to install a paradigm of ethical business practices installed in business students that will produce consistent results and have lasting effects; or, at a minimum, experience success that influences one leader to do what is right as opposed to everyone forsaking stakeholders for financial gain.

Gautschi and Jones (1998) discovered that in comparison to students that did not complete an ethics course, those who did became more adept at recognizing ethical issues. Similarly, Erzikova (2010) reported, through research, that ethics instructors conveyed there is a strong relationship between professional ethics and general morality. There exists an undeniable need for business schools to heighten efforts to increase the awareness of ethics in business along with the importance of ethical behavior, as the implications are potentially far-reaching and long lasting.

### **Problem Statement**

There exists a level of uncertainty as to which teaching strategy should be employed in teaching business ethics to both undergraduate and graduate business students. Existing techniques to teaching ethical behavior offer an array of strategies and methods, but not the commonality necessary to enhance overall effectiveness. Scott (2009) theorized that corporations exert pressure on business schools to align teaching methods with styles consistent with corporate goals, namely profit maximization, which can lead to unethical behavior. In contrast to this thinking, McCuddy (2012) suggested that ethical business practices should be fostered by society, which results in corporate profitability. The problem was the lack of information that is specific to the factors and strategies required to best educate business students in the critical area of ethical business practices, purposed on producing consistent results. Overall, increased understanding of the intangible components of teaching ethical behavior invokes the need for the study.

The intangible components to consider in making ethical decisions must be defined. Business workers must be able to define when consequences may impose harm or negative impact on persons or property. Ethics educators have tried, collectively, many teaching techniques of ethical behavior, which have produced mixed results, thus far. A better understanding of what affects ethical behavior is central to increased effectiveness in teaching business ethics.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore and describe the experiences of educators who have taught business ethics to obtain insight



into the factors and strategies they have found to be successful. By using the lived experiences derived from the research, I revealed the components that are missing from ethics course content. I addressed how business ethics can be taught to business students in an effective, conscience-based manner, emphasizing the human element as a guiding factor. In addition, I safeguarded against the occurrence of theory bits as described by Glaser (2000) who stated that theorizing is kept at a low level, thereby missing the target of more substantive, theory generating information typically found through a qualitative study.

In this phenomenological study, I explored the human aspect of understanding teaching business ethics to recommend a method of effectively managing business ethics instruction. I reviewed the processes used by individuals who teach or have taught ethics, along with how ethics enter into the decision-making process; conscience-driven elements of ethical behavior were a primary target of the research. Applicability of the teaching model is not limited to business schools because the tenets of ethical decision making transcend interdisciplinary boundaries to better serve the needs of society.

### **Research Questions**

The study involved exploring and describing the lived experiences of men and women who have taught business ethics and connecting those experiences to factors and strategies relating to business ethics education. The research question was as follows: What are the factors and strategies that have contributed to the success of educators who have taught business ethics? Phenomenology affords a deep understanding of the phenomenon through the subjective responses of participants who share a common

experience (Creswell, 2007). I collected the participants' feelings, beliefs, and experiences relating to the teaching of business ethics through personal interviews to help create a better understanding of the factors and strategies required to best educate business students in the critical area of ethical business practices.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The lack of information that is specific to teaching business ethics and increased understanding of the intangible components of ethics education ground the study. In addition, several types of distinctive ideas from the body of knowledge supported the need for the study. Meyer et al. (2009) discussed five approaches to ethical decision-making: utilitarian, or the decision that does the most good and the least harm; moral rights, or the duty to respect others' rights; justice, or all equals should be treated equally; common good, or welfare of everyone is important; and virtue, or decisions made based on a foundation of virtue and highest character.

Jones and George (2008) included an additional, *practical* approach, or whether a decision is the right thing to do as determined by three tests. Thus, the numerous approaches to ethical decision-making suggest a need for commonality or consistency in business ethics teaching. In addition, the various options available as ethical frameworks generate questions, which support the goal of key research questions and instrument development to gain additional knowledge in this critical area. A more thorough explanation of the main components of the framework follows in Chapter 2.

The ethical framework that informs this study is based on the virtue and justice approaches as a technique for analyzing ethical aspects of a decision, with the aim of

producing positive results in ethical behavior (Meyer et al., 2009). Virtue and justice find their beginnings in ancient times, and share a foundation established on fairness. For the purpose of the research study, the conceptual area for exploration is the perceptions or beliefs of teachers with lived experience in teaching business ethics, and their thoughts relating to requirements for effective ethics education. A detailed explanation on current teaching methods occurs in Chapter 2.

### **Nature of the Study**

According to Creswell (2007), “the procedures of qualitative research, or its methodology, are characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analyzing the data” (p. 19). A qualitative approach to research guides a researcher to collect personal thoughts, opinions, and feelings that are not readily available through quantitative means. In this study, used in conjunction with the qualitative method, was a phenomenological research approach (Creswell, 2009). I explored and described the lived experiences of 15 individuals that teach, or have previously taught, business ethics. A researcher brings to a qualitative study their individual paradigms, views, and values, which helps to shape the research (Creswell, 2007).

A conceptual framework is ontological, but several other components or philosophical assumptions are present as well. Epistemology is the relationship between the researcher, and that being researched (Creswell, 2007). I proposed to learn as much as possible to narrow the gap between researcher and research subject, per Creswell. Axiological values (i.e., biases) were brought to the study; but, they are disclosed so as

not to bring into question the validity of the study. In addition, I write in a rhetoric that is indicative of a qualitative study to include proper terms and language as described by Creswell. The purpose of the research process or methodology chosen is to gather the data necessary to facilitate the inductive nature of qualitative research.

Creswell (2007) claimed that the aim of qualitative research is to capture the experiences of participants and their views of what has been experienced. The subjectivity born through these experiences is the basis for constructivism, which is why I chose qualitative research. The other options for paradigm were not considered appropriate because of the lack of emphasis placed on a participant's personal experience and the missing element of subjectivity. A detailed discussion of the methodology employed follows in Chapter 3.

### **Definitions**

*Conscience:* That which is possessed by every human being for detecting the transcendent meaning that comes from beyond him or herself and his or her situation, that enables him or her to make the one right choice in that moment (Frankl, 1988).

*Contractualism:* An act is wrong if its performance is unacceptable as prescribed by a set of principles that govern behavior aligned with distinct, moral reasoning, and social contract (Scanlon, 1982).

*Econophobia:* A powerful, dominating language in which money is used to dictate and justify all actions (Giacalone & Promislo, 2013).

*Ethics*: Well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues (Velasquez, Andre, Shanks, & Meyer, 1987).

*Materialism*: The idea that technological and economic factors play the primary role in shaping a society (Carneiro, 1981).

*Moral*: Beliefs based on practices or teachings regarding how people conduct themselves in personal relationships and in society (Nichol, 2012).

*Potensiphonics*: A dominant language with its emphasis on power and supremacy (Giacalone & Promislo, 2013).

*Stakeholder*: A person who is involved in or affected by a course of action (Leigh, 2010).

Defining ethics, as relates to business behavior, must include several components to ensure meaningful intent. To further the understanding of what constitutes teaching business ethics, it is imperative to establish a solid foundation on the tenets of ethical human interaction.

### **Assumptions**

The phenomenological research approach was used to gather the personal experiences of participants to the study to inductively develop a theory (Creswell, 2009). Information divulged during the research process is assumed to be true and accurate, because the participants provide it freely and voluntarily. I assumed that because the participants are of an advanced level of education and occupy, or have occupied, a

position requiring a higher degree of responsibility, the accuracy of the information articulated by participants is considered credible.

No assumption was made to the study being connected to any other study, nor did I assume that there was an overlapping with any current theory or research. Beginning with the data collection process, literature examination assisted me in generating the categories for the coding process, as well as guiding the subsequent steps of data analysis. Results were not expected to align themselves with current literature; and I did conform to analytic induction, which is expected of a phenomenological research (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).

Findings of a research study are more valuable if they are generalizable to a larger population. Maxwell (2005) postulated that external generalizability, or extending conclusions beyond the group studied, has a place in qualitative research, and can lend credibility to the results. With this in mind, I assume that the findings resultant to the study can be generalizable to a larger population. However, I realize the lived experiences as described by the participants may, or may not, converge.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

To facilitate the data collection process, participants were selected from colleges and universities within a predetermined geographical, namely the Southern California area. The overarching criterion for participation was experience in teaching business ethics. Another option considered for the study was that of a quantitative approach, but gathering responses that are more mechanical in nature do not fully capture the experiences of the participants. A majority of prior research on the subject matter was

conducted under a quantitative approach, signaling the need for a qualitative study. The geographical area of representation did not pose a boundary because of area specificity. However, such boundary constitutes no reason for concern as to the purpose of the study.

### **A Call for Commonality**

Discovering a more effective way of teaching a given discipline is important to both educators and society. Unethical business behavior has been shown to have an adverse effect on the environment, in addition to the financial havoc that is manifested during the ensuing fallout. Many different individuals are victimized by a greed-based action by someone they will, more than likely, never cross paths with.

Researchers have not suggested the need for a more universal, common, and effective approach to teaching business ethics (Crane, 2004; Evans et al., 2006; Felton & Sims, 2005; Gempeshaw, 2009). Yet, researchers have found that there is a need to educate business students in this critical area; but, the methods and techniques of teaching business ethics have fallen short of the intended goal: social responsibility in everyday, business decision-making.

Gladwin and Berdish (2010) concluded that MBAs are not prepared for a business world that has become morally complex. Companies face the constant challenge to demonstrate their moral and social obligations that society is increasingly demanding. However, Gladwin and Berdish posited that business schools have fallen short in preparing students for this challenging responsibility. Central to preparing students for what is expected of them in the future is to gain buy-in from business leaders who are willing to accept the duty inherent in moral obligations to coming generations.

Understanding that ethics are the lynchpin to successfully negotiating the moral and ethical demands placed on corporations is paramount to long-term survival in the business world.

### **Setting the Standard**

Each member of society has a duty and an obligation to others to respect the inalienable human rights (e.g., worth, dignity) that extend to all persons. Peters (1994) emphasized that whether it is business or otherwise, maintaining high ethical standards are paramount to treating people decently, regardless of any differences that may exist. It is paramount that future leaders in business, educated through principled ethics teaching, are morally and ethically prepared to meet the goals of human society as a means of affecting positive social change.

In this qualitative phenomenological study, I explored and described faculty perceptions as pertains to the teaching of business ethics, with the purpose of filling a gap in prior research. Faculty participant responses were used to suggest an effective way of managing the teaching of business ethics in business schools. Ethical behavior should become more of the norm than the exception, thereby contributing to positive social change through the dignified treatment of others.

### **Limitations**

The study includes limitations that were addressed. As the researcher, I acknowledge my own personal bias in terms of ethical behavior. By this, I mean that there is a right way of doing things and that it is not always about money; business pursuits ought to penetrate the superficial aspect of profit motive.



In terms of the instrument used for data collection, I considered the content of the questions as a guideline in developing the protocol. Previous researchers who have studied the subject matter supplied sufficient information to target with this research. However, I was concerned that participants, especially those in adjunct or non-tenured positions, may not have been at ease divulging their innermost thoughts for fear of reprisal. In being mindful of ethical research and protecting the rights of participants, each participant was given the opportunity to review, add to, make changes to, or detract from responses. According to Patton (2002), having participants in a study react or comment on his or her own responses leads to an increased validity of the research. In addition, not only does the researcher's analysis benefit, evaluators are more inclined to approve the study's findings.

### **Significance of the Study**

A lapse in ethical behavior tends to result in both image and financial consequences to a corporation. Episodes involving things of this nature are counterproductive to corporate goals because there is a cost, some of which may be unrecoverable. Compromising personal standards of morality and values may have a negative effect on the conscience, thus fostering a corporate climate of unhappiness, uneasiness, and tension. Therefore, the significance of ethical behavior to the field of management is not to be underestimated or taken lightly from both fiscal and psychological perspectives. The question of how to define corporate culture then arises.

### **Significance to Practice**

Schwartz (2007) stated that as materialism, individualism, and competition are emphasized, the good of society and values of benefit to society are dismissed. However, values and the concern for the common good and moral fiber remain a fundamental part of human beings. In essence, there is a dichotomy in terms of how to live within the context of society and culture. Schwartz suggested the current version of the capitalist economy ought to be revised to allow for enlightened leaders to enable employees to make sound decisions, the type that will be the most beneficial to the range of stakeholders involved.

Debeljak and Krkac (2010) discussed that ethics are about being a good person and by being such, an ethical solution will be reached when circumstances dictate. More times than not, ethics have been unconcernedly and regularly ignored when decision time comes. By ignoring ethics and the implications thereof, the profitability, sustainability, and existence of a corporation become vulnerable, at minimum. General negligence in the form of pollution issues, changes in the environment, and human relations issues may be key contributors to an organization's demise (Debeljak & Krkac, 2010). The connection between professional ethics in business and overall morality cannot be minimized given the potential for catastrophic consequences as repeated throughout corporate history (Erzikova, 2010; Patsuris, 2002).

Several key aspects relating to ethics in business have been mentioned, illuminating the fact that ethical behavior and corporate performance and sustainability have been intertwined in the past, are currently so, and will continue to be into the future.

Rasche, Gilbert, and Schedel (2013) postulated that much of what comes out of business schools regarding ethics education is nothing more than rhetoric, which increases the potential for forming a gap between what is allegedly taught and what actually is.

In tune with this line of thinking are the thoughts of Blaine (2009) as well as the assessment of Jacobs (2009). Here, following the worldwide financial disaster that occurred in 2007, business schools were criticized for producing students that ignored social and environmental issues at the expense of maximizing profits and shareholder wealth. Jacobs went further by suggesting that contributing factors to the financial turmoil were improperly aligned incentive programs for executives, the absence of boards of directors in offering institutional guidance, and the lack of accountability in the investment community. Accordingly, to mitigate future episodes, Jacobs proposed including instruction on the workings of an effective board of directors in business school curriculum. At any rate, the requisite for future business leaders to be educated in the foundational components of ethics has been clearly established. What remains is discovering an effective, universal approach to increase ethical business behavior, a step toward advanced knowledge in corporate management.

### **Significance to Theory**

Corporate scandals from Enron to Madoff seem to occur with alarming regularity, illuminating the importance of ethics education within the business curriculum (Dzurnanin, Shortridge, & Smith, 2013). The year 2002 was a particularly tumultuous year within the corporate world, registering a staggering number of scandalous events. For instance, unethical accounting episodes revealed were committed by:

- Adelphia Communications – falsification of financial results; improper loans.
- AOL Time Warner – inflated revenue prior to impending sale of company.
- Arthur Andersen – destruction of records relating to firm’s client Enron prior to SEC audit.
- Bristol-Myers Squibb – inflated revenue.
- Duke Energy – manipulation of stock trades to hike-up trading volume.
- Merck – falsely recording revenue never received.
- WorldCom – overstating financial results.
- Xerox – income overstated by billions of dollars (Patsuris, 2002).

The critical information is that arrests have been made, confidence in U.S. corporations been shaken, and business survivability is in jeopardy.

McCuddy (2012) found that ethical practices may not be uniform across industry boundaries. McCuddy studied three highly profitable industries: financial services, energy (petroleum), and health care (including pharmaceuticals). Public perception suggests that the aforementioned industries have profited greatly through questionable business practices, virtually unchecked by any governing authority. Extraordinarily large profits, or those considered predatory, are commonplace within certain industries, as posited by McCuddy. The image stigmatization associated with financial services, energy, and health care is undeniable, but may encourage business to express ethical practices to the public and, conversely, to promote society’s desire that this information be reported consistently.

A company's ethics statement is also a factor. The Board of Ethics and Professional Standards (BEPS) roundtable discussion of 2012 offered thoughts as contributed by the participants. While company ethics statements (CES) are well intentioned and intended to project a certain image, the reality is they may be superficial, at best. The roundtable concluded

- A CES is only as good as the people who follow them.
- Top-down commitment is essential.
- Ethics education is important to operate ethically.
- The costs of acting unethically must be understood by leaders.
- Ethics is taught superficially in business schools.
- It must be understood that profitable and ethical behavior can co-exist at all times.
- Operating ethically should be the norm for corporate activities (BEPS Roundtable Discussion, 2012).

The underlying factor present is the importance of ethics education whether by being specifically mentioned, or an allusion to in the discussion's synopsis. Image and ethics, then, do have a connection that ultimately feeds into corporate legacy.

It is generally agreed upon that a corporation is to conduct business with the intent to generate a profit and to assure the entity's perpetuation. Included in this process are the various costs typically associated with conducting business, with industry specific costs accounting for differences that exist. With this in mind, from an accounting perspective,

part of the cost of doing business is reflected in corporate financial records. However, in the wake of an unethical episode in judgment, can the costs truly be counted?

Giacalone (2013) emphasized that ethics do not come without a price; the cost may come in the form of lost opportunity, or in the form of steadfastness to one's values. Daily, defining an individual and what they stand for has an impact on the ethical course they are traveling. As questioned by Giacalone, are individuals willing to admit that how they handle an ethical dilemma may be the total opposite of the guise they project as a virtuous person?

Typical professional and ethical standards include the assumption that business operations will be conducted in such a manner that harmful acts do not enter into the equation (Chandler, 2005). All too often, employees, customers, vendors, and other stakeholders are victimized by fraudulent, deceptive, and misleading acts of willful misconduct on a corporation's behalf. Consequently, Chandler explained that operations are disrupted to the point where an organization's continuity is at stake, which suggests a negative affect on the bottom line. In fact, ethical lapses have cost businesses billions of dollars, collectively, in expenditures for items such as litigation, fines, image and reputation damage, customer/client trust, and lost sales.

eHow (2013) asserted that in order to be successful, a company must project and maintain a positive image with consumers. The flipside to this are the actions required to restore a good image once an unethical incident has occurred, and has gone public. Costs typically associated with image recovery are those relating to media expense such as television ads, print sources, and radio airtime. A change in the company's name is an

option if circumstances warrant, and hiring a public relations firm may be in order. Regardless of the restoration approach taken, the task is not only challenging, but daunting as well (eHow, 2013).

The majority of the discussion in this section has centered on the consequences of unethical behavior, but what benefit is derived from a consistent practice of ethical business dealings is unclear. Duggan (2013) offered several advantages to a business entity resultant to ethical business practices such as

- a higher degree of financial performance is possible through sound business ethics,
- improved relationships/satisfaction with the corporation's multitude of stakeholders,
- less likely to create legal issues and the costs associated with court proceedings,
- increased employee satisfaction/morale which improves customer service, leading to repeat business and high customer retention, and
- corporate image held in high regard, which produces/sustains customer loyalty and satisfaction.

The changing nature of business, due to the globalization factor as well as the heightened level of competition, dictate the corporate imperative that ethics can not take a backseat to profit motive alone. Suspicion and fear sensed by customers are cause enough for them to seek-out alternatives of which there are many (Duggan, 2013).

### **Significance to Social Change**

Schwartz (2013) concluded that many business students harbor the preconceived notion that materialism outweighs all other business-related strategies, which does not bode well for the good of society. Under this materialistic worldview, as described by Schwartz, is the idea of econophobia, or the power of money to dictate virtually all that goes on in the business world and to justify behavior. Eisler (2007) reported that the dominance of financial matters is greatly emphasized by the fact that household and volunteer work are not included in the gross domestic product, even though countless hours are expended on such nonfinancial activities. The econophobic ideology is the first of materialistic worldview languages having a substantial impact on corporate culture.

The second language, or potensiphonics, is as ubiquitous as econophobia, but the emphasis is on power and supremacy as a guiding force behind business activities (Giacalone & Promislo, 2013). According to Lammers and Stapel (2009), the transformative effect that power has on moral reasoning oftentimes determines the choices made, although the results are not aligned with ethical standards. The use of a potensiphonic language does nothing more than buttress a set of beliefs that perpetuate what is considered the norm as relates to business behavior. Accordingly, then, the actions of a corporation become predicated on the language spoken within its culture.

Bateman (2011) discussed trust and courage as they relate to corporate culture. In terms of trust, slightly more than half of respondents to a survey said they trust business, and less than half that number placed trust on CEOs. With this in mind, it might be a daunting task to lead a corporation's employees when the buying public has little trust in



you as the company's leader. In terms of courage, leaders may be willing to forsake short-term profits for the betterment of social responsibility and corporate sustainability. Ethics requires courage, oftentimes in the face of the status quo and its emphasis on profit maximization (Bateman, 2011).

