

2006

A case study of the perceived decision-making practices and patterns of secondary administrators using four scenarios

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A Case Study of the Perceived Decision-Making Practices
and Patterns of Secondary Administrators Using Four Scenarios

by

Elizabeth M. Tuten

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
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Date of Approval:
April 18, 2006

Keywords: decision-making models, administration, qualitative, interviews, framework

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Dedication

Without my husband Paul, this dissertation would not have been possible. His guidance and support have been invaluable throughout the research and writing of this dissertation.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank the members of my dissertation committee for their support and guidance throughout this dissertation: Dr. Carol A. Mullen, Dr. Patricia L. Daniel, Dr. Steven Permuth, and Dr. Arthur S. Shapiro. I wish to express my special appreciation to Dr. Carol A. Mullen, my major professor, for her support, dedication, and guidance during the entire process. Without her continuous encouragement, this process would have taken much longer. Her dedication to her students in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department at the University of South Florida has been truly inspirational.

I also want to thank my parents for their constant support of my professional goals. They have always believed in me; this is just the beginning of my journey. I wish to thank them for always being there along the way.

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A Case Study of the Perceived Decision-Making Practices
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Elizabeth M. Tuten

ABSTRACT

This research study explored practitioners' perceived understanding and situational use of seven decision-making models of educational administration. In examining the extant literature of the field, the following research problem emerged to guide this study: scholars and practitioners struggle to understand how school administrators make workplace decisions, and how school leaders perceive their decision-making strategies and actions.

Based upon Pettigrew's (1985) Conceptual Framework of Organizational Change and relevant literature (see chapter 2), the researcher developed a series of questions in order to explore the aforementioned purpose and problem. Specifically, three principals, three assistant principals of curriculum, and three assistant principals for student affairs within three high schools in a large county district in west central Florida were interviewed. Research questions were developed.

The questions addressed high school administrators' knowledge/familiarity and use of seven decision-making models found in extant literature (see chapter 2). The researcher also focused on how leaders perceive they make decisions in various situations, and whom and to what extent they use other educational stakeholders to make these decisions. Administrators' answers ranged widely, depending on the situation presented and/or the decision-making model discussed. Three themes/patterns/ideas emerged from survey and interview data (see chapter 5).

The disconnect between leaders' decision-making model familiarity and usage was highlighted. Administrators employed classical or traditional decision-making with situations that provided ample information and guidelines. However, leaders tended to switch to the incremental or mixed-scanning model when information was lacking or policies/guidelines were unclear. Administrators strongly preferred shared leadership and suggestions for future research in the area of administration decision-making range from more empirical studies within the practitioner field to supplementing the academy's curriculum, employing simulations and active learning regarding models of decision-making.

Chapter One

Introduction

Easing my car into the parking lot, I marvel at the silence. Yes, I think, this is the way to start a perfect day. Just as I thrust the vehicle into park, a head appears at my window. "Hey, good morning! Didn't startle you, did I? I don't mean to bother you right now, but I really do need an answer." My secretary sputters all this with full force as I lower my window. Sensing her urgency, I struggle to remember the issue at hand and finally reply. "Yes, O.K. Call Mr. Clyde back and set an appointment to meet with him and his daughter at 9:00a.m. By that time, I should know whether or not Mrs. Archer is willing to take the make-up work or not." I sigh deeply. That should give me ample time to digest the necessary information and make a reasonable decision that can accommodate both the teacher and the student's needs. Unfortunately, I haven't made it out of the parking lot yet.

Hurrying down the north hall to my office, Deputy Martin, the student resource officer, falls in step beside me and quietly asks, "Remember the girl from yesterday with the questionable substance in her locker?" I look up sharply as the coffee from my drive to work kicks in. "Yeah," he chuckles, "of course you remember. Well, it looks like there was marijuana residue found all over that thermos. I want to get her into my office before the first bell rings. When I handcuff her, I don't want to make a big scene about it. It's your call whether or not the school notifies the parents. Either you call, or the detention center can do it for you if you want. It's completely up to you." I nod and he hurries away to alert his superiors at the county office about this development. I sigh deeply for the second time in 10 minutes. The mother of this child is the PTSA President.

Obviously, I must handle the situation carefully. I'm going to need some time to think. Where the time will come from I'm not sure. This does not bode well. It's not even 7:00 a.m. yet.

As my mind swirls rapidly, I round the corner and nearly run into the principal. "Where have you been? I've been waiting for you." He impatiently checks his watch and smooths down his hair. A nervous gesture I'm used to by now. "As chairman of the literacy council, you need to make a decision about which textbooks are the best. We need the best. I mean, what do you think?" At this juncture in our conversation, it is a waste of breath to point out that this is a staff decision, necessitating a group consensus or at least some input. Instead, I turn reassuringly and simply pacify him with a ready answer. "Absolutely, I'm working on it, sir. You can count on me." "I know I can," he grins, and the worry lines disappear from his forehead for a moment. Once he leaves, I unlock my door while expertly balancing my lunchbox, briefcase, and cup of coffee in one hand. As I set these on the desk, my frazzled secretary magically reappears at my office door. "Fight in the courtyard. Thought you should know." I smile as she rushes to a ringing phone. I grab my walkie-talkie and hurry out the door to greet a new day in my world as an educational leader.

As a first year administrator, the narrative outlined in the previous paragraph is not apocryphal or overdrawn. It is my reality; it is my environment. I am an assistant principal of an urban high school in the 11th largest school district in the United States, and days like the one described happen on a frequent basis. The majority of my professional life consists of making quick decisions and finding satisfactory solutions; as illustrated in the description above, I gather as much information as time allows before undertaking steps towards satisfactory solutions. Hebert (2005) echoes this statement: "Many times, we are oblivious to the impact of our decisions, being required to make them with so little time to analyze and interpret possible outcomes" (p. 96). Reflecting upon this thought, I realize that in one swift moment the decisions I make may alter my practice or a child's future. Simply, the situation, the individuals involved,

and the decision-making process change, but one fact remains the same: decision-making is an integral part of the everyday life of practicing administrators. In the following dissertation, I outlined my attempts to explain how practitioners make decisions in the “real world” of secondary schools.

As previously described, decision-making opportunities occur rapidly, and administrators must be ready to meet these challenges, making decisions that benefit all involved (e.g., teachers, students, staff, parents). In order to understand fully how decision-making functions in an educational setting, a fundamental overview of decision-making is briefly outlined.

Overview

Decision-making defines organizations by reinforcing norms and/or instituting changes (Holbrook, 1999; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Johns, 1995; Vroom & Yetton, 1974). As a form of organization, schools represent a dynamic, shifting, and evolving environment that gives rise to a nearly continuous stream of decision-making situations. In response to these circumstances, educational leaders must engage actively in decision-making through solving problems in order to continue effective organizational functioning (Bennis, 1989; Samier, 2002). Simply defined, *decision-making* is the process by which choices are made among alternatives to solve a given problem (Drucker, 1993, 1998; Mintzberg, Raisinghani, & Theoret, 1976; Reitz, 1989; Zey, 1992). Lunenburg and Ornstein (2000) write that decision-making pervades many areas of educational leadership, such as “planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, and controlling” (p.155).

In addition, decision-making serves as an important conflict resolution tool, allowing the members of the school environment to resolve their differences before the educational process is hampered and student learning diminished (Nye & Capelluti, 2003). Though often difficult, decision-making assists in reconciling individual needs and organizational goals (Barnard, 1938; Hoy & Miskel, 1991).