Gautschi and Jones (1998) discovered that business students who complete a course in ethics are more adept at identifying ethical situations than those who have not completed a comparable course. Additionally, requiring business ethics as part of the curriculum, assuring that faculty are adequately prepared on moral philosophy, and the inclusion of ethical issues in every course are necessary elements in reaching the ultimate goal of ethical conduct (Gautschi & Jones, 1998). Although skepticism exists as to whether business ethics can even be taught, Gautschi and Jones suggested otherwise.

Supporting the claim of Gautschi and Jones (1998) is that of Lau (2010). Business students were presented with questionnaires and scenarios relating to situations where ethical awareness and moral reasoning are contemplated. Through the process, Lau concluded that both ethical discernment and moral reasoning were heightened as a result. Also, Dellaportas, Cooper, and Leung (2006) reported that rule-based learning in ethics education does raise the level of moral reasoning in students, thus supporting the need to teach business ethics. Indeed, ethics education does make a difference (Gautschi & Jones, 1998; Lau, 2010), signaling the urgency for management to embrace the concept of cause-effect in terms of ethical behavior, corporate profitability, and organizational sustainability.

Ethics education is a precursor to developing and sustaining a corporate culture that is necessary to compete successfully in today's business climate. Conscience, as a component of ethics DNA, triggers the inner sense of what is right or wrong when a person is faced with a certain situation, hopefully impelling one to exhibit ethical conduct. The point at which business ethics pedagogy is replaced by consistent, practical application signals positive implications for social change.

### **Summary and Transition**

In this chapter, I illuminated the need for more information on increasing the effectiveness of how business ethics is taught. The answer to effective pedagogy rests with the thoughts and feelings of individuals rather than with the strategies employed. I also introduced the conceptual framework used in this phenomenological research approach, which served as a guide in capturing meaningful experiences of participants in teaching ethics. Study questions were used as a basis for data collection. In Chapter 2, I will review the current literature on other ways to teach business ethics. In the literature, I uncovered a gap that exists in the knowledge base.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The objective of the literature review was to (a) explore existing research relating to teaching business ethics; (b) identify gaps in the research; and (c) position the study within the literature, in particular to focus on experiences described by educators who have taught business ethics to obtain insight into the factors and strategies they have found to be successful. Researchers have offered numerous techniques and options of modality, but an effective method relating to the instruction of business ethics is lacking. The paucity of information relating to increased effectiveness on the teaching of ethics has created a gap in the existing knowledge base. Research conducted on teaching business ethics must include a discussion on the position of stakeholders as relates to ethical business behavior; business ethics and stakeholder consideration are inextricably woven. ASQ and Manpower Professional (2010) discussed the importance of public trust, reputation, the absence of corruption, and the need for ethical behavior if organizations have a willingness and desire to achieve social responsibility, particularly in a global economy imbedded with a vast number of stakeholders.

Researchers have suggested teaching business ethics in the form of modules (Naimi, 2007), as a stand-alone course dedicated to ethics (Rogers, 2011), as an integration of ethics into the various disciplines (accounting, finance, management, and marketing) typically instructed in a school of business (Hartman & Werhane, 2009), or as an analytical framework (Block & Cwik, 2007). However, there are objections or feasibility as to the use of these models. Ritter (2006) questioned whether business ethics can be trained at all, much less to the point where they become a habit. Several years

earlier as a dichotomy to Ritter, Gautschi and Jones (1998) proposed that ethics can be taught, particularly if students are instructed in how to recognize ethical issues and situations before rendering decisions. This contrast in thought evidenced by Ritter and Gautschi et al. carries significant weight since confusion appears to be an ongoing issue. It is not important to determine the most effective way of teaching business ethics without making it overly complex. Securing faculty buy-in would ensure that ethics would be emphasized more in business schools.

Both internal and external issues can have an impact on the level of ethics taught as can faculty attitudes or availability of credit hours. The point at which ethics should be taught or the targeted output of what is being presented to students must be determined (Evans et al., 2006; Felton & Sims, 2005). To mandate a stand-alone course in ethics, as opposed to total integration of ethics into core disciplines, is an ongoing debate, along with the incorporation of literature or case studies into the instruction of ethics (Gandz & Hayes, 1988; Von Weltzien Hoivik, 2009). The use of a modular approach to teaching ethics, or advocating the use of a model curriculum as the recommended strategy to teaching ethics is also up for debate (Hartman & Werhane, 2009; Naimi, 2007).

### **Literature Search Strategy**

An effective, user-friendlier method of teaching ethics should be developed. The research used as reference for this study afforded some in-depth, substantiated information, but appealing to basic moral principles (e.g., conscience) may make teaching business ethics less cumbersome and less challenging. The literature surveyed for this research included peer-reviewed articles relating to the teaching of business

ethics, the teaching of business, and the teaching of business ethics (e.g., stakeholder consideration). The search was conducted via the use of multiple online databases including Business Source Complete, ScienceDirect, and ProQuest, as well as an analysis of dissertations relating to the teaching of business ethics, integrity and compliance, and moral reasoning. The key words used in the search included *teaching ethics*, *teaching business ethics*, *stakeholders*, and *stakeholder theory*.

The literature review is organized through the grouping of like items such as ethics theory, ethics training, opinion and perception, pedagogy, and stakeholder consideration. Table 1 lists prior research conducted under a specific methodology that was reviewed for the study. Table 1 indicates an array of differences that exist within the overall scheme of teaching business ethics.

Table 1

*Research Relating to the Teaching of Business Ethics*

In-text Citation	Type of Research	Research Subject	Findings
Allen et al., 2005	Quantitative	Current models	Ineffective
Crane, 2004	Quantitative	Importance of course	Students desire
Curry & Thach, 2007	Quantitative	Deans' attitudes	Increasing emphasis
Evans et al. 2006	Quantitative	Curriculum content	Varies widely
Gosen & Werner, 2006	Qualitative	Teaching approach	Experiential preferred
Lau, 2010	Quantitative	Ethics education	Increased awareness
Mahdavi, 2010	Quantitative	Teaching modality	Practical preferred
Nicholson et al., 2009	Quantitative	Perceived importance	Currently deficient
Ritter, 2006	Mixed	Ethics and gender	Women more ethical

Table 1 shows the variety of findings that resulted from the subject studies. With the exception of one study, all used a quantitative method, or contained a quantitative component. Accordingly, a qualitative research approach was used for this study.

### **Conceptual Framework**

During the last 20 years, numerous studies have been undertaken to address teaching business ethics. Researchers have produced an abundance of theories as to what should be included in the teaching of business ethics, to the preparation of students prior to taking ethics courses, to who should shoulder the responsibility of educating tomorrow's leaders on the subject of ethical business behavior. In the wake of this effort by researchers there remains a need for an alternative means of teaching business ethics, a practiced method for evaluating the ethical aspects of a decision before it is made.

For this study, a conceptual framework guided by a phenomenological approach was used. A conceptual framework is a good fit when a researcher is convinced that a subject theory does not exist within the current knowledge base (Lynn, 2010). Subsequently, the concepts or theories that are generated become revealed in the research findings. A conceptual framework is ontological in nature; but epistemology, helps researchers to understand that which makes it work (Creswell, 2007). The data are used to assist the researcher in discovering a theory through interaction with participants in the field. Patton (2002) suggested that in addition to identifying what questions to ask, the researcher's level of personal engagement must also be determined. Miles and Huberman (1994) described a conceptual framework as "...the key factors, constructs, or variables-

and the presumed relationships among them” (p. 18). Several techniques have been used in teaching business ethics, but there is not a method that increases effectiveness.

The particulars that are associated with the teaching of business ethics are the same, regardless of the method of delivery. What may differ is the emphasis placed on each one as to how appropriate or important each is within the scheme of instruction. For instance, an instructor may focus on the use of case studies as the teaching medium, whereas others may employ a theoretical approach to teaching. Each has its merit. Whether business ethics education is taught as a stand-alone course or integrated into all courses has been the subject of considerable discourse.

The conceptual framework includes additional thoughts on teaching business ethics. Ritter (2006) surmised that many educators and professional organizations agree that some degree of ethical decision-making can be taught to business students. According to Ritter, the level of ethical decision-making taught to students may go beyond superficial means. Similarly, per Jones and George (2008), the practical rule stipulates that an action must meet a test comprised of three questions in order to be the right thing to do. First, does my decision fall within standards that are typically accepted in today’s business practices? Second, am I willing to have the decision made known to all parties having an interest in the outcome? Third, would people such as family members, friends, or even peers in other organizations approve of my actions? The practical rule approach attempts to facilitate ethical decision-making through the use of thought-provoking measures.

Allen, Bacdayan, Kowalski, and Roy (2005) suggested that organizational values are not supportive of ethical decision-making, thus questioning the link between business school teaching and the corporate world. Nicholson and DeMoss (2009) claimed that schools of business are not effective in teaching students in the area of business ethics. Thus, a practiced method for ethical decision-making requires not only weighing the considerations, but a developed sensitivity to ethical issues as well.

I introduced key components, or concepts, derived from the literature that is included in the ethical framework in Chapter 1. To reiterate, the virtue and justice approaches inform the ethical framework of the study. Meyer et al. (2009) offered a description of the ethical frameworks mentioned earlier. The virtue approach maintains that certain virtues ought to guide our ethical behavior, which, in turn, helps us to act at our best. Virtues such as honesty, compassion, generosity, fairness, and integrity dispose us to a habit of ethical decision-making. The justice approach supports the thinking that all human beings, as being equals, should be treated equally, or fairly, based on an established standard. Hence, as practiced, ethical actions treat all human beings justly through defensible standards grounded in fairness or justice.

Each ethical framework has value and merit, but problems exist in terms of the content of certain approaches, and determining what ethical is in a particular circumstance. However, the situational side of ethics remains a very real possibility, reinforcing the need for increased knowledge in this critical area. The current study benefits from previous research efforts through the thoughts, the perceptions, and the



framework established as a result, but the implications are clear that more exploration is needed.

## **Literature Review**

### **Accreditation Standards**

Schools of business maintaining accreditation status, or those seeking to become accredited, are required to uphold the curriculum standards as prescribed by the accrediting entity. For the purposes of this research, standards for accreditation of the AACSB and the ACBSP were reviewed to illuminate the importance of business ethics relative to overall curricula. With the advent of business ethics courses in the business school curriculum, there has been confusion as to the content of required courses. The absence of guidelines or recommendations for business schools before 2003 (AACSB, 2003) has had an affect on the teaching of business ethics as being a viable part of business school's curriculum. Frank, Ofobike, and Gradisher (2010) discussed both AACSB and American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) standards pertaining to ethics, but no definitive method on covering ethics was mentioned or recommended. Moore (2004) postulated that progress has been made in curriculum design, but a purposed strategy is required to achieve desired results. In the following discussion, I will focus on both the AACSB and the ACBSP approach it as relates to the ethics suggested/recommended course content.

### **Council of Business Schools**

Adopted for use on April 25, 2003, the Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation of the AACSB (2012) reflected a move away from

the predecessor version (Sims & Felton, 2006). Even though business ethics had garnered widespread attention because of more recent, unethical corporate behavior, AACSB course requirements are left to local options, or to integrating business ethics into existing courses. According to Sims and Felton (2006), most business schools are complying with the less stringent criteria included in the 1991 AACSB standards.

The current AACSB Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation (2012) offered institutional flexibility in terms of the emphasis placed on business ethics. The AACSB stated,

There is no implication in these standards that these topics designate particular courses or treatments. Schools should assume great flexibility in fashioning curricula to meet their missions and to fit with the specific circumstances of particular programs. Some of these topics may be emphasized for particular learning needs and others may be de-emphasized. (p. 70)

According to the AACSB criteria, a school need only justify the reasoning behind curricular contents and that the course structure aligns itself with the learning goals of degree programs offered. By meeting the mission needs of the school, compliance to standards has been met (AACSB, 2012, p. 70). A high degree of maneuverability exists in the current version of the AACSB standards.

The AACSB (2012) claimed that the following guidelines are germane to schools of business:

Standard 15: Management of Curricula: The school uses well documented, systematic processes to develop, monitor, evaluate, and revise the substance and

delivery of the curricula of degree programs and to assess the impact of the curricula on learning. Curriculum management includes inputs from all appropriate constituencies, which may include faculty, staff, administrators, students, and faculty from non-business disciplines, alumni, and the business community served by the school. (p. 71)

A collective effort in crafting an ethics curriculum should be designed to meet the needs business students, but current efforts may be falling short. Cavaliere et al. (2010) postulated that schools of business, as well as accrediting entities such as the AACSB, ought to assess the effectiveness of ethics curricula to ensure that what is being taught results in ethics education. Hartman and Werhane (2009) concluded that the AACSB typically does not mandate that specific ethics courses be required in either undergraduate or graduate business school curriculum.

The AACSB (2012) revealed the following as relates to curriculum management: The standard requires use of a systematic process for curriculum management but does not require any specific courses in the curriculum. Normally, the curriculum management process will result in an undergraduate degree program that includes learning experiences in such general knowledge and skill areas as: ethical understanding and reasoning abilities. (p. 71)

The AACSB mentioned ethics, but no specific courses are prescribed. Normally, the curriculum management process will result in undergraduate and master's level general management degree programs that will include learning experiences in such

management-specific knowledge and skills areas as ethical and legal responsibilities in organizations and society (AACSB, 2012).

### **Accreditation Council for Business Schools**

The ACBSP (2012) addressed the subject of ethics for schools of business in more specific terms than its AACSB counterpart. With an increased emphasis on teaching and learning outcomes as opposed to research, the ACBSP has gained widespread attention. The ACBSP is comprised of nine regions representing 44 countries (ACBSP, 2012). The ACBSP standards include more specific content related to social responsibility. “The business school or program *should* ensure ethical business and academic practices in all student and stakeholder transactions and interactions” (p. 19). The inclusion of stakeholders in the accreditation criteria reflects the importance of stakeholders in the overall purpose of the ACBSP. As decision ramifications have shown, business ethics and stakeholders are inextricably woven together.

The ACBSP (2012) described an additional component intended to equip business students with the necessary tools to function as responsible business leaders. The ACBSP stated “business students share common professional requirements. For this reason, certain common subject matter (the Common Professional Component, or “CPC”) as well as areas of specialization are *expected* to be covered in baccalaureate degree programs in business” (p. 41). Imbedded in the CPC component for undergraduate students is the topic of business ethics, but only as a subcategory of the business environment component. The CPC requirement is also included in the accreditation criteria for graduate-level business programs, but no mention is made of ethics-related courses.

## **Ethics Theory and Training**

Business ethics has been imbedded in management theory from the beginning. Although there are those who would argue in favor of the teachings of Friedman (1970), profit motive is not the sole focus of corporate activity. In this section, management theory is mentioned as well as the ideas of business ethicists.

## **Management Theory**

Schwartz (2007) examined the relationship between business ethics and the writings of three management theorists of the 1900s, Taylor, Barnard, and Drucker. Schwartz recommended that management theory, without a discussion of business ethics implications and business ethics content ought not to be taught to business students. Carroll (1991) suggested that leading by example is the most effective way of ensuring that ethical behavior is the norm rather than the exception. Offering a more effective way of teaching business ethics as an integral part of business school curriculum may help leaders to establish a culture of ethical responsibility.

Ethics issues relating to employee well being, rights, or job satisfaction might be evident in the management practices developed by Taylor (1911). Barnard (1938) asserted that the tenets of executive responsibility and leadership are related to business ethics. Drucker (1954) suggested, “The public responsibility of management must therefore underlie all its behavior. Basically it furnishes the ethics of management” (p. 383). The idea of business ethics can be found in the writings of several of the founding members of management theory.

## **Ethics Training**

Gempeshaw (2009) discussed the financial turmoil in the economy and questioned the role of business schools and their responsibility to educate students in matters of financial responsibility. Gempeshaw advocated for the teaching of courses in personal finance, entrepreneurship, or leadership, pursuing a double major or a minor, and heightening the level of teaching of corporate responsibility for students and faculty. Gempeshaw implored business schools to retool the curriculum to better respond to the business environment. Lau (2010) discussed the relationship between business ethics and a student's readiness to be taught business ethics. According to Lau, the moral aspect to decision-making, as it relates to business ethics, is the readiness of students to be educated on the subject of ethics. Lau asserted that paternalism, maturity level, religion, personal integrity, and physical environment are elements of readiness and how they relate to ethical decision-making in business. Lau posited that females tend to be more ethical than males and exhibit more caring as a part of ethical behavior. Overall, Lau determined that ethics education is a worthwhile endeavor.

Based on thinking prior to, and similar to, that of Lau (2010), Nguyen, Basuray, Smith, Kopka, and McCulloh (2008) established that ethics education substantially impacts the outcome of ethical decisions. Through ethics learning, students develop intent to do what is right, predicated on the theory of contractualism. When armed with ethical intent, decision-makers doing what is right and acceptable according to society's expectations constitute success. Nguyen et al. concluded that a well-designed ethics

curriculum is paramount to increasing both ethical awareness and ethical reasoning, purposed on the end-goal of improvement in business ethics.

Gender, as being a potential factor in ethics-related matters, was the basis of research conducted by Mahdavi (2010). Mahdavi examined the relationship between men and women students who had previously taken business ethics courses and their perceptions on teaching modality. Lastly, Mahdavi showed that a practical modality is the more preferred teaching method of both genders; women tended to perceive ethics courses to be more practical. A simpler way of teaching business ethics may neutralize any differences as the result of gender.

Debate has centered on the effectiveness of methods employed in the teaching of business ethics. Allen et al. (2005) claimed that current methods are falling short of the intended goal of reinforcing instrumental values, especially as related to material found in textbooks. Instrumental values are the means exercised to achieve the intended results of ethical behavior. Allen et al. also reported that senior level students placed more importance on instrumental values than did first-year students; but no discernible difference was discovered between males and females as related to instrumental values. Allen et al. posited “there is reason to believe that many organizational cultures are not adequately supporting ethical decision-making based on instrumental values” (p. 180). It is important to determine how instrumental values are communicated more effectively throughout the continuum of business school students.

Brady (1999) developed a systematic approach to define ethics. According to Brady, there is an absence of agreement in how business ethics should be taught. The

core components of Brady's process are deontology (duty), teleology (purpose), and axiology (values) to be included in the thought process when faced with a situation where ethics consideration is present. Brady postulated that by employing such a thought process, the human element necessary in ethics is brought into play and, therefore, chances for ethical behavior are increased.

Brady (1999) claimed that there are six voices of ethics theory, or ethical schema, in which ethic situations can be categorized. The six categories developed by Brady are

- ethics of universal principles (a matter of principle),
- situation ethics (each situation is unique),
- character/social ethics (socially defined),
- ethics of self-actualization (one must be true to oneself),
- ethics of universal care (concerned with the welfare of others), and
- ethics of relationships (shared values/stakeholder theory).

According to Brady, the six voices provide needed thought to ethics-related situations, but the combinations of voices may surface, or the lines between voices may be blurred. Brady stated, "It is unlikely that a technique can be found to replace human thoughtfulness" (p. 309).

Reedy and Learmonth (2011) proposed that ethics are an aspect of corporate sustainability; survivability becomes precarious without ethics. Heidegger (1962) described the need for people to determine what their lives are for, how their life is to be lived, and in what manner they are to relate to other people. Corporations must answer these same questions in terms of ethics and the implications of not exercising ethical



behavior. Reedy and Learmonth claimed that ethical awareness can “collectively make institutions that support our life projects rather than thwart them” (p. 118). Therefore, the perpetuation of corporate fraud may be due to the underpinnings of a questionable stance on business ethics created through ineffective ethics education.

### **Teaching Business Ethics**

Sandbu (2011) discussed business ethics in terms of moral reasoning, but suggested that most business ethics courses avoid the subject of right or wrong behavior. Sandbu claimed that there is a lack of a core body of knowledge within business ethics, as well as no agreed upon strategy in teaching business ethics. However, Sandbu found that business students expressed enthusiasm for moral reasoning following the completion of courses in accounting, economics, or marketing. A chasm exists in what is available within the realm teaching business ethics and the desired results. Business ethics teaching methodology must appeal to the innermost, human conscience in order to be an effective teaching tool.

The debate as to whether or not ethics can be taught continues to swirl around with no immediate signs of letting up. Character, as many maintain, is an innate feature that one either has, or does not have. As in the case of any endeavor or undertaking, a healthy level of encouragement is, frequently, the best impetus for making positive strides. Bennis (2012) offered what he has labeled *Character 101* as a means to improving ethical awareness in business students, the encouragement. Mentioned as ingredients to teaching character are conscience and empathy, requisite to developing character in future business leaders (Bennis, 2012). Bennis suggested that character is a

function of noncognitive skills, the aforementioned conscience and empathy; anything short of character fails to produce leaders purposed on discharging their duties in a socially responsible manner. The endgame, according to Bennis, is that the best business schools can do is to provide an opportunity for students to reflect on who they are and what motivates them, with an eye toward emphasizing character.