As well as stressing the central role of decision-making in an organization, Owens (2001) also claims that organizational leaders are directly responsible for the quality and efficiency of the decision-making process. As a result, this authority rests, to a substantial degree, with the principal or school-based administrator who may choose to make a decision or delegate the power to another within the school (e.g., assistant principal, team leader, department head, teacher, community member) (Barth, 2000; Evers & Lakomski, 1991).

Indeed, while scholars stress the importance of involving staff members and teachers in a shared decision-making process (e.g., David, 1995; Enderlin-Lampe, 1997; Klecker, Austin, & Burns, 2000), principals ultimately control decision-making by initiating the process and ensuring the implementation of the resulting conclusion(s) (Bennis, 1989; Johns, 1995; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000). Who should be involved in the decision-making process, how an administrator or committee arrives at a solution, and when or how that solution is put into place are, according to Griffiths (1956, 1959), all under the direct control of the school's administration. As a consequence of their position within the educational institution and because of the organizational authority granted to them, principals make decisions on an almost continuous basis (Hallinger, 1992; Vandenberghe, 1995). To assist in this task, principals may use a variety of decision-making models and involve a number of different stakeholders (Greenfield, 1987).

Purpose and Focus of Study

The purpose of the proposed research study was to explore practitioners' perceived understanding and situational use of decision-making models in the domain of educational administration. This project hoped to provide a clearer picture of how decisions are made within a high school setting. In the literature, researchers have called for more empirical studies of decision-making in the context of educational leadership (Brown, Brown, & Boyle, 1999; Petress, 2002). Scholars have written extensively concerning a multitude of decision-making models, describing in detail how decisions should be made. However, researchers have emphasized an

ideal of decision-making, not what practitioners perceive as happening in the school environment. As a result, scholars have called for additional empirical studies to better understand what is happening within schools. This project added another chapter to an already growing narrative of how decisions are perceived to be made on a daily basis in the “real world” of educational administration. By no means can this research alone affect change and growth in an educational setting. However, in concert with other studies within the field, practice can be informed throughout the secondary environment. As changes occur in the practitioner realm, future educational outcomes will be affected which is perhaps the ultimate goal of any research undertaken within the field.

To accomplish the immediate goals of this study, the researcher first utilized a conceptual framework to synthesize the disparate educational decision-making literature into a comprehensible body (see chapter 2). Next, the insights afforded by this framework guided the subsequent construction of a field-based study of decision-making patterns and perceived practices among three high school principals, three assistant principals of curriculum, and three assistant principals for student affairs (see chapter 3). Finally, an analysis of the study’s results was conducted. A written report of the results followed, addressing the demand for more empirically grounded research examining educational decision-making practices.

Theoretical Model: Pettigrew’s (1985) Conceptual Framework of Organizational Change

In exploring the field of relevant literature (see chapter 2) for a suitable conceptual heuristic, the researcher discovered a contextualist framework, proposed by Pettigrew (1985), for understanding the process of organizational change. While originating in the domain of operations and management research, Pettigrew’s (1985) framework has been applied in other disciplines. For example, Symons (1990) introduced Pettigrew’s framework into the field of information systems evaluation, having recognized the similarities between organizational change in general and the implementation of information systems in particular. As a result, Pettigrew’s

framework has been widely applied to information systems evaluation, including contributions from Klecun and Cornford (2003), Serafeimidis (1997), and Willcocks and Margetts (1994).

As mentioned, Pettigrew's (1985) framework has been profitably applied to other domains. So, noting the similarities between organizational change and some other analog, in this case educational decision-making, seemed appropriate. Indeed, both organizational change and decision-making have been described as processes that reinforce norms (i.e., inhibiting change) or institute new ideas (i.e., fostering change) (Holbrook, 1999; Johns, 1995). Pettigrew's (1985) framework (Figure 1) is depicted below.