Crane (2004) claimed that some believe that businesspeople are in a lower position than politicians. Crane pointed out that ethical business behavior has been moved to the backseat in favor of corporate profitability and shareholder wealth. Crane suggested that many colleges and universities structure their ethics courses to meet the minimum standards as mandated by accreditation associations; many business schools may not take ethics training seriously. To coincide with this shortcoming in business school curriculum, Crane found that a majority of students reflected that business ethics will not improve in the future. However, Crane determined that students are receptive to learning business ethics, and the majority of students stated that they felt as though they could learn something of value through an ethics course. Crane also stressed the influence that faculty have on students who are enrolled in an ethics training course.

Evans et al. (2006) investigated multiple factors that may influence the curriculum of master's in business (MBA) programs. Both internal and external influences that could have an impact on programs were addressed in the study. The sample of the study was comprised of more than 200 MBA programs from North America, with programs of varying sizes and affiliations being represented. Evans et al. revealed that some of the factors that contributed to the emphasis (or lack thereof) on ethics education are faculty

attitudes, availability of credit hours, government, and the news media. No definitive strategy exists in the teaching of business ethics.

Scott (2009) examined the influence of external factors on the curriculum of many business schools. Academic freedom, as proclaimed by Scott, had its beginnings in the United States with the codification of the Declaration of Principles of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP; 1915), with the purpose of protecting faculty, higher education, and the emerging research university. However, tenets of the AAUP doctrine have been overshadowed by the influence of businesspersons and politicians. Scott postulated that those imposing their will on business school curriculum have little patience for the notion of learning, and even less regard for faculty who oppose the views of businesspersons and politicians as to the purpose of higher education.

Baetz and Sharp (2004) assessed the effectiveness of textbooks typically used in teaching business ethics. Textbooks published on management and organizational behavior, marketing, information systems, strategic management, and finance were the focus of the study. Baetz and Sharp reported that textbooks tend to present a shallow coverage of ethical issues. As a result of this lack of detailed information as a teaching resource, Baetz and Sharp proposed that faculty do not possess the necessary materials to teach business ethics efficiently, particularly those new to the subject. The quality of any structured curriculum may be brought into question.

### **Perception on Teaching Business Ethics**

Nicholson and DeMoss (2009) claimed that business schools are not doing enough to educate students in the area of ethics, more specifically at the undergraduate

level. Most studies have been centered on graduate programs with little examination of undergraduate curricula. Nicholson and DeMoss examined the level of ethics present (or not) in the curriculum of the four major disciplines in business education: accounting, finance, management, and marketing. To accomplish this, Nicholson and DeMoss distributed a questionnaire via mail to 380 universities and received responses enough to draw viable conclusions from the data. Ultimately, Nicholson and DeMoss determined that a gap exists between what is being taught in business schools and what is considered necessary from the standpoint of preparing students in terms of ethical decision making. For this reason, Nicholson and DeMoss surmised that additional research is in order to develop a means of closing the gap in teaching ethics.

Any discussion on teaching business ethics is replete without mentioning the thoughts of business school deans. Curry and Thach (2007) captured the attitudes of 120 business deans from around the globe, which offered an accurate barometer as to the state of affairs relating to teaching business ethics. Curry and Thach surveyed areas such as the moral premise of business ethics, the influence of external sources on business ethics, construct of extant courses, and whether focus on business ethics tends to draw students to a particular institution. Curry and Thach showed that business deans' perceptions are similar on some aspects of business ethics, but also vary on certain issues. For instance, a majority of deans agreed that moral values have more of an influence on business ethics than does corporate culture or the immediate corporate environment (Curry & Thach, 2007). The deans also claimed that there is a lack of consensus on whether social concerns and philosophy garner much attention in the teaching of business ethics (Curry

& Thach, 2007). According to Curry and Thach, “Without any agreement on content, it is exceedingly hard to imagine how one would determine the effectiveness of instruction in this area” (p. 238).

### **Course Design or Modality**

Felton and Sims (2005) expressed the necessity of teaching more business ethics as the result of wrongdoings within the business world. Felton and Sims proposed focusing on the targeted output and at what point ethics should be taught in the curriculum. Felton and Sims discussed the application of nine targeted goals ranging from a student’s understanding of core values, to the reality that ethics training may be an ongoing occurrence. Felton and Sims suggested the optimum point at which ethics should be taught when considering both undergraduate and graduate students, beginning with general topics in ethics (undergraduate) and transitioning into more specific situations (graduate) over the course of study. Felton and Sims revealed that ethics are a part of every business decision, and business schools have a duty to prepare students to act ethically through the teaching of business ethics.

Sims and Felton (2006) developed a method to be used as a guideline in designing a business ethics course. Sims and Felton recommended that in structuring an ethics course, one would ask

- What are the objectives or targeted learning outcomes of the course?
- What kind of learning environment should be created?
- What learning processes need to be employed to achieve the goals?
- What are the roles of the participants in the learning experience?

Sims and Felton asserted that by providing the answers to these four questions, the foundation of any business ethics course would be laid. The first question of Sims and Felton's principle questions has implications in designing a business ethics course. Sims and Felton postulated that an individual's core values have an impact on ethical behavior. These same core values, as discussed by Sims and Felton, relate to instinct as described by Hayashi (2001). Hayashi stated, "I found that recent research has uncovered some striking clues suggesting that our emotions and feelings might not only be important in our intuitive ability to make good decisions, but may actually be essential" (p. 172). There is a need to move beyond guidelines, structure, and modality so that business ethics courses strike at the center of moral reasoning. Sims and Felton emphasized the importance of stakeholders in ethical decision-making, particularly in the wake of an ever-expanding marketplace.

Gandz and Hayes (1988) recommended that ethics should be taught in business schools as an integrated part of the curriculum in an attempt to overcome the reluctance of faculty members to teach ethics. Gandz and Hayes proposed the use of an outline in teaching ethics in business schools including what, how, when, and by whom ethics should be taught. The use of materials specifically addressing the subject of ethics (e.g., case studies) is suggested as a means of educating both faculty and students alike. Many business schools have focused on offering ethics as a stand-alone course either, as an elective or as a mandatory course, but Gandz and Hayes concluded that the most effective way to teach business ethics is to integrate ethics into all of the business discipline areas.

Rogers (2011) suggested that ethics should be integrated into business courses, but also proposed that access to a business school's alumni would aid students in making value judgments through real-life scenarios. This emphasis on educating students in value judgments was prompted by a call from Wall Street, asserting that MBA programs can do more by enlisting the support of former business students to strengthen business ethics curriculum (Rogers, 2011). Drawing from a resource such as a school's alumni has the potential of being invaluable, but the question of how well an alumnus is grounded in ethics still remains.

Hartman and Werhane (2009) maintained that business schools and their faculties must accept a share of the responsibility for educating students in the area of ethical business practices. In the pursuit of teaching ethics, business schools should consider a stand-alone course in ethics instead of integrating ethics into the curriculum of courses within a discipline (e.g., accounting, marketing, etc.). Hartman and Werhane proposed that by evaluating the issues surrounding the teaching of ethics and by installing a dedicated course on ethics using a modular approach, students will be exposed to the proper material and recommendations of accreditation associations will be met. To facilitate this perspective, Hartman and Werhane suggested that there is no generally accepted method of teaching business ethics.

Tanner (2004) argued that ethics education should be integrated into all required undergraduate business courses. By doing so, any doubt as to the importance of ethics is mitigated. Integration establishes and reinforces the relevance of ethics to the various functions found in business organizations. Tanner reported that agreeing to provisions of

an honor code is now required of students seeking admission to many schools of business. Policing of one's ranks through the use of an honor code facilitates the impression of accountability, but the issue of ethical behavior still remains.

Cavaliere et al. (2010) asserted that business schools overly emphasize profit and little effort is made in the areas of ethical leadership and socially responsible behavior. Corporate scandals have created both the opportunity and the duty to improve in the area of corporate affairs, whose genesis may be found in the teaching of business ethics. Cavaliere et al. proposed that business teachers should purpose themselves to teach right behavior, even though this flies in the face of what is traditionally taught. By doing so, ethics teachers prove their credentials, validating that they are qualified in teaching business ethics with the goal of social responsibility (Cavaliere et al., 2010).

Naimi (2007) emphasized the need for ethical behavior in the area of human research, especially in light of past corporate scandals. Naimi also referenced the work of Callahan (2004) in that society has become a cheating culture as the result of pressure to succeed in the business world. Educators have a duty to prepare students for what lies beyond the walls of an institute of higher education on both a personal as well as a professional level (Naimi, 2007). Naimi purposed to discuss various techniques determined to be suitable in teaching ethics to undergraduate and graduate students. To achieve this goal, Naimi surveyed faculty and students from eight, historically Black universities throughout the United States during the development of a model curriculum for recommended use in teaching ethics. As a result of the study, Naimi reiterated the need for ethics training that addresses personal and occupational situations that may be



encountered, and repercussions or ramifications of decisions with ethical implications must be made clear to students.

Generally, a discussion on teaching business ethics centers on pedagogy or modality. Price (2007) offered a different view on teaching business ethics by suggesting that the whom of ethics be taught as opposed to the what. Price posited that the focus should be on who individuals are, and what ought to be done.

The usual and customary approaches to teaching business ethics are what Price (2007) targeted as being ineffective as a means to the intended goal. Ethics teaching curriculum needs to be revamped (Price, 2007). To accomplish this morality makeover, Price proposed three areas of focus: (a) students must be encouraged to think critically about dilemmas regarding values and wealth; (b) students should possess an understanding about basic human psychology, and (c) it is imperative that students develop an awareness of the business-society relationship.

According to Price (2007), “students cannot get this kind of education from a curriculum that focuses only on the business fundamentals” (p. 1). However, the intent of business ethics education is improvement, not perfection. Anything less than perfection falls short of the ideal goal, but reality dictates the ultimate outcome.

### **Case Studies, Media, and Alternative Approaches**

Employing case studies as a teaching medium is the subject of the work presented by Falkenberg and Woiceshyn (2008). Falkenberg and Woiceshyn examined the perceived lack of moral reasoning skills possessed by business school graduates. To bridge this gap, Falkenberg and Woiceshyn recommended increasing the availability of

case studies relating to business ethics because such material contains an abundance of moral reasoning issues. In order to successfully negotiate such moral reasoning situations, Falkenberg and Woiceshyn identified certain components that are critical to arriving at ethical conclusions. Falkenberg and Woiceshyn asserted that students must be provided with not only a framework to draw from, but also certain skills (e.g., core values, an understanding of consequences) required in solving moral predicaments. In addition, Falkenberg and Woiceshyn mentioned the associated responsibility and accountability to stakeholders that exists because of the commingling of profit motive and ethical stewardship; inductive; Falkenberg and Woiceshyn claimed that deductive skills are also necessary as a means of developing moral reasoning ability. Falkenberg and Woiceshyn stated that there is a lack of unanimity amongst educators as to the true goal of business ethics teaching. This assessment mirrored that of Curry and Thach (2007).

Von Weltzien Hoivik (2009) contended that students, upon graduation from college, are oftentimes not sensitized to the workings of the business world and would benefit from ethics training featuring literature, plays, and novels. These tools would enable students to make the connection between moral relevance and the theories, analytical methods, and so on, that have been learned in the classroom over a several year period. Von Weltzien Hoivik extolled the virtues of literature in the teaching of ethics to emphasize the potential benefit to business students. Von Weltzien Hoivik also claimed that faculty plays a role in the process of teaching ethics.

Team teaching and guest lecturers as teaching methods are the focus of Brinkmann, Sims, and Nelson (2011) although, per the authors, the ideal method to employ in teaching business ethics remains uncertain. Brinkmann et al. mentioned several appeals to be included in an ethics course such as rights, respect for persons, cost-effectiveness, and justice. Hence, team teaching and lecturers invariably emphasize the aforementioned appeals. Lastly, Brinkmann et al. asserted that business schools have the imposing task of challenging the neoliberal rationalism that has engulfed corporate behavior, leaving little, if any, room for increased attention on ethics, sustainability, and social responsibility.

### **Additional Strategies**

Researchers have identified subjects that are typically found at the center of discussion on teaching business ethics (e.g., modality; mediums). Buchanan (2003) mentioned personal values, fiduciary duty, case studies, and stakeholders, but also included a section on the importance of market imperfections and failures and how they relate to business ethics. For example, when imperfect market conditions exist, the temptation for unethical behavior to occur is increased as pressure to perform (supernormal profits) remains constant (Buchanan, 2003). This serves as a break from the norm; Buchanan stated, “business ethics challenges... frequently involve some form of market imperfection, either between agents and shareholders, or between the firm and its stakeholders” (p. 3). Ideally, perfect market conditions suggest a positive impact on the existence of ethical behavior. However, market conditions aside, ethics are ethics, which demand that teaching methods address all potential scenarios.

Business ethics and political economic philosophy are rarely mentioned in the same discussion, let alone a research study. However, Block and Cwik (2007) developed a classificationist approach to teaching business ethics. Block and Cwik posited that by gaining an understanding of the philosophical differences between the various economics models that exist, business students are better prepared to ascertain the ethical implications that may arise. Block and Cwik claimed that the idea of business or commerce is founded on a voluntary exchange between parties, thus intended to be an inherently moral process.

Block and Cwik (2007) constructed a matrix listing the four prominent philosophical economic models, which represents a continuum of economic ideology. The four models, and the respective emphasis, as identified by Block and Cwik, are

- The Marxist view (left end of continuum; distrusts market; profits are evil),
- The Keynesian view (center-left; property rights regulated; control of profits),
- The Monetarist view (center-right; private property rights important; profits determined by market); and
- The Austrian view (right end of continuum; economy built upon property rights; profits are the reward for business efficiency).

One unique aspect of the work presented by Block and Cwik (2007) is the opportunity for ethics to be exercised positively or abused. For instance, with the absence of or diminished importance of profit motive in either the Marxist or Keynesian views,

unethical behavior may not have the opportunity to manifest itself. Conversely, with both the Monetarist and Austrian views espousing profit motive, the likelihood of unethical behavior occurring is increased, particularly with Monetarism. Philosophical differences do exist between the world's economies, but ethical behavior ought to transcend national boundaries. Knowledge of economic philosophy is helpful, but an ethical imperative is the cornerstone to social responsibility.

Cressey (as cited in Coenen, 2015) created The Fraud Triangle as a tool to detect and combat corporate fraud. Here, Cressey introduced opportunity, motivation, and rationalization as key elements in the *triangle*. Motivation (e.g., for money, assets) and rationalization (justification for actions) are, typically, the driving forces behind corporate malfeasance and corruption. Opportunity, or the circumstances that enable corruption, must be controlled by management in order to stem misbehavior. Interestingly, Cressey was a criminologist by profession, not a corporate executive or business owner.

Core personal values have garnered attention as a subjective component of business ethics, with discussion typically centered on an individual's upbringing or spheres of influence. A person either does or does not have that which is necessary to exercise good moral reasoning. Gosen and Werner (2006) focused on encouraging students to divulge their core personal values in matters relating to ethical situations, thus enabling students to learn where they stand as an individual. This more direct approach to teaching business ethics has a place in pedagogy, but not without a downside. First, as mentioned by Gosen and Werner, a student may express values that one might be expected to convey in an ethics-related situation to have the appearance of looking good.

Second, students may not be willing to share their core values in public, thereby exposing themselves to the scrutiny of other students (Gosen & Werner, 2006). Gosen and Werner presented a tool as a means of teaching business ethics, but theorized that “the question is how best to teach it, and the answer is unclear” (p. 285).

Poulton (2009) designed a teaching strategy where students constructed case narratives for use as a teaching medium. By having students craft case narratives, or short stories, the world of corporate ethics is brought to a more personal level, especially for those lacking corporate experience (Poulton, 2009). According to Poulton, the role and importance of stakeholders is illuminated, which energizes the personal responsibility aspect innate in ethical situations. Constructing case studies does require creativity and thought in order for goals to be achieved; but, the process does serve to provoke analysis as to ethical implications and potential outcomes of decision-making. Poulton claimed that, when it comes to business ethics, no one can have all the answers, nor can they be expected to.

### **Stakeholder Consideration**

It is important to determine where stakeholders fit into the ethics equation. This would appear to be in the general mindset of many decision-makers. Leigh (2010) offered definitions for both primary and secondary stakeholders, as well as some differences that exist between the two. Leigh claimed that stakeholders come in various shapes, sizes, ethnicity, and so on, and many of them exist relative to decision outcomes. Approaching stakeholders from a position of potential implications and resultant repercussions is critical to a favorable outcome, thinking about who will be affected by the decisions to be

made. Traditionally, stakeholders have been overlooked and, in many cases, ignored. Through an effective means of teaching business ethics, every attempt to consider the numerous stakeholders becomes more of a possibility.

### **Early Beginnings**

Stakeholders are a component of the corporation/business ethics continuum. This relationship is not something born out of modern times. The fleecing of investors performed by the South Sea Company in 1710 is a prime example of the long lineage of unethical, self-serving corporate behavior (Bakan, 2004). The South Sea Company's directors knowingly sold stock to investors with the promise that a fabulous return would be forthcoming, even though the South Sea Company was worthless. Bakan (2004) suggested, "The corporation's legally defined mandate is to pursue, relentlessly and without exception, its own self-interest, regardless of the often harmful consequences it might cause to others" (pp. 2-3). Bakan classified corporations as being pathological in nature, all the while exerting power over societies, and the people within them. The pathological pursuit of maximum financial gain will invariably collide with the tenets of ethical business practices. People are beginning to take notice of certain corporate behavior and are demanding accountability to stem feelings of fear and mistrust (Bakan, 2004).

### **Stakeholder and Ethics Connection**

Carroll (1991) discussed facilitating corporate social responsibility (CSR) through the use of four primary components (economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic), as well as stakeholder consideration. Traditionally, economic and legal components have been

the focus of CSR, but the entry of numerous episodes of corporate unethical behavior and malfeasance have placed more emphasis on the ethical aspect of CSR. According to Carroll, corporations have a responsibility to improve the quality of life of the community by giving back, which is where philanthropy fits into the equation. Carroll stated, “The CSR firm should strive to make a profit, obey the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen” (p. 46). Numerous stakeholders have an interest in decisions made by, and operations performed by, the corporation. Oftentimes, stakeholders are myriad and difficult to interact with, so the effort must be made to satisfy the primary stakeholders (Carroll, 1991). Carroll discussed the need for moral management to prevail over both immoral and amoral approaches to corporate management. Keeping the (morality) bar high in all business practices will help establish an ethical norm. Carroll provided a practical resource for developing socially conscious leadership, fitting into the realm of CSR.

Parmar et al. (2010) discussed stakeholder theory and its application to various disciplines within the business realm. In the wake of corporate scandal and related irresponsibility, Parmar et al. suggested that corporate executives are focused on profit maximization at the expense of ignoring business ethics and society-at-large. To remedy this problem, Parmar et al. recommended addressing the areas of value creation and trade, the ethics of capitalism, and the (existing) problem of managerial mindset. Where corporate goals and stakeholder concerns conflict, a concerted effort must be made to arrive at the most equitable solution possible. Stakeholder theory has a place in every segment of business operations.



Freeman, Wicks, and Parmar (2004) offered a rebuttal to previous ideas about the role of stakeholders. Freeman et al. claimed “stakeholder theory is managerial in that it reflects and directs how managers operate rather than primarily addressing management theorists and economists” (p. 364). Focusing entirely on maximizing shareholder wealth at the expense of a corporation’s other stakeholders does little to create value for shareholders. Value creation is the best approach managers can take as it benefits everyone (and thing) concerned. Freeman et al. also suggested that business practice and ethical behavior are intertwined to the point that one cannot be exercised exclusive of the other. Additionally, Freeman et al. concluded that profit maximization would perpetuate the kind of behavior witnessed through the Enron, WorldCom, and HealthSouth.

### **Practical Application**

In the past, recognizing, considering, and working with stakeholders has been a difficult task for many corporations. Strand (2008) offered *The Stakeholder Dashboard* as a means to develop a relationship with the various stakeholders of an organization. The primary goal, according to Strand, is “to raise awareness and facilitate discussion among the corporation’s management about the corporation’s stakeholders” (p. 26). Strand developed a matrix, or dashboard, designed to uncover the numerous stakeholders that an entity must consider when a decision is forthcoming, including any ethical ramifications. In the dashboard are categories for employees, customers, shareholders, suppliers, and so on. Each category is assessed as to the likelihood of collaboration, thus facilitating discussion between corporate management and respective stakeholders (Strand, 2008). The opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with a corporation’s many

stakeholders, as extolled by Strand, exists through employing a technique such as the dashboard. Not only is the relationship with stakeholders fostered, but the ethical underpinnings present are also strengthened.

Communicating with stakeholders, not just speaking to or receiving information from them, is a necessary ingredient of the stakeholder/ethics relationship. This is an important distinction to make in that continuous communication exists between all parties during the entire decision-making process, clearly and purposefully addressing any ethical considerations that may be present. Simmons, Iles, and Yolles (2005) stated, “The incorporation of stakeholder perspectives in decision making processes will enhance effectiveness, employee motivation and organizational justice as system outputs” (p. 41).

### **Summary and Conclusions**

In the review of the literature, I found that issues relating to the teaching of business ethics remain unresolved. The smattering of opinion, perception, and ideas discussed earlier illuminate the need for something more substantive. The literature review began with an examination of the two primary accreditation entities subscribed to by schools of business. Although the subject of ethics is included in the standards and procedures, no definitive curriculum design is suggested or offered. However, the ACBSP standards include more specific information than those of the AACSB, but those, too, fall short of a mandated ethics curriculum.

Ethics theory and ethics training were discussed, which showed that business ethics is not a new school of thought. Plausible methods exist with which to teach business ethics, but effectiveness remains an issue as does the receptiveness of techniques

by ethics educators. Material reviewed for this section dates back more than 20 years, indicating that a chasm continues to be impedance to making progress in this area.

Opinion and perception are in no less supply pertaining to the teaching of business ethics than exists in other knowledge bases. Moral reasoning, external factors, deans of business schools, among others, were investigated, further supporting the lack of commonality which is missing when it comes to teaching business ethics. The most accurate measure of this fact is reflected in the sentiments of business school deans themselves.

Pedagogy was reviewed, along with course design and modality. With no clear guidelines as to course design, teaching effectiveness continues to be brought into question. Modality issues do exist, but when to teach business ethics is of far less concern than how to teach them. The techniques identified in the review (e.g., case studies, media, etc.) are not without merit, but not without limitation. Rounding-out the literature review was the section on stakeholders and their place in the large scheme of things. The presence of stakeholders in the business-society relationship was discussed. Properly handling stakeholders during ethics-related matters must be the cornerstone of all business ethics courses.

No researchers suggested or mentioned the need for an effective, common approach to teaching business ethics courses. Researchers have revealed that there is a need to educate business students in this critical area, but the current methods, techniques, line of thinking, and so on, have fallen short of the intended goal: ethical responsibility in everyday, business decision-making. The research of Cavaliere et al.

(2010), Nguyen et al. (2008), and Sims and Felton (2006) serve as works to help guide this study and the intended goal. Each member of society has a duty and an obligation to others to respect the inalienable human rights that are extended to all persons. It is paramount that the future leaders in business are morally and ethically prepared to meet the goals of human society. Chapter 3 is the methodology for the study.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the lived experiences of educators who are currently, or who have taught, ethics to business students. Curry and Thach (2007) suggested that ethics educators need to be surveyed to a greater extent than the exploratory research they performed. More depth in surveying is one tenet of this qualitative research. As a result of this acquired understanding, the goal of this study was to inject the discovered information into a typical business ethics curriculum, purposed on managing an effective way to teach business ethics. To elucidate the intent of the method chosen, a clear and detailed description of the steps employed follow to assist the reader, as well as to aid those considering further research on teaching business ethics (Rudestam & Newton, 2001).

A section of this chapter discusses the rationale behind choosing the most effective qualitative research strategy, a phenomenological study, which was conducted. A discussion on the phenomenology undertaken and how the data collected was used to reveal the experiences of those who have lived through teaching business ethics is included. Through analysis of the data, an alternative, effective method to teaching business ethics surfaced as the result of the findings.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

The goal of suggesting an effective way of teaching business ethics centered the research on the following question: What is the strategy that explains the process of course design in teaching business ethics? Initially, mixed methods was considered as an option for the research approach because of the assumption that data collected via

divergent means provides the highest level of understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2009). However, the intent of the research is not to generalize findings to a larger population or to focus on a pragmatic worldview, thus mixed methods was not selected. Similarly, in terms of a quantitative study, the need to generalize results or to question an existing theory was not the objective of the research, thereby dismissing a qualitative study as the method to employ.

Numerous researchers have employed a quantitative research method to analyze the teaching of business ethics. I used a qualitative study to gain a better understanding of people's lived experiences. Creswell (2007) claimed that in a qualitative study, the approach is inductive, emerging, and formed by the researcher's role in collecting and analyzing the data. Janesick (2011) posited that no method of data collection would replace the interview in qualitative research with its innate ability to gather the essence of human understanding, as well as the rewarding nature of human interaction that is typically experienced by a researcher. Gathering data directly from participants was central to the intent of the study. Resultant to this perspective is the formulation of a means to increase effectiveness in the teaching of business ethics.

In a qualitative approach, a researcher has the ability to collect personal thoughts, opinions, and feelings that are not as readily available through quantitative means. In addition, a researcher brings to a qualitative study their individual paradigms, views, and values which also help to shape the research (Creswell, 2007). Holliday (2007) surmised that to fully understand human affairs, a researcher should not rely exclusively on

quantitative findings in a study. Reynolds (2007) asserted that statistical analysis is not needed if a study is well designed.

A conceptual framework, as part of a study, is ontological by design but several other components, or philosophical assumptions, are present as well. Epistemology is used to describe the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Here, the researcher proposes to learn as much as possible to narrow the gap between the researcher and the subject being researched (Creswell, 2007). In addition, axiological values (i.e., biases) of the researcher are brought to the study but they should be disclosed, so as not to have the validity of the study questioned. Moreover, the researcher writes in a rhetoric that is indicative of a qualitative study to include proper terms and language (Creswell, 2007). The research process, or methodology, is selected to gather the data necessary to facilitate the inductive nature of qualitative research. Qualitative studies are naturally emerging by nature.

The focus of the study is on the paradigm of constructivism, or interpretivism, which signals the need for a qualitative approach. Creswell (2007) claimed that the aim of qualitative research is to capture the experiences of participants and their views of what they have experienced. Interpretivism includes the input obtained from participants as it relates to the subject of the study (Creswell, 2009). The subjectivity born through these experiences is the basis for interpretivism as a paradigm. Other options for paradigm were not considered appropriate because of the lack of emphasis placed on a participant's personal experience, thereby missing the element of subjectivity.

### **Selection of a Phenomenological Study**

Qualitative research offers several design options to consider such as narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and phenomenology before making a selection to guide the study, with each design targeting a particular outcome (Creswell, 2009). A narrative design was not chosen because of the focus on exploring the life of an individual, purposed on retelling the person's life through a *story* (e.g., a military sniper). Grounded theory, by its design, seeks to uncover a theory grounded in the responses of participants to the study, not necessarily the lived experiences of individuals. An ethnography, or design based on studying an entire culture over time, involves a high degree of research that is not necessary for this study. Lastly, research centered on a case study aims to explore an event, process, or activity that is bounded by time constraints over a sustained period of time, which effectively eliminates this option.

Researchers who have studied teaching business ethics have focused mainly on the quantitative end of the research continuum (Allen et al., 2005; Crane, 2004; Lau, 2010). For this reason, a phenomenological design was chosen as best suited for this study. Maxwell (2005) suggested that both existing theory and a phenomenological study are justifiable and of benefit in qualitative research. Additionally, studying the experience and thoughts of individuals who have taught ethics necessitates a phenomenological design to accomplish the goal of the research; to capture the *essence* of the experience.

The theory that develops is directly related to the setting in which the data collection is conducted (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). The subjective or human side is lost in numbers and statistics; entirely quantifiable findings are incapable



of telling the whole story. Goes (2013) asserted that a phenomenological study was developed to counter the positivism that had saturated most research in the social sciences. Considering the significance of managing an effective way to teach business ethics, gaining an understanding of the lived experiences of the individuals studied is critical to supporting the aim of the research.

### **Justification for Research Design**

The task of justifying a research design is aided by the purpose of the study, meaning that what the researcher is set on accomplishing selects the approach to be used. In terms of a phenomenological study, the knowledge gained supports beliefs in which people can have legitimate confidence in, a common sense understanding of what constitutes said knowledge (Andrews, 2012). Thus, according to Van Manen (1990), phenomenology is a methodology, which investigates the lived experiences of this world. Moustakas (1994) concluded that the very essence of what a participant has experienced in life is the goal of phenomenological research. Additionally, constant comparison of data, theoretical sampling, and determining which information to collect next assists the researcher in theory construction.

Further justifying the selection of a phenomenology as the research design is the focus on human consciousness that the design brings. Hence, a phenomenological study is, from the thoughts and voices of the participants, a reflective analysis of lived experiences (Von Eckartsberg, 1986). Sanders (1982) added that a phenomenological study examines concepts from new and fresh viewpoints. Additionally, per McClelland

(1995), phenomenology dismisses the traditional objectivity measures prescribed by the quantitative research model.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher, I conducted all data collection during the interviewing phase of the study, purposed on actively listening to the experiences of the individual participants. To facilitate data collection, I employed an interview protocol (see Appendix A) containing the set of questions used during the actual interviews. My role was critical to the study's effectiveness to lend credibility to the research, and manage bias as much as possible as the process unfolded. I am aware that my personal views and perceptions are exclusively personal and are to have no bearing on the thoughts, views, opinions, and perceptions of others; objectivity was on display at its highest level. Once the collection process was underway, I began to group the individuals' common responses together, paying attention to any developing themes or concepts. In addition, I was mindful of any ethical questions that may have arisen during the study to ensure that the work is aligned with expected qualitative research standards (Janesick, 2004).

Purists supporting the quantitative research approach have been critical of the subjective component of qualitative research, particularly because the researcher is the primary source of data collection and the chief analyzer of the same data (Patton, 2002). Patton claimed that subjectivity is the opposite of scientific inquiry. However, even in the case of scientific inquiry, the presence of subjectivity may have its presence through the terminology reflected in questionnaires and/or hypotheses posed by a researcher. Words such as trustworthiness and authenticity should be preferred as those typically used in

qualitative research (Patton, 2002). I aimed to demonstrate neutrality, trustworthiness, and authenticity as the voices of the participants reflected their thoughts, experiences, and opinions that ultimately guided the research.

Before beginning the actual interviewing of participants, a predetermined number of interviews were established, intent upon gathering sufficient data to support the goal of a phenomenological study. Creswell (2007) offered a set of procedures for use in a phenomenology, which served to guide the data analysis process. Saturation of ideas or concepts collected from interviewees was not the goal of the research as is typically the case with a phenomenology. Instead, this work was purposed on extracting all thoughts, perceptions, and suggestions from the participants with an eye toward similarity of views that are born out of lived experiences.

### **Managing Researcher Bias**

Performing a qualitative research signals the need for the researcher to be keenly aware of the presence of personal bias. Qualitative research, by its very nature, is focused on the human element of social research, but the tradeoff between the personal views of the participants and the researcher's own sentiments continue to support the benefits of a qualitative study, nonetheless. Creswell (2013) asserted that the bracketing-out of one's own biases, as a researcher, is a leading concern in phenomenology. Thus, mitigating the effect of personal bias becomes a critical component of a qualitative approach.

Accordingly, my role as researcher was to remain open to the responses of participants, to be mindful of the importance of neutrality in research, and to question my own preferences, if necessary.

Surveying an area relating to ethics increases the likelihood of subjectivity and personal bias surfacing during the course of research. Whether a response is right or whether it is wrong is not subject to the personal interpretation of the researcher. Rather, judgment must be withheld so that the proper perspective is maintained and the purpose of qualitative research is not compromised. Clarity of definitions, the appropriate understanding of responses, and the meaning of words used must be dutifully executed by the researcher for the duration of the study.

Janesick (2011) discussed the use of reflective journaling as a tool available to safeguard against researcher bias. Janesick advocated four points to consider when collecting and analyzing research data in an effort to stem researcher bias, namely

- refine the understanding of the researcher's role using reflection,
- refine the understanding of participants' responses,
- use journaling as a means to maintain interactive communication between participants and the researcher, and
- through journal writing, individuals become connoisseurs of their own thinking, understanding, and responsibility as a qualitative researcher (p. 156).

A qualitative study may bring into question issues relating to integrity and researcher bias, but reflective journaling serves to significantly improve the credibility of the study.

## **Ethical Concerns**

Legal and ethical issues were an area of concern in this study in terms of protection and privacy as relates to the interviewees. Participants to the research are professionals in their field of work, not those deemed to be at risk or marginalized. My own bias toward the study was minimal because the participants are much more knowledgeable on the subject matter than I am. Learning what works or what does not work from experienced participants is central to what I was researching.

Each individual who agreed to participate in the study was provided with an Informed Consent form containing the standard language typical of a qualitative research consent form (Creswell, 2009). Also included is the request to have the participant become a reviewer once the research data were available for review by willing participants. In addition, the request to have the interview recorded is addressed on the form as well. Ultimately, a researcher is keenly aware that consequences are a reality for participants and will be taken into account (Kvale, 1996).

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

The target population consists, in theory, of any and all current or former instructors of business ethics. However, from the standpoint of practicality and feasibility, the parameters established for the study dictate a localized, scaled-down approach. In addition, due to the absence of absolutes in sample size, the flexibility afforded gives the researcher a high degree of maneuverability. Particulars relating to population and sample size are explained in detail in the Population section.

## **Population**

For a phenomenological study, it is imperative that all participants have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007). When considered in the aggregate, the target population for the study reaches far and wide or internationally, at the very least. The population was limited to the Southern California area, which consists of approximately 130 institutions and an estimated population of 400 business ethics instructors. These institutions of higher education were targeted to collect a sample size of up to 15 participants. The opportunity did arise to interview multiple participants at a single location, which is considered appropriate to accomplish the aim of the research.

The chosen mode of contact was via e-mail accessed through a school's faculty directory to gather individuals willing to participate in the research. In order to comply with time, scheduling, or other constraints, the targeted schools are located within the greater Los Angeles area, or within a driving distance of no more than 100 miles from my primary location. To facilitate the maximum level of cooperation possible, the data collection process took place at each participant's respective college or university. Moreover, to ensure a sampling that was objectively representative of methods, trends, and lines of thinking, selected schools were divided as much as practicable between public, private, and those having a religious affiliation.

An equal number of men and women participants would add to the research as men and women tend to approach business ethics from differing points of view (Lau, 2009). The size of the sample for a phenomenological approach, according to Creswell (2007), is several individuals that have shared the experience. Maxwell (2005) suggested

that sample size is not a function of quantity, but is determined by what is needed to answer the research questions. Moustakas (1994) emphasized the goal of phenomenological research is to capture the *essence* of individual experience as reported by participants. Lastly, Patton (2002) offered that no set rules exist in a qualitative study.

### **Strategy to Determine the Correct Sample Size**

Qualitative researchers like to observe or interview individuals of interest for a study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore, it is important to determine the most effective sample size for the proposed research. Qualitative research, by its design, does not have defined guidelines, as does its quantitative counterpart. Accordingly, there are no rules or absolutes when it comes to determining sample size in qualitative research (Patton, 2002). The intent of the qualitative study helps to guide the researcher in selecting the appropriate sample size in terms of both minimum and maximum numbers of participants.

In approaching sampling procedure, one must consider the various factors present that will best align the sample with the goal of the research. Timing, accessibility to participants, logistical concerns, resource expenditure, to name a few, all feed into the sampling strategy. Additionally, the basis for data collection (e.g., observation, interview) will also have a bearing on the strategy employed, too. Understanding what is appropriate as the means of capturing data from participants is a key tenet of the sampling procedure (Creswell, 2007).

Maxwell (2005) offered what is referred to as purposeful selection, which is neither probability nor convenience sampling. The intent of purposeful selection is to

choose individuals, times, and settings that enable the researcher to gather the most beneficial data through the research. A sample size derived from purposeful selection may not be large in number, but quality is the driving force behind this strategy. This is not to say that a large random sample is not plausible or is not an option in qualitative research. However, if generalization is the goal of the study, then a large random sample may be more effective to ensure validity (Maxwell, 2005). For this study criterion sampling, which is synonymous with purposeful sampling, was the chosen method to derive the sample size; criterion sampling is discussed in the next section.

### **Sample Size**

In a qualitative study selecting the appropriate sample size is, by no means, the subject of pre-established rules governing an exact number of participants. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) asserted that research methodologists furnish few definitive guidelines when it comes to determining the proper sample size. In fact, most methodologists aligning themselves with qualitative research fully agree that standards for estimating sample size are clearly lacking. Patton (2002) surmised that a qualitative study appears to be more appropriate for researchers that are able to cope with a high level of ambiguity; there are no rules for determining sample size in a qualitative study.

Patton (2002) described criterion sampling as a tool for use in arriving at a study's sample size. The criteria established are used to point to a specific group of individuals to be selected for the sample size, often resulting in a number of participants less than those found in other studies. Morse (1994) recommended that phenomenological research aimed toward capturing the *essence* of experiences include about six participants.



Polkinghorne (1989) suggested that from 5 to 25 individual who have experienced the phenomenon be interviewed.

I concentrated on depth as opposed to sheer volume of participants. With this in mind, I employed criterion sampling as the method of determining sample size (Patton, 2002). By choosing a criterion sampling, the components of boundary and frame are fulfilled to support the conceptual underpinnings of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I interviewed 15 participants, with data saturation occurring prior to the last interview. It was not necessary to include additional participants to the study. I was able to conduct multiple interviews on several occasions, which does not detract from the aim of the research.

### **Informed Consent**

Before conducting an interview, potential participants were formally invited to take part in the study (see Appendix B). Once participation was agreed to informed consent was obtained via completion of an Informed Consent form, which describes the study's purpose, the time required, and how the results of the interview are to be used (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, the participant was offered a copy or abstract of the recorded information. It was my intent to be respectful and courteous at all times during the interview process, as well as being a good listener.

Patton (2002) offered additional insight into informed consent by addressing the issues of confidentiality and risk/benefit as relates to the person being interviewed. According to Patton, such issues should be covered straightforward and with brevity, opting for the simpler approach as opposed to drawn-out, lengthy instructions. For

example, when opening an interview, interview protocol suggests that the following issues be covered:

- What is the purpose of collecting the information?
- Who is the information for, and how will it be used?
- What will be asked in the interview?
- How will responses be handled, including confidentiality?
- What risks benefits are involved for person being interviewed (p. 407)?

To avoid any potential pitfalls, interviewees were provided with consent information in advance of the interview as well as immediately prior to the start of the actual interview.

One considerable advantage to working with professional participants in a field such as teaching is that one avoids the issues and concerns oftentimes associated with at-risk or vulnerable individuals or groups. Participants may tell the interviewer information typically kept private, so it is imperative that informed consent addresses this possibility, even though this research does not involve marginalized participants (Patton, 2002).

### **Confidentiality**

The issues of confidentiality and ethical concern in any research study are frequently intertwined. For purposes of this study each was addressed separately, with ample attention placed on each subject. A discussion on ethical concerns follows in a later section.

In addressing confidentiality, Patton (2002) included several points on confidentiality as part of an Ethical Issues Checklist such as:

- What information can you, as interviewer, not promise confidentiality on?

- Will names, particular details, or locations be changed?
- Is anonymity an option?
- Where will the collected data be stored, and for how long?

Patton made an important distinction between confidentiality and anonymity, which is to be honored by the researcher regardless of the option selected by the research participant. Earlier, I mentioned that the study did not involve any at risk or marginalized individuals or groups, thus I fully expected that a high degree of confidentiality was achieved with the study's participants.

### **Instrumentation**

I was the key instrument in the study. To support me, a data collection instrument featuring approximately ten open-ended questions was employed, with the purpose of extracting the information necessary to accomplish the intent of the research. Close-ended questions would have been too limiting and would not have facilitated the gathering of the desired data; depth, as opposed to brevity, was the target of participants' responses. During the interviewing process, participants' responses were recorded (with prior permission) to capture the entire interview and to rescue the interviewer from total dependence on his pseudo-shorthand style of writing. Recording the interviews made transcription of the data more palatable. In addition, recording of the data lends credibility to the results of the study.

Kvale (1996) identified seven stages of an interview to assist the researcher when preparing for a qualitative study. The steps recommended by Kvale serve to offset the

nonexistence of any prescribed rules or the lack of standardization when it comes to performing qualitative interviews. Per Kvale, the interview investigation should include:

- Thematising: The object of the investigation is to gather information to improve the current lack of information relating to teaching business ethics.
- Designing: Plan the design of the study, which, in this case, is qualitative with grounded theory, by considering all seven stages.
- Interviewing: Equipped with the interview protocol, conduct the interviews according to plan.
- Transcribing: Prepare the collected data for analysis, which involves transcription of oral/recorded speech to written form.
- Analyzing: Use of the various stages of coding to fracture, categorize, and be observant for emerging themes.
- Verifying: Determine that the interview findings meet the standards of generalizability, reliability, and validity.
- Reporting: Present the findings of the study in such a form that it meets the standards of scientific criteria, has ethical underpinnings, and has a readable quality (pp. 133-135).