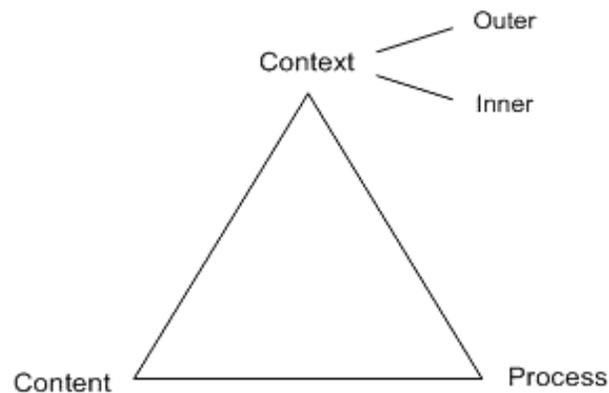


Figure 1. *Pettigrew's (1985) Conceptual Framework of Organizational Change*

Pettigrew's (1985) framework consists of three parts. In broad terms, "content" refers to the *what* of change, "context" refers to the *why* of change, and "process" refers to *how* change takes place. However, in the case of this study, the researcher adapted Pettigrew's framework in order to align it better with the three primary concerns identified in reviewing the extant literature on educational decision-making: the decision situation (the "content"), the individual(s) involved in making the decision (the "context"), and the methods used in the decision-making process (the "process"). While the application of the content and process elements seems obvious, the context element may require further explanation.

Meaning is personally constructed, so it is appropriate to recognize the individualistic nature of context. That is to say, context is not a concrete reality; instead, it exists only in the

mind of an individual (Carlson, 1964; Murphy, 1989). Individuals construct their view of a situation based upon a myriad of beliefs, experiences, and prior knowledge that arise from a multitude of social, cultural, economic, and political variables (Reitzug, 1994; Smircich, 1983). Thus, “context” may best be explored in this study in terms of individuals’ perceptions of the decision-making process.

Problem and Rationale of Study

From perusing the literature, it is uncertain whether or not scholars and practitioners understand how decisions are made in the school environment. Do administrators follow models to reach decisions, or does the situation dictate the outcome of the process? Who and to what extent do they involve stakeholders in decision-making? Ultimately, scholars and practitioners are unclear in their understanding concerning how school administrators make decisions in the workplace. More specifically, scholars do not fully comprehend how school leaders perceive their decision-making strategies and actions. That is the problem this study addressed.

The available literature contains many models of normative and descriptive decision-making (Bendor, 1995; Brown, Boyle, & Boyle, 1999; Daft, 2001; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; March, 1994; Shapiro, Benjamin, & Hunt, 1995). While some of these models are descriptive, most are normative. That is, they describe how decision-making should be conducted in practice. Many scholars have argued that decision-making models should be more grounded in empirical reality, and that more research should be done in this area (Evers & Lakomski, 1991; Rallis & MacMullen, 2000; Willower, 1994). In fact, normative models pose a challenge on two levels.

First, from a philosophical perspective, in order for a model or theory to be meaningful and serve a purpose, it should be grounded contextually in a “real world” setting (Henry, 2001; Huber, 2004). Indeed, the assumption of a postmodern epistemology suggests that meanings shift as they are applied to models in different situations by different individuals (Butler, 2002; Huysen, 1990). Consequently, there are no absolute truths about decision-making; conversely,

reality is contextually-bound and socially-constructed. As a result, a model or conceptual framework should be grounded in an actual context or setting in order for its utility to fully emerge (Noddings, 1998).

Second, from a pragmatic perspective, situations inform decision-making practices (Duncan, 1976; White, Dittrich, & Lang, 1980). While a model may be used to address an issue, the circumstances surrounding a situation will likely determine a leader's course of action. Moreover, circumstances may change over time, thereby affecting the manner in which participants employ a normative decision-making heuristic. As the scope, dimension, or outlook of a situation evolves, so might the benefits of a normative model expand or contract.

Research Questions

Based upon Pettigrew's (1985) conceptual framework and relevant literature in the field (see chapter 2), the researcher developed a series of questions in order to explore school administrators' perceived understanding and situational use of decision-making models. Specifically, the study focused on three principals, three assistant principals of curriculum, and three assistant principals for student affairs within three high schools in a large county district located in west central Florida.

1. What degree of familiarity do school administrators have with the different decision-making models (e.g., satisficing model, garbage can model, incremental model, classical or traditional model) outlined in the existing literature?
2. Under what circumstances do school administrators perceive they employ various decision-making models?
3. How and in what way do school-based leaders perceive they make decisions in their schools? What are the emergent themes/patterns/ideas among their perceived decision-making actions?

4. In which situations are school-based leaders willing to involve other stakeholders in the decision-making process?
5. How frequently and to what degree do institutional leaders perceive they involve other stakeholders in the decision-making process?

Significance of Study

In the decision-making literature, researchers have called for more empirical studies of decision-making in the context of educational leadership (Brown, Boyle, & Boyle, 1999; Petress, 2002). Scholars have written extensively about a multitude of decision-making models, describing how they should be used by educational practitioners. However, it appears that researchers have emphasized idealized versions of decision-making, while failing to focus on developing an understanding of actual decision-making practice. As a result, scholars have called for additional empirical studies to better understand what actually happens during the school day when problems arise and solutions must be determined. Put more simply, what is actually happening in schools should be the focus of educational decision-making research efforts. This research project aimed to add to the knowledge already in the field. The goal of this study was to make a contribution to practitioner decision-making practices and procedures (Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000; Owens, 2001; Tarter & Hoy, 1998).

Operational Descriptions

The following definitions are provided to promote a common understanding of the terms used in this study.

Principal - The principal of a high school is the instructional and administrative leader of the institution (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). He or she usually sets policies and procedures at a school site. In some cases, the principal is the primary decision-maker (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Jazzar, 2004). However, when deemed necessary, the principal may delegate his or her decision-making responsibility to other individuals or committees within the school. Ultimately, the

principal is accountable to district-level supervisors and the school board for all aspects of operations at the school site (Eckman, 2004; Jazzar, 2004).

Assistant Principals - Assistant principals aid principals in the day-to-day administrative operation of the school (Cantwell, 1993; Marshall & Greenfield, 1987). At the discretion of the principal, they address many of the decision-making situations that arise, aiding in all matters of administration and curriculum. In general, whereas the principal oversees the entire operation of the school, assistant principals hold posts of limited jurisdiction (Cantwell, 1993; Eckman, 2004; Greenfield, 1985). For example, in the school district selected for participation in this study, there is one or more assistant principals for student affairs (discipline), curriculum (instruction), and administration (extra-curricular activities and physical school plant operations) in every high school. Within this study, the assistant principals for curriculum and the assistant principals for student affairs were targeted.

Assistant Principal of Curriculum - The job description for this assistant principal position was taken from the faculty handbook of the large county school district located in west central Florida selected for participation in this study. The assistant principal of curriculum “shall be directly responsible to the principal and shall, with the assistance of the department heads, provide leadership in curriculum study and development, coordination of in-service training, and the supervision of intern and teacher-aide programs” (Faculty Handbook 2005-2006, p.1). The assistant principal of curriculum’s role can include, but is not limited to, assisting in teacher evaluations, supervising classrooms, and preparing accreditation reports. They can also construct the master schedule; supervise the securing of substitute teachers; cover classes and maintain balanced classes; supervise data processing operations; and maintain property, textbooks, and inventory records (p.1).

Assistant Principal for Student Affairs - The job description for this assistant principal position was taken from the faculty handbook of the large county school district located in west

central Florida selected for participation in this study. The assistant principals for student affairs “as members of the administrative staff of the school shall have authority commensurate with individual responsibilities, in the area of administration, teacher evaluation, student activities and welfare, student discipline, in-service training of teachers, and public relations” (Faculty Handbook 2005-2006, p.1). The assistant principal for student affairs is directly responsible to the principal and will be the acting principal if the principal and the assistant principal of curriculum are absent. The assistant principal for student affairs’ duties include, but are not limited to, assisting in student registration and scheduling; pupil accounting and determining reasons for pupil absence and truancy; all forms of student discipline; assisting in supervision of after school and evening functions; and supervise and coordinate student activities, programs, and assemblies (p.1).