A qualitative study, by design, does not follow a fixed or prescribed set of rules or guidelines (Creswell, 2007). The data collection instrument developed for the research was specifically crafted by me for the intended purpose. Patton (2002) discussed the purpose of using an interview guide as part of the data gathering process of a qualitative

study. Here, the interview guide: (a) lists the questions that are to be explored during the interview; (b) maintains consistency of subject matter between all participants; and (c) provides the interviewer with a level of maneuverability to explore, probe, or ask questions to clarify or illuminate a particular subject. By using an interview guide the issues of having a limited amount of time for an interview, along with the ability to systematically interview multiple participants were effectively addressed.

Employing an interview guide is but one valuable tool available to the researcher. The use of open-ended questions during an interview offers additional advantages to the researcher as well. As discussed by Patton (2002), standardized open-ended questions are beneficial for the following reasons:

- The exact instrument used in the evaluation is available for inspection by those who will use the findings of the study.
- Variation among interviewees can be minimized where a number of different interviews must be used.
- The interview is highly focused so that interviewee time is used efficiently.
- Analysis is facilitated by making responses easy to find and compare (p. 346).

Should issues relating to credibility and legitimacy arise, producing an interview guide reflecting consistency in interviewing may well stem any potential problems or controversy regarding the study's results. Credibility is enhanced when the same information is collected from each participant, knowing beforehand that each response is

unique to the individual. Lastly, open-ended questions afford strength in an interview in that the interviewer has the freedom to investigate issues that were not anticipated at the time the interview protocol was constructed (Patton, 2002).

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted to assure that design, protocol, and specific instructions were aligned with the purpose of the research. The pilot study and the main study were intended to mirror one another, further illuminating the value of undertaking a pilot study. Maxwell (2005) extolled the benefit of a pilot study suggesting the researcher's ideas and methods can be explored, and implications manifested through a pilot study may be brought to the researcher's attention before the actual data collection begins. For the pilot study, 2 participants were recruited and interviewed per the overall instructions discussed below. The pilot study was expected to refine the data collection process and assure the methods employed are consistent with the study's purpose.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The interview process was guided by an instrument I developed. Participants in the study were recruited by invitation provided through email, followed by an Informed Consent form once participation was agreed upon. Data collection details for the main study, as well as the pilot study, are listed below.

- Data will be collected from participants at their location.
- I will collect the data.
- Frequency of data collection events is as scheduled.
- Duration of data collection events to not exceed 60 minutes.

- Data to be recorded manually by me as well as audio-recorded.
- Additional participants will be sought-out, if necessary, per strategy.

The nature of the research does not require a debriefing phase, and follow-up interviews are not anticipated.

### **The Relationship of Interview Questions to Research Questions**

An interview guide (see Appendix A) was the protocol used during the actual interviews with participants. The protocol was developed using the interview approach, with careful consideration given to the research problem-research questions relationship. Patton (2002) discussed the various questions that are available for inclusion in the interview protocol, with each question designed to extract a specific bit of information. For purposes of this study, I determined that the interview instrument include: (a) opinion and value (e.g., what the participant thinks goes into ethics instruction course design); (b) feeling (e.g., how the participant feels about the importance of business ethics instruction); and (c) knowledge (e.g., prior experience with students in teaching business ethics) (p. 350).

The questions were open-ended and intended to guide the study. Questions relating to the participant's background were asked to establish a basis for level of education and teaching experience to substantiate the research. As suggested by Patton (2002), background questions were throughout the interview to mitigate the mundane aspect of lumping them together at one time.

The instrument used for this research was specifically designed by me, thereby not requiring approval by a developer before use (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, much

attention was given to content to assure that questions contained on the questionnaire accurately address the overall topic of the research (Verial, 2014). Lastly, Patton (2002) asserted that in qualitative research, no established measures currently exist, further justifying the use of a researcher-crafted instrument for this particular study.

### **Data Collection Plan**

Once permission to be interviewed was granted and the required paperwork was completed, data was collected from each participant using an interview questionnaire (protocol) containing a maximum number of questions, which was limited to no more than 10 in number. Questions were open-ended in nature, purposed on measuring the importance of the subject matter through the eyes of the respondent: the lived experience of teaching business ethics. Wimpenny and Gass (2000) emphasized that by using the predominant form of data collection, the in-depth interview, the phenomenologist remains focused on gathering the lived experiences of the participants.

In addition to the interview, each session was recorded once the participant had given permission to do so to ensure accuracy of responses. Close-ended questions would have been too limiting and would not have facilitated the gathering of the desired data; deep, purposeful thought is what I was seeking. Truly understanding human experience and the *meaning* of the lived experience is the goal of a phenomenology (Lin, 2013).

Other forms of data collection would not have been appropriate for the purpose of the study. Observation, for example, would not have added to what I was trying to accomplish because nonverbal communication is not a factor. I did not detect any participant sensing the need to avoid answering any of the questions that were asked



during the interview. Similarly, videotaping or archived material, I believe, would not have added to the findings of the research. The real essence of the experience was found in the responses of those who have been personally involved with the topic of interest.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Following the interpretation of the interview instruments and transcription of the recorded data, coding was used to develop themes from the gathered information. Initially, open coding was used to dissect the information and place it into categories. Through axial/thematic coding, connections were established to show the relationship between themes and subthemes that emerged. Once open and axial coding was completed, selective coding was conducted to identify propositions that connected the categories developed and how they relate to one another (Creswell, 2007).

The possibility existed that predetermined codes would be used for analysis, but coding on an emergent basis lends credibility to the collected data. However, it is a good idea to develop a manageable coding system at the beginning of a qualitative research (Patton, 2002). A computer program was not used to assist in coding the data. Manual coding, even considering the time consuming aspect involved, was the chosen method employed by me. Coding is discussed in more detail below.

Glaser (1998) suggested the use of memoing as a means of managing codes as they emerge through the collecting, coding, and data analysis phases of the research. The constant comparison required during memoing substantiates the data to aid in the credibility of the study as a further benefit. I engaged in the use of theoretical memos once the actual fieldwork of the research had begun.

Dependability of the collected data may be enhanced by the use of an intercoder agreement (Creswell, 2007). I believe that an intercoder agreement facilitates objectivity in interpreting the research data. Enlisting the services of two additional coders lends support in substantiating subjective, field-gathered information. In addition, checking the coding results several times will further attest to the accuracy of the collected data and issues of trustworthiness. However, I did not make use of an intercoder agreement.

### **The Four Stages of Analysis**

The four stages of data analysis are shown in Table 2. Each stage of the process provides the foundation for subsequent steps that follow.

Table 2

#### *Stages of Data Analysis*

Stage	Purpose
Codes	Identifying anchors that allow the key points of the data to be gathered
Concepts	Collections of codes of similar content that allows the data to be grouped
Categories	Broad groups of similar concepts that are used to generate a theory
Theory	A collection of explanations that explain the subject of the research

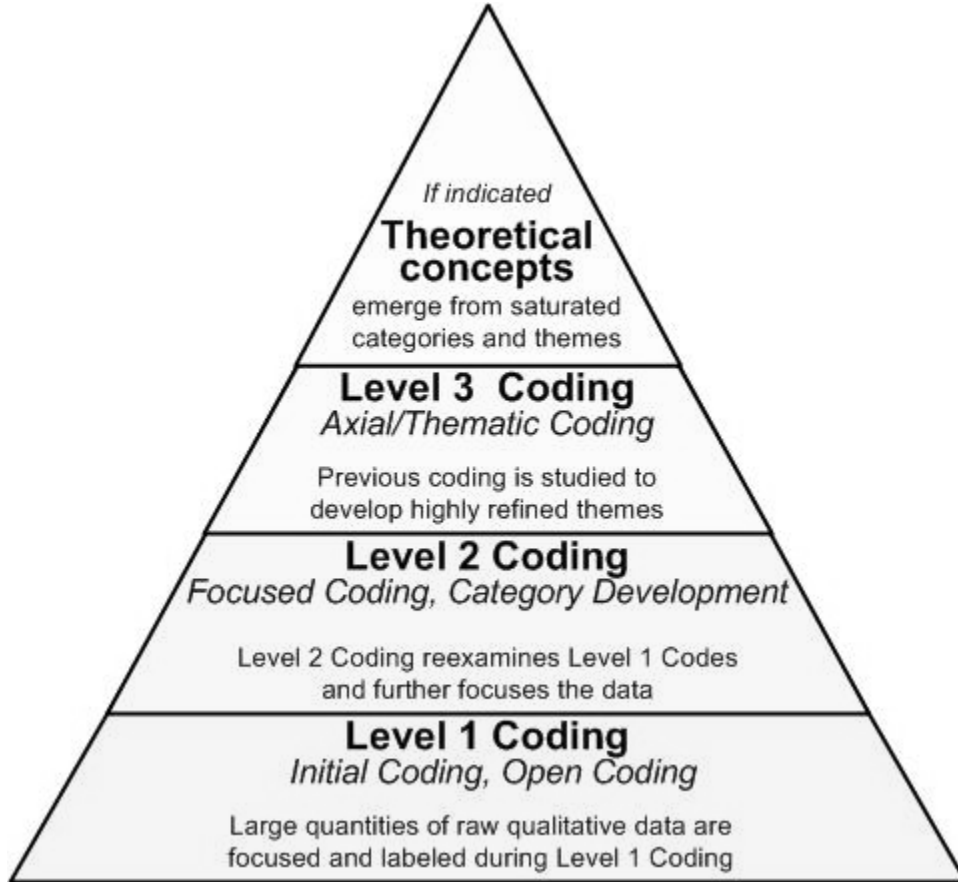
A phenomenology, by its very design, is the opposite of traditional, theory driven research. For instance, Table 2 reflects that a theory *arrives*, as opposed to beginning with one at the outset of a study. This process clearly contradicts the traditional model of research design, including the element of subjectivity germane to qualitative research.

This study is based on the concepts that are manifested during the data analysis phase of the research. The goal is not to discover the truth but rather, in the case of this research, to uncover a convergence of ideas that will further the cause of effective ethics education.

## **Coding Process**

The process of coding the collected data serves to facilitate data analysis through the use of categories containing similar responses. To assist in coding the data, the constant comparative method is used to enable the researcher to accurately categorize information with like qualities. As the steps of the process unfold, preceding levels give way to more specific, response-related categories that continue with the paring down of data until the apex is reached (see Figure 1).

Earlier, coding was mentioned using open, axial, and selective categories to which the data is assigned. Figure 1 includes slightly different labels from those listed above, but the terms are synonymous, nonetheless. Ultimately, regardless of nomenclature, a theoretical concept is the sought-after result. The coding process culminates in the emergence of a new approach, signaling the pinnacle of the data analysis phase.



*Figure 1.* Levels of coding.

### **Concept Mapping**

Daley (2004) posited that the volume of qualitative research has increased dramatically over the years, but sparse attention has been given to the use of concept maps in the literature. Qualitative research poses challenges to methodology itself, but a concept map offers a strategy to contend with such concerns. Concept maps offer the researcher a means with which to cope with voluminous amounts of data during the data analysis phase, keeping the imbedded meaning of the responses intact.

The advantages of using concept maps far outweigh the disadvantages of doing so. According to Daley, the advantages are

- the meaning of the interview is preserved during data analysis,
- support is given to the philosophical basis of qualitative research,
- help is included to reduce the volume of data through displaying connections, and
- concept maps visually support the coding and categorizing scheme.

The major disadvantage listed by Daley is that the sophistication of some concept maps makes interpretation of the various linkages difficult.

### **Coding and “Pet” Theory**

Researcher bias was discussed earlier; the incidence of pet codes or themes as a possibility in coding must be addressed as well. The inclusion of pet theory brings into question the objectivity and relevance of the study. Critical to a phenomenological study and the case for validity, the theoretical code must be emergent within the data to eliminate the forced coding of themes or theories preconceived by the researcher (Glaser, 2004; Hernandez, 2009). Accordingly, a researcher will purposefully analyze the data on a line-by-line basis, intent on maintaining a high level of objectivity within a subjective research methodology.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness, as relates to quantitative or qualitative research, respectively, may differ by the semantics used to define the various terms, but parallels may be drawn, nonetheless. Golafshani (2003) surmised that quantitative terms might not apply to

qualitative research whatsoever. Table 3 lists terms commonly used to describe the criteria for judging the level of trust of quantitative research along with their qualitative counterparts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Table 3

*Commonly Used Terms*

Traditional Criteria for Judging Quantitative Research	Alternative Criteria for Judging Qualitative Research
internal validity	credibility
external validity	transferability
reliability	dependability
objectivity	confirmability

Of particular importance to this study are credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Credibility addresses the believability of the responses from the perspective of the participants, who also judge whether or not the results are credible. This lends support to a researcher in mitigating researcher bias as a concern of the study. Transferability garners considerable attention due to the pervasive nature of ethics across the various realms of human interaction. Lastly, confirmability speaks to the level at which the results can be confirmed as well the neutrality of the findings (Trochim, 2006).

### **Credibility**

The content of the instrument used for data collection was given careful thought as to the content of the questions. Previous researchers have supplied sufficient information on what needs to be addressed in a study. Initially, there was concern that participants, especially those in adjunct or nontenured positions, may not have felt at ease

divulging their innermost thoughts for fear of reprisal. Accordingly, each participant was given the opportunity to review, add to, make changes to, or detract from his or her responses.

Patton (2002) claimed that researchers and analysts can get a feel for the validity of collected data by having participants review the information for accuracy and completeness of what was described during the study. The intent of participant review is to determine if a researcher reported what was actually conveyed. This strategy lends credibility to the findings as the participants personally verify the accuracy of the results (Creswell, 2007).

### **Transferability**

Schwandt (2007) defined transferability, or generalization, as “the wider relevance or resonance of one’s inquiry beyond the specific context in which it was conducted.” (p. 126). Stated another way, the extent to which the findings of a study could be consistently applied to other people at different times; the conclusions are not temporal in nature (Trochim, 2006). Conversely, three major threats to transferability are people, places, or times.

Several methods exist to improve the transferability of a study, which may also refer to generaliability or applicability (Trochim, 2006). Random selection, maintaining a low dropout rate among the participants, and the use of proximal similarity in groups are all options available to the researcher. However, as relates to this research, the most effective means of improving transferability is the fact that multiple locations were visited, time of interview varied, and the participants have ethics teaching as a common

experience. Qualitative studies, in general, are not transferable to a larger population because of small sample sizes and nonrandom sampling.

### **Dependability**

Dependability, the qualitative counterpart to reliability in quantitative research, is dependent on meticulous data collection and analysis, a belief in the value of qualitative research, and researcher credibility (Patton, 2002). In addition, Schwandt (2007) posited dependability is the responsibility of the researcher and is enhanced through a thorough and logical process used during data collection and documentation. In addition, critical to assuring dependability is mitigating personal bias of the researcher, which was a point of focus throughout the study.

To establish dependability, data collected through the interviews was analyzed manually, which enabled me to gain a better understanding of the nature of the responses. I have the recorded interviews as a source to verify any responses that may require further clarification should the situation arise. Additionally, participants were provided with a transcript of the interview to verify authenticity and accuracy of the data.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability, or achieving objectivity in a qualitative study, is a significant goal of the researcher. Shenton (2004) emphasized the need for the researcher to take the necessary steps to help ensure that the study's results are the ideas and experiences of the participants, not the personal preferences of the researcher. To accomplish *objectivity of results*, participants exercised reflexivity once the findings of the study were made available to them. Responses to questions were changed when the participant considered



it imperative to reflect the true meaning of the lived experience; changes to responses were minimal.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical issues were discussed earlier but, from a procedural standpoint, additional information is addressed in this section. Gaining access to participants did not pose a problem, as I did not include at risk or marginalized individuals or those considered institutional by definition. Actual documents used in the study are included in the IRB application, which reflects the unobtrusive nature of the research.

Data collected through the research remains confidential and stored at a location accessible only to me. Dissemination of the data will be done only as required by the IRB, governing authority, or an entity entitled to such information by virtue of proper jurisdiction. Lastly, according to established rules and regulations, data will be destroyed in compliance after 5 years.

### **Summary**

The occurrence of unethical behavior in the business world has spurred business leaders to realize that unethical behavior is unacceptable, particularly where sustainability cannot be achieved without socially responsible behavior. It is important to determine how ethics is being taught in business schools. The teaching of ethics in business schools may reverse the trend of unethical decision-making in corporations and businesses. Researchers have suggested various methods in addressing the teaching of business ethics; a gap in the research exists nonetheless.

Justification rests in the need to create an effective means of teaching business ethics that will be more generally accepted than the existing methods. Today's methods have created reluctance, confusion, and uncertainty as relates to the instruction of teaching business ethics to both undergraduate and graduate students. An effective approach would instill confidence in faculty that what they are conveying is predicated on culturally accepted moral standards. Corporate scandal is a reflection of the inadequacy that exists in teaching pedagogy.

In an effort towards bridging the gap in the existing knowledge base, a phenomenological research methodology is a plausible means of discovering the nonquantitative components. Potentially, insight may be gained through the collective voice of up to 15 individuals who have experienced teaching business ethics. The outcome sought is an effective teaching method that will not only speak to business students about the need for ethical behavior, but will instill a sense of duty and responsibility that extends beyond profit motive alone. The results of the research are included in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore and describe the factors and strategies of success, as well as the missing course content, experienced by educators who have taught business ethics. Based on the responses, I suggest how ethics could be taught to business students in an effective, conscience-based manner, emphasizing the human ingredient as a guiding factor. The first part of the chapter reviews the purpose of the study, as well as the execution of the research. The remainder of this section describes the process involved in data collection, coding the data, and a review of the findings. Additionally, I review how I conducted the research in a trustworthy manner addressing issues related to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Using a phenomenological research approach, I addressed the following research question: What are the factors and strategies that have contributed to the success of educators who have taught business ethics? A phenomenological study allows for a deep understanding of the phenomenon through the personal responses of participants who share a common experience (Creswell, 2007). I collected the participants' feelings, beliefs, and experiences relating to teaching business ethics through personal interviews to gain a better understanding of the factors and strategies required to educate business students in the critical area of ethical business practices.

The chapter includes the results of data collection and analysis, including the themes that emerged from the study of the lived experiences of participants gathered during 15 open-ended interviews. The chapter contains seven main sections: (a) pilot

study, (b) research setting, (c) demographics, (d) data collection (e) data analysis, (f) evidence of trustworthiness, and (g) study results. At the end of the chapter, I will conclude with a summary of the answers to the research questions, followed by a transition to Chapter 5.

### **Pilot Study**

The characteristics of the pilot participants represented the characteristics of the sample in the study. The pilot study included one woman and one man who met all the participant criteria. The intent of the pilot study was to help me adjust the interview questions for clarity, if needed. I contacted pilot study participants directly via the same strategy as the main study, and asked them to participate in the pilot study. Participants received a copy of the invitation to participate letter (see Appendix B), the informed consent form, and a copy of the interview questions (see Appendix A). Interviews with the pilot study participants were audio tape-recorded and participants had the opportunity to review their responses.

Participants answered eight questions that focused on revealing the essence of teaching business ethics. Pilot study participants understood their responses became part of the study and that the feedback might lead to refinements to the interview questions. Pilot study participants stated that the interview questions were easy to follow and understand. Based on the results of the pilot study, the interview questions appeared to be unambiguous, clearly worded, and sufficient to collect participant experiences related to the phenomenon. Based on the pilot participants' comments, no changes ensued to the original interview questions. In addition, changes to the data analysis strategy were not

necessarily the result of the pilot study's findings, which indicated the main study was suited for collecting the lived experiences of the participants.

### **Research Setting**

The research setting varied with each participant to the extent that the interviews were conducted at six different locations. Five of the locations were on campus at either a university (Azusa Pacific University, California Baptist University, University of Laverne, and University of Redlands) or college (Mount San Jacinto College – Menifee). The sixth interview took place at a popular site situated near a cluster of schools in downtown Claremont, CA. I met with each participant at his or her office, in most instances, to conduct the interview during a time that we scheduled in advance. The participants did not mention any personal or organizational circumstances that influenced their lived experiences.