Stakeholders - The stakeholders of an organization are any individuals who have an interest in the running of a particular organization or the outcome of a specific decision. In the context of high schools, stakeholders can be students, teachers, parents, administrators, or other members of the community. Depending on the given circumstance, many stakeholders may be involved in, or affected by, the decision-making process. However, the degree of involvement of particular stakeholders in the decision-making process generally rests with the principal of that given school (Rallis & MacMullen, 2000; Vandenberghe, 1995).

Summary

In chapter one, the investigator briefly outlined the basic elements of the research study. Exploring the practitioners’ perceived understanding and situational use of decision-making models in the domain of educational leadership was the goal of this dissertation research. In order to achieve this end, the researcher first utilized Pettigrew’s (1985) conceptual framework to synthesize the disparate literature of the field into a holistic presentation of administrative decision-making. Second, the researcher used the understanding gained from an exploration of

the literature to guide the construction of a field-based study of decision-making patterns and perceived practices that guide secondary principals and assistant principals. Once this was completed, the study's results were analyzed, and the results reported in an attempt to address the demand for more empirically grounded research examining educational decision-making practices. To gain the requisite knowledge from practitioners in the field, the researcher devised a semi-structured schedule of interview questions and a demographic survey/decision-making survey. By interviewing and surveying the principals and assistant principals from each participating school site, the researcher explored how administrators handle decision-making situations and the decision-making processes implemented at specific high schools in one county district in west central Florida.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

As I faced the administrative challenges outlined in the introduction to chapter one (i.e., parent conferences, narcotics, curriculum issues), it became clear that decision-making was not a naturally occurring process, arising without issue throughout the course of one's professional duties. Decision-making requires thought and foresight. In many cases, a solution does not please each and every stakeholder. In my limited experience, a resolution to a given problem was often just a "jumping off point" for another cycle of decision-making.

Throughout my first year as an administrator, I encountered many problems. As I attempted, sometimes with the help of others (i.e., teachers, principal, assistant principals, students, parents), to solve a given concern, I realized that most decision-making endeavors included three key elements: the situation surrounding the problem, the individuals involved in the problem, and the process used to reach a solution to the problem. In order to understand the decision-making process fully, I read widely during my first year as a school leader. Within the course of my reading, I found a conceptual framework that mirrored the three aforementioned elements: the decision situation, the individuals involved in decision-making, and the decision making process (Pettigrew, 1985).

Using this heuristic as a guide, I attempted to synthesize and analyze the extant literature in the field of decision-making. Chapter two of the dissertation is the result of this effort. It begins with a description of decision-making itself and leads into a detailed explanation of the situations, models, and individuals involved in the decision-making process that arise in a school setting.

When combined together, these three elements define decision-making, and this chapter describes that process in detail.

Introduction

Decision-making is the process by which choices are made between alternatives to solve a given problem (Drucker, 1993, 1998; Mintzberg, Raisinghani, & Theoret, 1976; Reitz, 1989; Zey, 1992). Barnard (1938) defines decision-making as making choices that lead to environmental change. Owens (2001) adds to this definition, describing decision-making as, "... the heart of the organization and administration" (p. 264). Simply put, decision-making reinforces norms and institutes changes within organizations (Holbrook, 1999; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Johns, 1995; Vroom & Yetton, 1974). As a type of organization, schools embody a dynamic, shifting, and evolving environment that gives rise to an almost continuous stream of decision situations. Consequently, educational leaders must react to these circumstances in order to solve problems and continue effective organizational functioning (Bennis, 1989; Samier, 2002).

This chapter explores the various aspects of decision-making that influence the school environment. A conceptual framework is presented for use in exploring the elements that dominate decision-making in a K-12 educational setting. In doing so, the author ties together disparate components (e.g., decision situations, decision-making models, decision-makers) highlighted within the literature. Specifically, the author reviews the literature by examining decision situations in schools, the models/methods used to facilitate or describe decision-making in a K-12 environment, and the individual(s) involved in this process.

Regardless of instructional environment, decision-making pervades all areas of educational administration (Kirby, Paradise, & Protti, 1992; Taylor, 1984). Some decisions call for a committee's input, with a chairperson at the lead who must carefully weigh options before making any conclusion "for" or "against" a proposed solution (Duke, Showers, & Imber, 1980; Murnigham, 1981). For example, the move to add a controversial reading program into a

district's high school curriculum entails research and exploration by a decision-making body. One individual cannot demand the implementation of a curriculum that affects all the high schools in a given district. Conversely, however, some decisions are more simplistic, requiring little time or effort in the making. These decisions do not necessarily require a committee consensus (Miner, 1988; Paulsen & Betz, 2004). When to have the weekly staff meeting, or what to serve the faculty for dinner during open house are examples of decisions that require little planning or research. The lead decision-maker at the school, in most instances the principal, can make these decisions usually without the input of the organization's other members (Lindblom, 1980; March, 1994; Nye, 2004; Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Decision-making influences the "planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, and controlling" of the organization (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000, p. 155). In addition, decision-making serves as an important conflict resolution tool, allowing the members of the school environment to work out their differences before the educational process is hampered and student learning diminished (Nye & Capelluti, 2003). Though often difficult, decision-making provides a process that assists in reconciling individual needs and organizational goals (Barnard, 1938; Hoy & Miskel, 1991).

According to Owens (2001), organizational leaders are directly responsible for the quality and efficiency of the decision-making process. So, within schools, decision-making authority rests primarily with school-based administrators—in particular, principals—who may choose to make a decision or delegate the power to another within the school (e.g., assistant principal, team leader, department head, teacher, community member) (Barth, 2000; Evers & Lakomski, 1991). Indeed, while scholars stress the importance of involving staff members and teachers in a shared decision-making process (e.g., David, 1995; Enderlin-Lampe, 1997; Klecker, Austin, & Burns, 2000), principals ultimately control decision-making by initiating the process and ensuring the

implementation of the resulting decision(s) (Bennis, 1989; Johns, 1995; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000).

Some scholars, such as Drucker (1986, 1998), Griffiths (1956, 1959), Lindblom (1965, 1980), and Simon (1947, 1964) assert that leadership *is* decision-making. Each day, a school-based leader must make decisions that define the educational environment. At the same time, the leader's decision illustrates his or her leadership style and situational efficacy. Clearly, the aforementioned constructs are intertwined, both defining and being defined by one another (Plous, 1993). Who is included in the decision-making process, how the leader or committee finalizes a decision, and when the solution is put into place within the organization are, according to Griffiths (1956, 1959), all under the direct control of the school's administrators. Within the context of an individual school, the principal is the lead administrator and primary decision-making authority (Gardner, 1990; Senge, 1990); that is to say, most decisions originate and/or are approved by the principal or leader (Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Mintzberg, 1989; Vroom & Jago, 1988). In doing so, a principal should demonstrate concern for both students and faculty members, providing a working environment that is fulfilling for the adult and educationally challenging for the student (Denig & Quinn, 2001). Similarly, Bell (2002) and Whipp (1998) assert that the principal of a school is a strategic planner, examining the environment in which his or her school functions and using resources in order to predict problems before they occur.