Conditions under which the interviews took place had no bearing on the interpretation of the study results. The study was not subject to temporal constraints or other conditions that would bring into question the authenticity of the participants' responses. In addition, the research setting or other immediate surroundings did not affect the experience of the participants relating to the phenomenon studied. Each of the respondents, in fact, participated with a high degree of willingness because teaching ethics is an important part of what they do on a consistent, if not daily, basis.

### **Demographics**

The sample in this study was comprised of 15 individuals representing six different universities and colleges, equally divided between institutions having public

(California State University, San Bernardino, and Mount San Jacinto College – Menifee), private (University of Redlands and University of Laverne), or religious affiliation (California Baptist University and Azusa Pacific University). One participant, who teaches at both a public university and a religiously affiliation institution, mentioned that ethics are approached in the same manner, regardless. Each location was well within the prescribed distance of 100 miles, and I was able to conduct one or two interviews during the same visit when the opportunity presented itself. Additionally, the equal distribution of public, private, and religious affiliation among the institutions aligned with the level of objectivity I sought prior to beginning interviewing participants.

The majority of the 15 participants were men. Initially, I hoped for an equal number of male and female participants, but it became apparent that most ethics instructors are men. However, the female participants suggested that, ultimately, gender does not play a significant role in ethical decision making, which came as a surprise to me. I proposed to use up to 15 participants or until saturation occurred, but the maximum number of interviews took place even though saturation was achieved several respondents earlier. Morse (1994) suggested that a phenomenological research study designed to capture the essence of lived experiences includes about six participants. Polkinghorne (1989) recommended that from five to 25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon should be interviewed. Hence, the 15 participants included in this study clearly satisfied the number suggested for a phenomenology.

### **Data Collection**

Once approval was granted to proceed with the research (Walden IRB approval #06-29-15-0199423), potential participants were invited to participate in the study by email obtained from university and college websites; contact information is public record and not subject to access approval. Generally, it was not difficult to recruit participants since most of those contacted were willing to contribute. The only variation was an instructor I had scheduled who cancelled abruptly due to personal reasons, and I was unable to contact him to reschedule another interview. Most of the participants had doctorates themselves, so they understood the challenge posed in assembling a pool of participants. Additionally, the sample was derived from a population not subject to the conditions associated with being at risk, marginalized, or those considered vulnerable to the effects associated with participation in a research study.

I obtained the consent of each participant via email exchange as stipulated per the established protocol. The 12 men and three women who participated in the research were interviewed face-to-face using the same collection instrument, with no variation in how the interviews were conducted. The average length of interview was slightly more than 40 minutes, but none exceeded 60 minutes. Each interview was recorded once the participant agreed to do so; no respondents refused to have the session recorded. The data collection happened according to plan, negating any changes to the data collection instrument or tweaking the interview process itself.

During the data collection process, I was able to conduct two interviews in one day several times in an effort to be more efficient with my time and that of the

participants. For example, Azusa Pacific University and University of La Verne are a short distance apart and easily accessible from the 210 Freeway, which made it possible to complete two interviews on one occasion within a matter of hours. The other instances where I was able to conduct more than one interview took place on the same campus shared by the participants. Ultimately, at the conclusion of my fieldwork, seven interviews took place at California Baptist University; three were conducted at Azusa Pacific University; two were carried out at University of Laverne; and, one interview each took place at University of Redlands, Mount San Jacinto College – Menifee, and Claremont Village West.

I transcribed each respondent's interview and stored the transcripts and recordings in a locked, alarmed facility pending the appropriate time of destruction according to the guidelines prescribed by Walden University. Additionally, collected data contain no reference to respondents' names or other personal data, thereby minimizing, if not eliminating, any negative consequences relating to participation in the study. My data collection process went according to plan, with no variation from the original plan discussed in Chapter 3.

The fieldwork did not reveal any unusual circumstances or discrepant cases; however, one participant approached responses to questions from a slightly different perspective. Here, according to the participant, many of the challenges and questionable behavior surrounding business ethics are the result of shortcomings within the capitalist economic system. For instance, human-made limits to markets, an obscene distribution of wealth, and a lack of opportunity for people considered lower in society contribute to



ethical lapses. Further, as suggested by the respondent, “There is an institutional ‘dark ages’ through a lack of business ethics.... We no longer have ethical moorings.”

### **Data Analysis**

I completed content analysis on the interview data once the data were transcribed. I conducted data analysis by hand without the aid of a software program using open, axial, and selective coding. Using a simplified approach, as suggested by Creswell (2007), I focused on:

- Describing my personal experience with the phenomenon under study to mitigate researcher bias and to focus on the study’s participants.
- Compiling a list of significant statements as they are extracted from the data. Each significant statement is of equal value, and serves to develop a list of no overlapping, nonrepetitive statements.
- Grouping the significant statements into larger units of information, known as *meaning units* or themes.
- Writing a description of what the participants intended through their responses.
- Creating a theme cluster by incorporating the collective responses of participants that have a common thread or idea.

Initially, the data provided by each respondent were fractured using open coding, enabling me to place responses into clusters containing similar meaning, or meaning units (Creswell, 2007). Next, through axial/thematic coding, connections were established to show the relationship between themes and subthemes that emerged. Once open and axial

coding were completed, selective coding was used to link propositions that connect the categories developed and how they relate to one another (Creswell, 2007). The data analysis process produced the common theme clusters discussed in the section below.

### **Identified Common Theme Clusters**

The aim of this phenomenology was to explore and describe the experiences of educators who teach, or have taught, business ethics to obtain insight into the factors and strategies they have found to be successful. The primary research question was: What are the factors and strategies that have contributed to the success of educators who have taught business ethics? To answer this research question, I conducted face-to-face interviews with 15 individuals who met the criteria prescribed to participate in the study. I present the findings, the seven common theme clusters that emerged from the analysis of the data, in a brief discussion below. Most descriptions include a quote selected from participant responses to help capture the meaning of the theme. Following the common theme clusters, several minor points are presented because of the additional meaning they offer to the overall research. The common theme clusters and frequency distribution among the study participants are shown in Table 4.

### **Brief Description of the Theme Clusters**

**Highlighting character and virtue ethics.** This theme cluster includes statements relating to character development, moral courage as a component of ethical decision-making, and overcoming the issue of relativism when approaching ethics. According to one participant, “Students need to be upset by episodes of unethical

behavior.” A majority of participants held this deficiency in high regard manifested in an 80% response rate.

**Increasing concern for stakeholders emphasized.** Contained within this meaning unit are developing and maintaining an ethical corporate culture and the use of critical decision making as a tool in approaching a decision with ethical ramifications. As suggested by a participant, “Stakeholders are taken-for-granted these days.” An 80% response rate among participants indicates the critical need to increase the emphasis in this area.

**Teaching Socrates and other classic scholars as a basis.** This theme cluster emphasizes the teachings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle as a foundation for ethics instruction in determining what is *right* in a given situation. “Students appreciate the grounding established by philosophers,” asserted one participant. Whether the teachings of the Greek philosophers are ignored, overlooked, or confusing, a 73% response rate suggests the need to include them in ethics instruction.

**Introducing a foundations course.** The inclusion, within the curriculum, of an introductory or foundations course in business ethics is the subject of this theme cluster. Such a class would be taught on a stand-alone basis, early in a program of study to emphasize the critical nature of ethics, and to lay a foundation for use throughout the entire program.

**Integrating throughout the curriculum.** This meaning unit emphasizes the inclusion of business ethics education in every course offered within the curriculum in an effort to reinforce the critical nature of ethical behavior. Hence, “Constant exposure to

ethics creates a level of ethical awareness,” posited one respondent. Total integration reinforces the reality that ethical behavior transcends all business disciplines; key awareness corporate leaders must embrace.

**Recognizing knowledge of ethics is limited.** This theme cluster contains statements suggesting that what we know about ethics are insufficient and lacks clarity in ethics education, effectively hindering developing an effective business ethics curriculum. One participant concluded that, “Theory is needed that justifies the conclusion. Establishing parameters of theory would aid in clarifying what is ethical.” Interestingly, this theme cluster aligns with the problem statement described earlier in Chapter 1.

**Establishing a theoretical base.** The meaning unit discussed in this theme cluster advocates creating a foundation built upon prevailing theories that address various approaches to ethical decision making. “We need rationality and objectivity, which are currently missing,” purported one respondent. Simply put, we cannot arrive at an ethical conclusion if we have no means of negotiating the way there.

**Minor points.** Several minor points emerged during the data analysis phase of the research that, even though they were not mentioned as frequently, is worth identifying here. I present them in order from most responses collected to those with fewer responses.

- Ethics education should be required to maintain compliance with previously established standards.

- Establishing and maintaining a corporate community of ethical nurturing will improve ethical actions.
- The focus on shortsighted financial gain ought to be replaced with a long-term vision.
- Society needs exemplars to model ethical behavior.
- Mentoring of business leaders and students.

Each point listed above has the ability to influence ethics education and is deserving of consideration as an element in ethics curriculum development.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

I mentioned in Chapter 3 that the content of the instrument used for data collection was given careful thought during formulation of the questions, which laid a foundation of credibility prior to beginning field research. I did not receive any indication that any of the participants were reluctant to discuss shortcomings in business ethics education before, during, or after the interview. I transcribed the collected data, after which each participant was given the opportunity to review, add to, make changes to, or detract from his or her responses.

Overall, participants did not make substantial changes to responses once the information was made available for review, further attesting to the credibility of the collected data. Only three of the 15 participants made changes or additions to their original answers. Each participant verified the information I captured during his or her

interview as accurate. Hence, I believe I have established credibility of the research through consistency in the interviews and member checking of the interview results.

### **Transferability**

The issue of transferability, as it relates to business ethics education, is not limited by sample size, sample selection, or temporal conditions. In Chapter 3, to reiterate, Schwandt (2007) defined transferability, or generalization, as “the wider relevance or resonance of one’s inquiry beyond the specific context in which it was conducted.” (p. 126). In other words, this study’s findings are not subject to the constraints associated with the number of participants or by temporal conditions.

For instance, one participant, who instructs at two different universities—one with a religious affiliation and one secular—mentioned that ethics education, is approached in the same manner, regardless. This is not surprising when one considers a person will choose to act ethically, or not to act ethically. Nonetheless, ethical behavior transcends all boundaries and disciplines, effectively eliminating any concern raised as to the generalizability of the results.

In Chapter 3, I mentioned the three major threats to transferability: people, places, or times. All but one of the respondents followed through with the interview without hesitation once they committed to participate. Hence, the issue of transferability was enhanced due to the absence of dropping-out among participants. Additionally, using criterion sampling strengthens transferability further, particularly where multiple venues were used for data collection. Lastly, the interviews themselves were not subject to temporal constraints, thereby aiding generalizability of the findings.

**Dependability**

Dependability, the qualitative counterpart to reliability in quantitative research, is dependent on meticulous data collection and analysis, a belief in the value of qualitative research, and researcher credibility (Patton, 2002). This is the position that I took in selecting qualitative research early on in the process. Similar to Patton, Schwandt (2007) posited dependability is the responsibility of the researcher, and is enhanced through a thorough and logical process used during data collection and documentation. In addition, critical to assuring dependability is mitigating personal bias of the researcher, which I was mindful of throughout the study.

To establish dependability, data collected through the interviews were analyzed manually to enable me to gain a better understanding of the nature of the responses. I will have the recorded interviews as a source to verify any responses that may require further clarification should the situation arise. Additionally, I provided participants with a transcript of the interview to verify authenticity and accuracy of the data.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability, or achieving objectivity in a qualitative study, is a significant goal of the researcher. Shenton (2004) emphasized the need for the researcher to take the necessary steps to help ensure that the study's results are the ideas and experiences of the participants, not the personal preferences of the researcher. To accomplish objectivity of results, I provided each respondent with a transcript of his or her interview to verify the accuracy of the collected information. Subsequently, as necessary, responses to questions changed if the participant considered it imperative to reflect the true meaning of the lived

experience. Overall, changes to responses were minimal, indicating the collected data accurately revealed the true sentiments of the participants.

### **Study Results**

This section includes a discussion of the findings obtained from 15 interviews with ethics educators, which revealed seven common theme clusters. These theme clusters were constructed from the more significant responses collected during the interview process. The theme clusters included (a) highlighting character and virtue ethics, (b) increasing concern for stakeholders emphasized, (c) teaching Socrates and other classic scholars as a basis, (d) introducing a foundations course, (e) integrating throughout the curriculum, (f) recognizing knowledge of ethics is limited, and (g) establishing a theoretical base.

Minor, or unique, themes emerged from the collected as well. References were made to (a) character development, (b) moral courage, (c) overcoming relativism, (d) critical thinking, (e) an ethical corporate culture, (f) based on what is right, and (g) expository teaching. Although these themes did not enter into the major category, their importance is of no less benefit. Table 2 shows the common theme clusters.

#### **Highlighting Character and Virtue Ethics**

Each participant was asked an open-ended question: What are the elements that must be included in course design to increase effectiveness in teaching business ethics? I assigned participants an anonym (e.g., P $n$ ) for reference during the course of the study to maintain a condition of anonymity as a means of protecting their identity.



P1 stated, “Leaders live on character, character is the difference, and virtue is rooted in character” when faced with ethical dilemmas. In addition, P1 posited that duty to rules is not the solution to improving ethical behavior because how rules are determined is subjective; who makes the rules? Thus, there are implications for not exercising character. Business schools, by introducing students to the importance of character and virtue ethics, stand to produce leaders that are more sensitive to the needs of society. Furthermore, according to P1, schools should nurture virtue in students by emphasizing goodness and truth in business affairs through a community of accountability.

P2 suggested there are divergent approaches to business, which creates the opportunity for unethical behavior. Students wonder why they should care or ask, “How does it connect with me?” In addition, P2 asserted, “Currently, there is a lack of appeal to conscience and personhood.” Mentors are needed to introduce and nurture ethical awareness, emphasizing that ethical behavior requires sacrifice. Virtuous actions require paying attention to what the conscience is saying.

P3 posed the questions, “What do you want on your tombstone. . . . How do you want to be remembered?” Such questions appear to be quite simple, but their poignant nature may speak to character or virtue when dwelt upon, helping to bring ethics to a personal level. P4 surmised character ethics requires that a person must have a vision with values, perhaps taking an atypical approach to business practices. “Being virtuous and having character involves constant thinking and is a lifelong endeavor,” concluded

P4. Encourage students to think through the consequences, make no abrupt decisions, and have *bigger picture* questions.

P5 reported virtue ethics build character, rapport. Additionally, there must be an honest, clear, straightforward assertion of virtue ethics, accurately describing what a *good* person ought to do in a given situation; goodness is not objective but subjective. For instance, before making a decision, take the time to ponder and prioritize. Decisions do not necessarily require an immediate or neglectful response. P5 claimed, “All have a notion of good and bad,” proposing that virtue and character can be developed in business students.

P6 suggested, “Virtue is systematic, diligent, to the point where good becomes habit.” Character may be developed which, in turn, builds confidence in coping with ethical decisions or dilemmas. We ought to do what does not harm others through exercising a high degree of humility in molding character. P6 recommended using peer-to-peer examination to uncover virtue and character in students, purposed on developing accountability and confidence. P7 echoed the sentiments of P6 in that character development is a necessary component in attaining virtue ethics. Further, P7 postulated, “Pursuing ethical ripeness in students is a requisite to increasing ethical behavior.”

P8 recommended that illuminating virtue in ethics education is an integral part of improving ethical conduct. Furthermore, according to P8, more emphasis on the role conscience plays in business ethics must be clearly defined. P8 mentioned that ethical underpinnings are missing from society, prompting the need to establish parameters of ethical behavior. P8 emphasized, “Ethics instruction does not include enough training on

being, and more teaching on conscience is a must.” P9 asserted that without increased emphasis on virtue ethics, “We cannot arrive at right things without knowing how.” Additionally, P9 concluded, “There is an institutional “dark ages” through lack of ethics.” Moreover, “The background of ethics is not assimilated into thinking to suggest that more is not better,” expressed P9.

P10 mentioned combining virtue ethics with economic systems. This suggestion has a great deal of merit; especially given the affect, unethical behavior has had on free, market-driven economic systems. Aligning ethics with economic systems brings into question how people ought to act as opposed to how they have acted. P10 reported, “There are different economic systems based on what a country values,” revealing the importance of virtue and character.

P11 concluded, “Ethics are soul-driven.” P12 asserted that we must enhance virtue in ethics curriculum to increase effectiveness. Similarly, P13 suggested developing character by having students identify their own values through extraction, and P14 recommended identifying a student’s personal values and origination to assist in virtue and character development. P15 posited, “Ethics are not taught soon enough, and there must be must be a greater emphasis on virtue.”

Table 4

*Common Theme Clusters and Frequency Distribution Among Study Respondents (N=15)*

Common Theme Clusters	Frequency	
	#	%
Highlighting Character and Virtue Ethics	12	.80
Character Development	4	.26
Moral Courage	3	.20
Overcome Relativism	2	.13
Increasing Concern for Stakeholders Emphasized	12	.80
Critical Thinking	6	.40
Ethical Corporate Culture	4	.27
Teaching Socrates and Scholars as a Basis	11	.73
Based on what is Right	5	.33
Introducing a Foundations Course	8	.53
Integrating Throughout the Curriculum	8	.53
Recognizing Knowledge of Ethics is Limited	7	.47
Expository Teaching	2	.13
Establishing a Theoretical Base	7	.47

*Note.* Suggestions collected during interviews were *A Community of Nurturing*; *Society Needs Exemplars*; and, *Focus on Finances is Shortsighted*. Although these suggestions are of lesser significance overall, it merits mentioning them because they were made known during interviews.

**Character development.** P8 surmised that character might be developed through “Pursuing ultimate goodness, as prescribed by Plato.” P9, in referring to character development, stated, “We no longer have ethical moorings,” which signals the need to bolster efforts in character development. P13 suggested students identify his or her values as a starting point in character development, with the intent of aligning personal values with what is expected of a good person.

**Moral courage.** P6 expressed the need for moral courage to be a critical component in behaving ethically. Students must be assured that a firm stance against potential wrongdoing is an attribute that not only is the right thing to do, but is an admirable trait as well. P8 posed the question, “What does courage look like?” Again, standing up for what is right. P15, in similar fashion, reiterated the essential nature of moral courage as relates to business ethics.

**Overcoming relativism.** P11 emphasized the requisite that students understand and overcome the effects of relativism in business ethics. P11 suggested, “A clear beginning in ethics education is needed in overcoming relativism.” P14 concluded that values are not a point of focus in college, which tends to perpetuate relativism in ethics.

### **Increasing Concern for Stakeholders Emphasized**

P1 posited that concern for stakeholders must be elevated in ethics education since “Everyone is intrinsically valuable.” There must be a notion of the *common good*, based on a deep understanding of virtue and accountability. P2 suggested that typically, stakeholders are woven into every decision to the point that others do count but are taken-for-granted these days. “Ethical behavior requires sacrifice,” concluded P2. In a response

centered on forward thinking, P3 recommended students ponder the question, “What do you want on your tombstone,” to reflect the true measure of how you have given due consideration to stakeholders.

P4 postulated, “Students need to be upset by episodes of unethical behavior.” Students must be encouraged to think through the consequences of what effect actions will have on others. Similarly, P5 asserted, “We must understand the impact of a decision on all concerned stakeholders . . . more practicality is needed.” Additionally, P5 mentioned that historically, focus on financial matters is shortsighted, thus promoting a lack of regard for stakeholders and long-term consequences. Lastly, P5 discussed the position of employees as stakeholders, encouraging employers to “be decent and treat them with dignity.”

P6 commented, “Stakeholders need more protection” from the ills and repercussions of unethical behavior, which includes socially conscious investing. P8 made the simple suggestion that leaders must “pay attention to things” to afford more protection to stakeholders against harmful actions. “Greater practical wisdom is necessary,” concluded P8.

P9 expressed that “Wealth does not equate with contentment” when addressing the issue of stakeholders, suggesting that doing what is right matters. P11 agreed with an increasing emphasis on stakeholders but we must have a balance. P12 succinctly stated, “Prove they [stakeholders] matter.”

**Critical thinking.** P6 recommended the use of critical thinking as a tool to help uncover the issues surrounding decisions at hand. P12 suggested ethics education

illuminate the reality there are consequences to actions, and that we must be “better than the norm” in what others expect of responsible leadership. Additionally, P14 advocated focusing on neutrality in decision-making, thus mitigating the potential quandary created by bias or selfish motives. Critical thinking is a key component of courses offered in graduate schools of business as tool in decision-making. Therefore, should not ethics education place the same emphasis on critical thinking as relates to determining what the right thing to do is?

**Ethical corporate culture.** P1 asserted that constructing an effective ethics curriculum involves faculty buy-in, supported by a school’s established corporate culture. P4 offered “corporate culture development” as a needed element that is currently missing from the typical business ethics curriculum. P6, in addressing corporate culture, made the point that the most effective way to ethical behavior is by creating and sustaining “a corporate culture that does so.” P13 commented, “Ethical practices should be contagious,” which is altogether possible if the corporate culture encourages such behavior.

### **Teaching Socrates and Other Classic Scholars as a Basis**

The study results provided a constant reminder of the need for the teachings of the great philosophers to have a larger presence in business ethics curriculum. P1 posited virtue, in the Aristotelian sense, guides knowledge acquisition in the areas of moral virtue and intellectual virtue. P4 theorized that the “Aristotle and Plato do make a difference” in appealing to a person’s conscience to do what is right. In addition, per P4, students appreciate the foundation established by philosophers. Similarly, P5 suggested that

curriculum “Illuminate the teachings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle” to advance the effectiveness of ethics instruction.

P6 recommended including Virtue Theory as found in the teachings of the Greek philosophers, where virtue is “systematic, diligent.” P7 discussed the need for ethics education to be infused with more emphasis on virtue according to the philosophers, with the goal of establishing an ethical basis in students. Thus, striving for a culture of ethos as prescribed through the teachings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

P8 suggested “more Plato” in ethics instruction to assure that an ethics foundation is adequately rooted in students. In addition, P8 recommended teaching on practical wisdom as extolled by Aristotle in his works. P9 also called for more Plato in ethics teaching and opined, “The teachings of Aristotle have been watered-down.” P10 recommended increasing the effectiveness of ethics instruction through employing “a Greek philosophical framework” as a basis for developing moral virtue. P11 offered two suggestions to improve ethics curriculum one of which was, “Major thinkers should be included to facilitate understanding.” In addition, P11 recommended students “Look at Socrates life as an example of how to live morally.”

P12, in a similar vein to the aforementioned responses, advocated increasing the use of the works of Greek philosophers in course design. P12 commented, “The mindset is one that ethics are not a big deal anymore,” suggesting a return to focusing on what is right is sorely needed. In addition, P13 suggested discussing the Greek philosophers as a means to improving business ethics education. P15 supported the increased emphasis on



the Greek philosophers, but favored the addition of Aquinas and Kant to the list of contributors as well.

**Based on what is right.** P6 asserted, “Do what does not harm others” when weighing the different options present in decision-making. Additionally, P6 suggested acting based on what is right requires humility as a way to consider the position of others. P9, in discussing the areas of Greek philosophers and ethics knowledge stated, “One can not arrive at right things without knowing how.” P11 surmised that it is possible to have right answers, but there must be a baseline to refer to for what is considered right. P14 supported using *The Ethics of Care* to arrive at what is right, even if it means breaking the law to do so.

### **Introducing a Foundations Course**

Slightly more than half of the participants mentioned the need for an introductory or foundations course in business ethics. In terms of an introductory course, P1 suggested beginning with an introductory course, followed by integration of ethics throughout the curriculum. P2 and P3 recommended an introductory course as a means of laying a good foundation for further ethics study.

P5 emphasized a foundations course “highlighting the importance of virtues such as trustworthiness, honesty, goodness, etcetera, as habits to have in one’s life...a core of virtue ethics in a foundations course.” P7 suggested the inclusion of professionalism training in a foundations course to elucidate the critical need for business leaders to behave accordingly. P8 recommended a foundations course to assure a foundation is adequately established. In addition, P10 and P11 supported the inclusion of a foundations

course focusing on the importance of ethics, and P15 proposed a foundations course because “ethics are not taught soon enough.”

### **Integrating Throughout the Curriculum**

The number of respondents mentioning integration of ethics across the curriculum equaled that of Introductory/Foundations Course. P1 recommended beginning with an introductory course, followed by integration of ethics into all courses. P2 commented, “An essential component of curriculum design is blending ethics into courses.” Aligned with this line of thinking was P4, who suggested “integration is preferred” in course design as a means to underscore the importance of ethics in business practices. P7 advocated integration throughout the curriculum, but proposed ongoing training to reinforce the work begun by integration.

### **Recognizing Knowledge of Ethics is Limited**

P1 posited, “Knowledge of psychology and/or sociology is currently too narrow,” indicating the need to expand on what is presently known about ethics. P2 surmised, “Currently, there is the lack of a clear connection in ethics teaching materials.” In addition, P2 pointed to the absence of a refined definition of ethics, which impedes answering questions relating to ethics. P4 concluded, “Current methods do not address exploration of ethics.” P5 emphasized, “There is a lack of understanding of ethics in the world, the culture of ethics.” P6 remarked, “Currently, there is no obvious solution to this problem. More dialogue is needed to gain insight into teaching ethics.”

**Expository teaching.** The subject of ethics—for many—can be vague, confusing, and difficult to grasp. With this in mind, a different approach in how ethics are taught

may be in order, signaling for a more expository technique. For instance, P1 asserted, “Teaching ethics must be based upon a deep understanding of virtue and human nature.” This suggests an expository approach to delve into such topics as virtue and human nature. Superficial discussion on ethics serves only to introduce concepts and ideas, but not the deep-seated instruction necessary to teach ethics effectively.

P2 recommended using a heuristic, or analytical, means of teaching ethics to further a student’s understanding of the subject material. Investigation of ethics, through expository teaching, can stimulate interest in ethics that will benefit students and instructors alike. P7 included the need for expository teaching in instruction, as did P11 when asked what is currently missing in ethics pedagogy.

### **Establishing a Theoretical Base**

Essential to creating an ethical awareness in students is, according to P1, “Establishing a theoretical base” from which to draw to do what is right. P5, in creating a theoretical base, stated, “We need rationality and objectivity, which are currently missing...define what we ought to do.” A theoretical base predicated on deontology was suggested by P6, highlighting the qualities of duty, moral obligation, and right action.

P7 suggested establishing a theoretical base founded on ontological ethics in an attempt to understand the nature and existence of ethics. P8 surmised, “Building a theoretical base, including parameters of theory, serves to adequately establish a foundation of ethics.” P9 concluded that establishing a theoretical base for ethics should include content and abstract, which are currently missing from existing curriculum. P11

recommended establishing a theoretical base to help students understand and overcome relativism, and to offer people a plan in dealing with ethical issues.

### **Summary**

The themes that emerged from the qualitative interviews are presented in detail in this chapter. The sample consisted of 12 men and 3 women who have taught business ethics at the collegiate level. Participants described what they felt was currently missing from course design and what would be successful based on experience. I believe the participants adequately presented what is currently lacking in business ethics education, by suggesting that not enough is known about how to teach business ethics more effectively. At times during the interview process, time constraints precluded me from collecting information on each of the interview guide questions, but overlap among the questions served to offset this concern, if any.

The common theme clusters discovered during data analysis are the result of addressing the research question. Overall, seven major themes materialized during data analysis.

- Highlighting character and virtue ethics.
- Increasing concern for stakeholders emphasized.
- Teaching Socrates and other classic scholars as a basis.
- Introducing a foundations course.
- Integrating throughout the curriculum.
- Recognizing knowledge of ethics is limited.
- Establishing a theoretical base.

I discussed minor points suggested as missing by the study's participants to include (a) character development, (b) moral courage, (c) overcoming relativism, (d) critical thinking, (e) ethical corporate culture, (f) based on what is right, and (g) expository teaching. In Chapter 5, I discuss my findings of this study, recommendations, conclusions, and implications for social change.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

I conducted this phenomenological qualitative study to explore and describe the lived experiences of educators who have taught business ethics to obtain insight into the factors and strategies they have found to be successful. By using the experiences derived from the research, I have revealed the components that are currently missing from ethics course content. In this chapter, I suggest how business ethics should be taught to business students in an effective manner, incorporating the study's finding into the final analysis.

The research question for the study was the following: What are the factors and strategies that have contributed to the success of educators who have taught business ethics? To gather the information in answering this question, I conducted 15 face-to-face interviews with business ethics instructors. The interviews were guided by a series of open-ended questions. For this study, a phenomenology was an ideal fit because it allowed me to collect, first hand, the lived experiences of the men and women who have taught ethics with the goal of increasing knowledge in this critical area. Ultimately, the theme clusters that emerged included (a) highlighting character and virtue ethics, (b) increasing concern for stakeholders emphasized, (c) teaching Socrates and other classic scholars as a basis, (d) introducing a foundations course, (e) integrating throughout the curriculum, (f) recognizing knowledge of ethics is limited, and (g) establishing a theoretical base.

## **Interpretation of Findings**

In this section, I interpret the findings of the study based on the theme clusters presented in Chapter 4. My interpretation includes how the findings compare to the peer-reviewed literature described in Chapter 2, and how they confirm or extend knowledge in the discipline as well. I follow with a discussion of limitations, recommendations, implications, and conclusions.

### **Theme Clusters**

**Highlighting character and virtue ethics.** One of the two major theme clusters that emerged is the need for character and virtue ethics to be included in ethics course design. The other theme, relating to stakeholders, is discussed later in this section. This theme cluster, in fact, garnered an 80% response rate from respondents, overall. Included within this theme cluster are the elements of character development, moral courage, and overcoming relativism.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 revealed several sources pertaining to character and ethics education. Brady (1999) proposed using a thought process to arrive at ethical decisions founded on character development. Similarly, Bennis (2012) emphasized a focus on character development through a course he labeled “Character 101.” By doing so, according to Bennis, the awareness toward ethical behavior is enhanced. Conscience and empathy are necessary to developing character in business students, with an eye toward preparing socially responsible leaders. Bennis continued by suggesting that character stems from noncognitive skills—conscience and empathy—to the point where responsible leadership cannot be exercised without them and is

considered failure. Thus, per Bennis, business schools have an opportunity to develop character in students by providing them with tools and resources to discover who they are and what drives them, but this is the most that schools can offer.

Sims and Felton (2006) surmised that character development is possible once an individual discovers and understands his or her core personal values. In a similar vein, Gosen and Werner (2006) asserted that by encouraging students to disclose their core personal values relating to ethical matters help them to understand their position as an individual. However, the downside is the reluctance of students to divulge such sensitive information for fear of public scrutiny, and to give others the appearance of being good. Gosen and Werner (2006) and Sims and Felton (2006) both suggested a means of teaching business ethics by targeting character but the most effective way to do so remains unclear.

Once I completed analysis of the collected data, it became clear that character and virtue play a significant role in ethical behavior. My interpretation is supported by the level of response demonstrated by the study's participants. In addition, the participants' level of response substantiates the lack of emphasis on character and virtue in current course design.

*Moral courage.* My review of the literature in Chapter 2 does not include, specifically, sources focused on moral courage. However, moral reasoning is a precursor to moral courage; moral reasoning provided a limited amount of information for purposes of interpretation in this section. The connection between moral reasoning and moral courage is undeniable when there must be a catalyst to display moral courage. It is fair to



suggest that if moral reasoning had occurred and resulted in moral courage, false entries would not have been entered into accounting journals to give the appearance of a more profitable organization than was actually the case. No doubt, there are numerous instances where moral courage would have made a difference in the outcome.

In discussing business ethics Sandbu (2011) focused on moral reasoning, suggesting that most courses avoid the subject of right or wrong behavior. Dellaportas, Cooper, and Leung (2006) asserted that rule-based learning in ethics education does increase the level of moral reasoning in students, thus supporting the need to teach business ethics. Nevertheless, once certain courses were completed that illuminated moral reasoning, students revealed an enthusiasm for moral reasoning. This suggests that business ethics teaching must appeal to the core of an individual—the conscience—if the methodology is to be an effective means of instruction.

Resultant to a study conducted by Curry and Thach (2007), a majority of business school deans concurred that moral values have more of an impact on business ethics than either corporate culture or the immediate corporate environment. In addition, the deans added that scant attention is given to social concerns and the philosophy of ethics as they relate to ethics education, and that no agreed upon strategy exists in teaching business ethics (Curry & Thach, 2007).

I mentioned that my review of the literature is void of a discussion on moral courage but a minimal amount of reference to moral reasoning and moral values is included. To me, this reflects a lack of interest in moral thinking or, at minimum, a lackadaisical approach by researchers to delve into core values and conscience-related

subjects that tend to create controversy or spirited debate. However, this proves to be a topic of further research and a critical area where the current level of knowledge is clearly lacking.

**Increasing concern for stakeholders emphasized.** This major theme cluster also collected an 80% response rate from participants. A strong response rate, such as the one reflected here, suggests stakeholders have fallen victim to circumstances beyond their control through lack of proper consideration. Included within this theme cluster are the use of critical thinking as a tool in approaching a decision with ethical consequences, and establishing and maintaining an ethical corporate culture.

Simmons, Iles, and Yolles (2005) suggested that by including stakeholders in the decision-making process, a corporation stands to benefit by such activity. Strand (2008) emphasized establishing a relationship with stakeholders with the purpose of increasing the level of awareness between management and the various stakeholders. In terms of ethical corporate culture, Carroll (1991) extolled the benefits of leading by example to lay the foundation for, and perpetuate, an ethical corporate culture.

Stakeholder acknowledgment is enhanced by having students construct case narratives, or short stories, to bring the world of corporate ethics to a more personal level, especially for those lacking corporate experience (Poulton, 2009). According to Poulton, the role and importance of stakeholders is illuminated, which energizes the personal responsibility aspect innate in ethical situations. Sims and Felton (2006) supported the position of stakeholders by emphasizing their consideration in the decision-making

process, especially in a marketplace with ever increasing-boundaries and international implications.

Strand (2008) posited that the primary goal of corporation—stakeholder relations should be to increase corporate awareness of stakeholders and to promote discussion amongst management relating to the organization's stakeholders. To aid in accomplishing these goals, Strand created a matrix designed to reveal the many stakeholders that an organization must consider when approaching a decision, to include potential outcomes and ethical consequences. Strand's matrix, or dashboard, contains categories for employees, customers, shareholders, suppliers, and so on; stakeholders are both external to, and internal to an organization. Each category is measured and weighted as to the likelihood of collaboration, thereby facilitating discussion between corporate management and the various stakeholders (Strand, 2008). Developing relationships with stakeholders, through a tool like Strand's matrix, is an opportunity for organizations to demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility and to display the prominence of ethics within the corporate culture.

Parmar et al. (2010) reviewed stakeholder theory and how it could be applied to the different disciplines in business. Following corporate scandal and related ethical lapses, Parmar et al. argued that corporate executives place such an emphasis on profit maximization that ethics are neglected, causing stakeholders to suffer. In an effort to improve the situation, Parmar et al. suggested examining the areas of value creation and trade, the ethics of capitalism, and the issue of the traditional managerial way of thinking.

Undeniably, corporate goals and stakeholder concerns conflict requiring a joint effort to achieve the most equitable solution available.

Freeman, Wicks, and Parmar (2004) proposed an argument to previous viewpoints about the role of stakeholders. Freeman et al. claimed “stakeholder theory is managerial in that it reflects and directs how managers operate rather than primarily addressing management theorists and economists” (p. 364). Focusing solely on maximizing shareholder wealth at the expense of other stakeholders attached to the corporation does little in terms of value for shareholders. In addition, value creation is the most sensible approach managers can take because everyone involved stands to benefit from it.

Once I pondered the responses that supported this theme cluster, I came to the realization that after hundreds of years of business-related decisions, corporations overlook, or ignore, stakeholders on a continual basis. I interpret an 80% response rate as being a glaring deficiency in ethics course design in terms of an emphasis on stakeholders. In addition, graduate-level programs emphasized critical thinking, but not necessarily when it comes to ethics education. A concerted effort on the part of business schools to reinforce the relevance of stakeholders is a major step in student preparedness.

*Critical thinking.* The usual and customary approaches to teaching business ethics are what Price (2007) targeted as being ineffective as a means to the intended goal. Ethics teaching curriculum needs to be revamped (Price, 2007). To accomplish this morality makeover, Price proposed three areas of focus: (a) students must be encouraged to think critically about dilemmas regarding values and wealth; (b) students should possess an

understanding about basic human psychology, and (c) it is imperative that students develop an awareness of the business-society relationship. Using critical thinking as a tool to identify various aspects of a decision is a key approach in graduate schools, but not to the point necessary in ethics instruction.

*Ethical corporate culture.* Carroll (1991) suggested that leading by example is the most effective way of ensuring that ethical behavior is the norm rather than the exception. Offering a more effective way of teaching business ethics as an integral part of business school curriculum may help leaders to establish a culture of ethical responsibility.

Bateman (2011) discussed trust and courage as they relate to corporate culture. In terms of trust, slightly more than half of respondents to a survey said they trust business, and less than half that number placed trust on CEOs. With this in mind, it might be a daunting task to lead a corporation's employees when the buying public has little trust in you as the company's leader. In terms of courage, leaders may be willing to forsake short-term profits for the betterment of social responsibility and corporate sustainability. Ethics requires courage, oftentimes in the face of the status quo and its emphasis on profit maximization (Bateman, 2011).

**Teaching Socrates and other classic scholars as a basis.** Over the course of the literature review, one resource contained ideas that aligned with the works of Greek philosophers, but not naming any philosophers specifically. Brady (1999) mentioned such things as character and virtue, although the author did not refer to the underpinnings as prescribed by Socrates, Plato, or Aristotle. Aside from Brady, no article within the aggregate of those chosen for review fit into this particular area. In addition to the

philosophers, this theme cluster includes respondents' thoughts regarding behavior that is based on what is right.

A discussion centered on Greek philosophers is typically found in a philosophy or, perhaps, a history class. This, in itself, poses a challenge for many students because of the perceived dry nature of the subject matter, or an overall lack of interest in the material itself. However, three of four participants in the study asserted that the teachings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, in particular, should be included in courses intended to teach business ethics more effectively. Considering such a high response rate, I interpret this theme cluster as a clear signal that business ethics education is currently inadequate and lacks this critical component in course content.

*Based on what is right.* Nguyen, Basuray, Smith, Kopka, and McCulloh (2008) concluded that effective ethics education substantially influences the outcome of ethical decisions. Here, using the theory of contractualism as a basis, students learn to do what is right and acceptable according to the expectations of society. Success is attainable because of an increased awareness in ethical reasoning, purposed on an overall improvement in how business ethics are handled.

Cavaliere et al. (2010) argued that business schools place an extreme emphasis on profit and scant effort is made in the areas of ethical leadership and socially responsible behavior. Corporate scandals have created a two-fold opportunity for schools of business: the opportunity to improve ethical behavior at the teaching level, and the duty to improve in the area of business dealings because of ethics education. In addition, Cavalier et al. extolled business educators to be intent on teaching right behavior, even if it is in direct

contrast to that which is traditionally found in business school curriculum. The result, according to Cavaliere et al., is a form of validation that indicates an instructor is qualified to teach business ethics and is committed to social responsibility. Sandbu (2011) discussed business ethics in terms of moral reasoning, but suggested that most business ethics courses avoid the subject of right or wrong behavior.

**Introducing a foundations course.** Roughly, half of those interviewed suggested including an introductory/foundations course to lay the groundwork for illuminating the importance of ethics within the business environment. Hartman and Werhane (2009) argued business schools should establish a stand-alone course in ethics instead of integrating ethics into the curriculum of courses within a discipline (e.g., accounting, marketing, etc.). In addition, Hartman and Werhane asserted that by examining the issues surrounding the teaching of ethics followed by instituting a foundations course, students are exposed to the material necessary and, therefore, be better prepared to learn business ethics.

I interpret the meaning of this theme cluster to indicate that an inclusive introductory/foundations course is a precursor to establishing a sound starting point for further ethics education. It is worth repeating that half of the respondents identified inclusion of a foundations course to bolster the purpose of ethics education. Suffice is to say that ethics education going forward must have a sound, purposeful point of origination.

**Integrating throughout the curriculum.** Similar to the preceding theme cluster, infusing ethics teaching into courses across the curriculum drew support from most of the

respondents. Gandz and Hayes (1988) surmised that the most effective way to teach business ethics is to include ethics training in all classes that the business school curriculum comprises. In like fashion, Rogers (2011) advocated inclusion of ethics teaching in all courses, as did Tanner (2004). Tanner (2004) emphasized that ethics training must be completely integrated into all required business courses. Thus, students become aware of the essential part that ethics play in all aspects of business. Accordingly, the relevance of ethical behavior is elevated, which serves to reinforce the standard set by a school of business to produce ethically minded students.

In terms of interpreting this theme cluster, the position supports that curriculum-wide integration not only reinforces the importance of ethics but also sustains a culture of ethics now and into the future. I previously mentioned how the thoughts of Gandz and Hayes (1988) relate to integration, which reflects a constructive suggestion first presented, at minimum, over 27 years ago.

**Recognizing knowledge of ethics is limited.** The study's problem, as stated in Chapter 1, was the lack of information that is specific to the factors and strategies required to best educate business students in the critical area of ethical business practices, purposed on producing consistent results. This problem was clearly reflected through the literature and the responses that comprise this theme cluster. Baetz and Sharp (2004) evaluated the effectiveness of textbooks typically used in business ethics education. Textbooks published on the various emphases included in a school of business curriculum were the target of the investigation. Baetz and Sharp concluded that textbooks tend to present a superficial coverage of ethical issues. Hence, because of this lack of



detailed information, efforts of ethics instructors are effectively curtailed due to a lack of knowledge-based information contained in current resources.

Included in this theme cluster is the suggestion that an expository teaching method is used during business ethics instruction. However, I did not happen upon any resources relating to expository teaching as an instructional tool. Expository teaching mustered two responses, but the ability of this tool to go beyond the superficial makes a viable mode of instruction.

My interpretation of this theme cluster is the problem targeted by the study, the lack of information specific to teaching business ethics, which was plainly revealed via the participants' comments. In addition, only Baetz and Sharp (2004) specifically addressed the deficiency currently present in the knowledge of ethics. Lastly, the aforementioned shortage in ethics knowledge is not a recent development. Rather, several generations of business students have passed through business schools without an adequate knowledge base aimed at ethics education. According to Sandbu (2011) there is a deficiency in the core body of knowledge within business ethics, as well the absence of an agreed upon method to teach business ethics.

**Establishing a theoretical base.** As discussed in Chapter 2, Meyer et al. (2009) presented five approaches to ethical decision-making: utilitarian, moral rights, justice, common good, and virtue. In a similar vein, Jones and George (2008) offered a practical approach to determine if a decision will arrive at a right conclusion. Hence, a need for commonality or consistency in business ethics teaching, founded on a theoretical base

from which to draw, is evident. Key components of any theoretical base are objectivity and rationality, which one participant conveyed during an interview.

Falkenberg and Woiceshyn (2008) suggested that students must have a framework from which to draw, possess certain core values, and have an understanding of consequences to cope with moral dilemmas. Although there are models or approaches to use in decision-making, I interpret the findings as suggesting a lack of an established theoretical base founded on existing theories. Each approach has merit, but melding available tools together into a common baseline satisfies the need for a standard to guide decision-making.

### **Applying Conceptual Framework to the Findings**

The lack of information that is unique to teaching business ethics along with increased understanding of other components of ethics education grounded the study. To support the need for the research, several types of distinctive concepts from the body of knowledge were offered in Chapter 2. For instance, Meyer et al. (2009) identified five means of ethical decision-making: utilitarian, or that which does the most good and the least amount of harm; moral rights, or the obligation to respect others' rights; justice, or equal treatment for everyone; common good, or the welfare of everyone is important; and virtue, or decisions made based on the underpinnings of virtue and uppermost character. In a separate study, Jones and George (2008) discussed an additional, *practical* approach, using three tests to determine if a decision is the right one to make. These techniques are two of the many approaches to ethical decision-making, suggesting a need for agreement or consistency in business ethics instruction. In addition, the various choices available as

ethical frameworks bring about questions, which support the goal of research to gain additional knowledge in this critical area of education.

The ethical framework that informed this study was based on the virtue and justice approaches as a technique for evaluating ethical aspects of a business decision, with the goal of producing positive results in ethical behavior. Virtue and justice find their roots in early times, and share a foundation established on fairness. For the purpose of this research study, the conceptual area for exploration was the thoughts or beliefs of teachers with lived experience in teaching business ethics, and their opinions relating to requirements for effective ethics education.

### **Limitations of the Study**

In Chapter 1, I addressed the limitations as I intended to proceed through the study. I acknowledged my own personal bias in terms of ethical behavior, but I continually adhered to a position of neutrality and objectivity. The study did not reveal any further considerations relating to limitations, nor did any other issues manifest to raise questions pertaining to the study's findings.

The instrument used for data collection consistently captured the information for which it was intended. No participant was reluctant to answer the questions posed to him or her, nor did any respondent request dismissal from the interview or early termination of the session for any reason. In addition, each participant reviewed his or her responses after transcripts became available, thus improving validity of the findings and affirming trustworthiness of the overall research.

## **Recommendations**

The key recommendation based on the results of the study is the need to revamp current business ethics curriculum, thus providing a platform to increase the effectiveness of ethics education. Findings of the study confirm a deficiency in the knowledge base, suggesting the need for further research in this critical area. In this section, I suggest strengths and limitations of the current study, including how the findings relate to the literature review in Chapter 2.

Strengths of the study are supported by the consistent responses of the participants, along with a clear indication that not enough is known about business ethics education. For instance, a number of participants echoed the same, or similar, sentiments when answering the questions, demonstrating the need to assess how business schools currently teach ethics.

Hartman and Werhane (2009) emphasized the need to include an introductory or foundations course in ethics curriculum. I concur with this recommendation. By doing so, the groundwork would be effectively laid for improved results. Additionally, the importance of ethical behavior within the business school's corporate culture is illuminated early on in a student's instruction. Conversely, the absence of an introductory or foundations in the early stages of instruction indicates a lack of regard for the significance of ethical behavior.

Another recommendation is the total integration of ethics throughout the curriculum. Devoting one chapter per textbook used within each course has the potential of solidifying the importance of ethics across the different disciplines taught in a school

of business. For instance, Baetz and Sharp (2004), as discussed in the literature review, concluded that textbooks offer scant information as a resource relating to ethical issues. Hence, continuity within a program of study is nonexistent, replaced by a sporadic approach to ethics teaching. Gandz and Hayes (1988), Rogers (2011), and Tanner (2004) discussed the inclusion of ethics training in each business course, which I included in Chapter 2. Here, it is interesting to note total integration has lagged behind in business ethics education over a span of 27 years or more.

The level of response by the participants demonstrates the critical role virtue plays in ethical business behavior, which I mentioned earlier. Brady (1999), Sims and Felton (2006), and Bennis (2012) discussed the importance of character development in business students, a much-needed quality in becoming ethically sound. I recommend infusing tools for character development into each course within the curriculum. By doing so, ethical dilemmas can be dissected to demonstrate the value of character and virtue in reaching the right decision to render.

Including the teachings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle is a recommendation I suggest to enhance the effective of current business ethics curriculum. I am keenly aware that courses containing philosophical content tend to be dry, uneventful, and dull. However, injecting the proper amount of enthusiasm, along with a thorough explanation of the potential benefits, may facilitate the effort to develop character. Encouraging students to embrace, gain an appreciation of, and realize the worth of philosophical teachings and the connection with character development are keys to positive results. A

clear majority of respondents, unequivocally signaling the need for ethics education to incorporate such a recommendation, supported this suggestion.

I recommend increasing the emphasis on stakeholder consideration in business ethics curriculum. Again, a significant number of respondents touched on this issue, indicating the lack of attention now. In addition, critical thinking constitutes a crucial component in not only business strategy decisions but stakeholder consideration as well. Freeman, Wicks, and Parmar (2004) asserted that business practice and ethical behavior co-exist as necessary elements of value creation, which bodes well for stakeholders. Similarly, Simmons, Iles, and Yolles (2005) surmised that organizational effectiveness, employee morale, and organizational quality all benefit from incorporating stakeholders in the decision-making process. All too often, according to Parmar et al. (2010), corporate decision-makers neglect ethical behavior in the pursuit of profit maximization, creating the potential to harm stakeholders connected to the eventual outcome. Indeed, stakeholders deserve more attention and consideration in business ethics curricula to demonstrate the significant role stakeholders play in the overall scheme of business decisions.

At the conclusion of the interview process, nearly half of all respondents mentioned the need to establish a theoretical base from which to teach business ethics. . Various teaching methods exist within the knowledge base, but an agreed-upon strategy founded on commonality does not currently exist. Meyer et al. (2009), Jones and George (2008), and Brady (1999), for example, offered techniques to assist business leaders in an effort to arrive at an ethical decision, or that, which produces the right outcome. Hence, I

recommend establishing a theoretical base, or baseline, founded on a commonality contained within the base of knowledge—a literal common denominator readily shared by the business ethics community.

In addition to recommending establishing a theoretical base, I recommend that more research should be conducted to extract information the knowledge-base is deficient of at the present. Unethical behavior has its roots traceable for many centuries, at minimum (Bakan, 2004). For this reason, it is not conceivable to believe that research, up to this point, has captured or revealed all needed information.

I recommend that The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, and like organizations revisit business curriculum to prescribe more defined requirements for inclusion of ethics in business courses. The current AACSB Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation (2012) offered limited guidance but institutional flexibility in terms of the emphasis placed on business ethics curriculum. The AACSB stated,

There is no implication in these standards that these topics designate particular courses or treatments. Schools should assume great flexibility in fashioning curricula to meet their missions and to fit with the specific circumstances of particular programs. Some of these topics may be emphasized for particular learning needs and others may be de-emphasized. (p. 70)

Thus, according to the AACSB standards, a school need only justify the rationale behind curricular contents, and that the course design aligns itself with the learning goals of degree programs offered by an institution. By meeting the mission needs of the school, compliance to standards has been met (AACSB, 2012, p. 70). A high degree of maneuverability exists in the current version of the AACSB standards.

The ACBSP standards prescribe more definitive content related to social responsibility than do the AACSB standards. Per the ACBSP, “The business school or program *should* ensure ethical business and academic practices in all student and stakeholder transactions and interactions” (p. 19). The inclusion of stakeholders in the accreditation criteria emphasizes the importance of stakeholders in the overall thrust of the ACBSP standards. Time and again, decision outcomes have shown that business ethics and stakeholders are intertwined to the point where they are practically inseparable.

Merely suggesting ethics courses should be included does not equate to sufficient time allotted to instruction. Mandating a minimum level of ethics instruction without completely overhauling course or program design is a reachable goal. Available credit hours, staffing concerns, resource allocation, and qualification feed into the course design formula, but a minimum amount of shuffling could be the answer.

In this section, I made several recommendations to help manage as well as to increase the effectiveness of teaching ethics based on the study’s findings. To recap the discussion, I recommend



- implementing an introductory or foundations course in business school curriculum,
- integrating ethics into all business school curricula,
- devoting time to character development through tools contained within each course or the curriculum,
- including the teachings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in course design or core courses,
- increasing the emphasis on stakeholder consideration,
- establishing a theoretical base, and
- encouraging accreditation organizations to require specific components in business ethics curriculum

The present study has revealed that there is insufficient knowledge on teaching business ethics, to include course design, signaling the need for further research. The collective voices of 15 ethics educators who participated in the study have been heard; however, an area of future research may rest within an entirely different section of the country or a separate nation altogether, possibly in Europe to determine if differences exist. I discuss further research in a section below.

### **Implications**

Unethical business behavior continues to be present, even in light of efforts made through ethics education. Hence, managing an effective way to teach ethics is vital to business, society, and the international community. Business ethics teaching is a critical component to establishing ethics of the individual, which is manifest in other areas of life

such as family, society, and the workplace. In this section, I discuss the potential impact for positive social change from positions of the individual, the family, the organization, and society. In addition, I will describe implications for policy as it relates to business ethics instruction.

### **Implications for the Individual**

The potential impact for positive social change on individuals-- and their actions-- is the innermost mechanism for sweeping social change. The conscience, a sense innate in all people, refers to the ability to know right from wrong, which plays a major role in ethical behavior. Hence, appealing to conscience in individuals through character development is a key component in teaching. Purposeful ethics education lays the groundwork for positive results beyond the individual, the type of outcome that drives social change in a positive way.

Furthermore consistent with most, if not all, activities people are involved in the actions of the individual dictate the eventual outcome. Therefore, character development of the individual student is paramount to success in ethical business behavior. Society cannot rely on the teachings of the home to prepare students for a socially responsible, ethically sound career as a business leader; environments differ, as does a focus attributed to teaching others to do what is right. Schools of business must implement a grassroots-type effort to grow—and advance—the attributes of character and virtue in students, with the larger goal of positive social change through affecting the individual, manifested through positive contributions to society.

The potential influence on the individual and positive social change is but one area of discussion. From the perspective through a different lens, character development decreases the likelihood of a student experiencing an ethical lapse. Proper exposure and cultivation of character and virtue help to avoid the pitfalls others have experienced, as well as impress upon students the consequences associated with such behavior.

### **Implications for the Family**

The potential impact for positive social change on the family has a direct connection to the actions of the individual. Teaching ethics more effectively to individual students—and future business leaders—serves not only the responsibility corporations have to society it lessens the possibility of a family becoming a victim of unethical business actions. Earlier in the study, I discussed the presence of stakeholders within the overall scheme of business decisions. The family, as a vital component of stakeholders, feels the impact of positive social change achieved through managing ethics education more effectively.

The potential effect for positive social change on the family carries with it significant points relating to domestic issues. For instance, wrongdoers facing incarceration risk losing not only their freedom and the associated rights and privileges, but also a marriage, any children, and other relationships. The hardship created through such an arrangement and the embarrassment that is sure to follow is daunting, to say the least. Again, the implications for family are—potentially—far-reaching and a real part of unethical business behavior.

## **Organizational and Societal Implications**

Corporate social responsibility and sustainability have become significant issues over the past few years, requiring corporations to devote more attention to complying with these leading concerns. Society expects, and is entitled to, a level of ethical behavior that reflects the dignity all people deserve. The potential impact for positive social change through organizational behavior cannot be overstated.

Practicing social responsibility indicates an organization's commitment to operate as a good neighbor, rather than overlooking social issues and the overall well being of society. Developing character and virtue in business students creates the potential for improved awareness and sensitivity to situations that, otherwise, may prove to be problematic or disastrous. Without question, responsible, ethical business leadership furthers positive social change. In addition, a corporate culture embracing the tenets of positive social change serves as an example of what society is expecting in modern times.

The price tag associated with unethical business behavior is another issue that has potential for improvement through managing business ethics education. For instance, oil spills have reached tens of billions of dollars for remediation alone, not including the ancillary costs attributable to individuals, families, and society. Corporate scandals, of the blue-collar variety, have ballooned to \$70 billion in losses in a single episode, most of which is not recovered. The legal costs alone can be staggering. Potential profitability suffers because of diverting funds to cope with unethical episodes. The social stigma that comes with the fallout usually takes many years for a corporation to recover.

Unfortunately, for society, such costs end up being passed-on to consumers in the form of higher prices as a cost of doing business. With this being the case, funds that would otherwise be available for pay increases, community programs, and activities directed at positive social change become nonexistent. Many corporations have received criticism, for good reason, because of a history of a shortsighted, profit maximization motive that competes with that which is better for society as a whole. Organizations are in a favorable position to practice socially responsible behavior by their actions. This, in turn, will reflect a commitment to the expectations of society for overall improvement in standard of living and positive social change.

### **Policy Implications**

In Chapter 2, I discussed accreditation organizations and the position currently taken relating to business ethics education. To reiterate, ethics instruction, as part of a curriculum, is required. However, no prescribed standards exist that would guide what educators should include in course content. Requiring a minimum level of ethics instruction to business students has the ability to significantly affect positive social change.

Current standards in place by accreditation bodies offer no specific guidelines on ethics course design. In effect, this lack of guidance allows individual business schools the freedom—and latitude—to include content that complies with less rigid requirements, although their pedagogical effectiveness is questionable. Hence, schools of business show compliance with accreditation requirements through aligning ethics instruction with courses within the schools own curriculum. A change in policy, particularly if done

collectively, has the potential of having a profound and lasting impact on business ethics education.

Most people will support the concept that morality is good, not to mention the fact that everyone expects ethical treatment. Business schools, then, have an opportunity to better prepare students by introducing policy that not only bolsters ethics instruction but also mitigates the relative aspect of ethical decision-making. The potential for positive social impact is a real possibility if accreditation organizations prescribe, and mandate, the inclusion of clear, definitive guidelines in ethics course curriculum. Ultimately, the goal of positive social change is within reach if business schools make a concerted effort to better prepare business students, many of whom may become leaders and primary decision-makers.

### **Implications for Further Research**

This study has reported the responses of 15 ethics instructors on what they feel is missing from current ethics teaching. Major theme clusters emerged from the collected data, but several minor themes were mentioned as well in Chapter 4. Further research is needed to contribute to the body of knowledge to substantiate the inclusion of these minor themes and to describe their intended meaning. Similar to this study, a qualitative approach is needed to capture the essence of what the participants are conveying.

The present study focused on business schools located in Southern California, but further research in another region, state, or country would be useful to determine any variation, if any. Boundaries and borders have changed at a rapid pace in recent years, all

the more reason to investigate how other areas approach business ethics teaching. All too often, ethical lapses occur in the United States, suggesting that other nations may have a better handle on business ethics.

### **Conclusions**

In this study, I addressed the lack of information that exists in the knowledge base of business ethics instruction. The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the factors and strategies of success, as well as the missing course content, experienced by educators who have taught business ethics. The study revealed the components ethics instructors described as being necessary to improve business ethics teaching. In particular, the teachings of the Greek philosophers, virtue/character development, and greater emphasis on stakeholders all warrant a more significant presence in curriculum content. The findings of this study confirm that critical elements are absent from business ethics courses. Those critical elements the study's participants described as missing are as follows:

- Highlighting character and virtue ethics.
- Increasing concern for stakeholders emphasized.
- Teaching Socrates and other classic scholars as a basis.
- Introducing a foundations course.
- Integrating throughout the curriculum.
- Recognizing knowledge of ethics is limited.
- Establishing a theoretical base.

The economist—Friedman (1970)—has a place in economics curriculum, as does Taylor (1911) in management theory. Similarly, accounting would not be what it is without generally accepted accounting principles; otherwise, accounting would lack consistency and accountability that truthful and honest bookkeeping is intended to present. Hence, business ethics must have a place in course design as well. Educators must require core components that increase the chances for success when preparing students.

The potential impact for positive social change, through managing business ethics teaching, is significant and attainable. Ethics instruction must awaken the conscience to the needs of society, to the point where ethics become habit. The findings of this study can serve as the impetus to ethics educators, course designers, and accreditation organizations alike to seize the opportunity to implement more stringent requirements for ethics instruction. Ethics education needs to embrace a goal of awakening the conscience, thus ensuring ethical behavior becomes habit.



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## Appendix A: Interview Guide

The questions below are intended to facilitate the interview process as well as to keep the interview moving at an acceptable pace. Questions may be asked in an order other than that listed below.

Q1 What are the elements that must be included in course design to increase effectiveness in teaching business ethics?

Q2 How do you view the importance of sustained exposure to business ethics over the duration of an undergraduate/graduate program of instruction?

Q3 How likely is business schools to increase ethics instruction given time and resource constraints?

Q4 In your opinion, is a foundational course in business ethics a viable means of establishing a business school's commitment to ethics education, followed by ongoing instruction throughout the curriculum?

Q5 How does course subject matter appeal to a person's conscience that will create a level of ethical awareness to do what is right in any business decision?

Q6 How does an individual put society's interests above profit motive in an uncompromising manner?

Q7 What degree of emphasis is placed on concern for others as individual stakeholders?

Q8 How do you view the importance of ethics instruction as it relates to family and loved ones, given the results of past behavior?

As the end of the interview draws near, ask

- Is there anything that has not been addressed in a question that you would like to add?
- Are there any questions that you would ask as the interviewer?

(Thank individual for participating and reiterate commitment to confidentiality)

## Appendix B: Letter of Invitation

My name is John Walls and I am a student at Walden University pursuing a terminal degree specializing in Leadership and Organizational Change. I am conducting a research study entitled *Managing an Effective to Teach Business Ethics*. Despite what is currently known about teaching business ethics, there is a lack of information that is specific to the factors and strategies required to best educate business students in this critical area. The purpose of the qualitative phenomenological research is to explore and understand the lived experiences of current or former ethics instructors to bring to light the beliefs or perceptions as relates to business ethics education and curriculum.

I am looking for volunteers (current/former business ethics instructors) to participate in individual, audio-recorded interviews that focus on obtaining your experiences and perceptions of what factors and strategies you have found to be successful in teaching ethics, as well as what is lacking. The interview is expected to last no more than 60 minutes and will be conducted at a location of your choice. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience. Your participation in the study is strictly voluntary. If you choose not to participate or wish to withdraw from the study at any time, you can do so without any consequences. The results of the research study may be published, but your identity will remain confidential and your name will not be disclosed to any outside party. Participation poses no foreseeable risks to you.

If the study peaks your interest and you would like to participate, or would like more information please contact me at XXX.XXX.XXXX, or send me an email at XXX@XXXXXXXX.com

Sincerely,

John Walls