In short, due to the principal's or leader's role within the organization and the organizational authority granted to him or her, principals or leaders make decisions on a nearly continual basis (Hallinger, 1992; Vandenberghe, 1995). These may range from relatively "trivial" concerns, such as which slogan to use for the homecoming dance, to far more serious situations, such as a student's use of violence against another student, or a staff member's harassment of a student (Bucher & Manning, 2003). To assist in this task, principals may use a variety of

decision-making models and involve a number of different stakeholders based upon the given organizational situation (Greenfield, 1987, 1991).

Following this introduction, a theoretical model is utilized to explore the components that influence decision-making. Through this framework, the author binds together disparate elements highlighted in the literature. Consequently, the author reviews the literature, examining educational decision situations, the models/methods used to facilitate or describe decision-making, and the individual(s) involved in the process. This endeavor will help provide clarity and background knowledge for the study's methodology presented in chapter three.

Conceptual Framework: Decision-Making in Educational Administration

The purpose of this dissertation was to advance knowledge by exploring practitioners' perceived understanding and situational use of decision-making models in the educational administration domain. To accomplish this objective, the author explored the extant literature related to decision-making in education. In reviewing the literature, however, the author identified a number of disparate streams. As a result, a conceptual framework was provided to synthesize these distinct elements into a comprehensible, holistic review.

In her preliminary exploration of the literature, the author discovered three critical elements associated with decision-making that are frequently cited in the literature. First, scholars highlight the importance of understanding the decision situation. Second, researchers address the issue of individual involvement in the decision-making process. In other words, who is and/or should be empowered to participate in making decisions. Third, academics and practitioners concern themselves with models/methods that are either employed as heuristics or used to describe the decision-making process (Blau & Scott, 1962; Daft, 2001; Heller, Drenth, Koopman, & Rus, 1988; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000; March, 1994; Owens, 2001).

In exploring the available literature for a suitable conceptual framework to synthesize this disparate body of literature, the author discovered a contextualist framework, proposed by

Pettigrew (1985), for understanding the process of organizational change. As a management scholar, Pettigrew writes concerning the ideas of change and growth within various organizations and environments (Pettigrew, 1985; Pettigrew, Woodman, & Cameron, 2001). Although originating in the domain of operations and management research, Pettigrew's (1985) model has been applied in other fields. For example, Symons (1990) introduced Pettigrew's framework into the discipline of information systems evaluation, having recognized the similarities between organizational change (broadly) and the implementation of information systems in organizations (specifically). As a result, Pettigrew's (1985) framework has been widely applied to information systems evaluation, including contributions from Klecun and Cornford (2003), Serafeimidis (1997), and Willcocks and Margetts (1994).

Like Symons (1990), the author recognized the similarities between organizational change and another domain, in this case educational decision-making. Indeed, at the outset of this dissertation, decision-making was described as a process that reinforces norms (i.e., inhibiting change) or institutes new ideas (i.e., fostering change). Ergo, Pettigrew's (1985) framework (see chapter one) for understanding organizational change processes seemed particularly appropriate.

Pettigrew's framework consists of three parts. In broad terms, "content" refers to the *what* of change, "context" refers to the *why* of change, and "process" refers to the *how* of change, or how change takes place in a given organizational setting. However, in the case of this dissertation, the researcher adapted Pettigrew's framework in order to better align it with the three primary concerns identified in her review of the extant literature on educational decision-making: the decision situation (the "content"), the methods used in the decision-making process (the "process"), and the individual(s) involved in making the decision (the "context") (Blau & Scott, 1962; Daft, 2001; Heller, Drenth, Koopman, & Rus, 1988; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000; March, 1994; Owens, 2001; Plous, 1993). While the application of the content and process elements likely seems obvious, the context element may require further explanation.

As meaning is personally constructed, it appeared appropriate to recognize the individualistic nature of context. That is to say, context is not a concrete reality; instead, it exists only in the mind of an individual (Beckner, 2004; Carlson, 1964; Murphy, 1989). Furthermore, an individual constructs his or her view of a situation based upon a myriad of beliefs, experiences, and prior knowledge that arise from a multitude of social, cultural, economic, and political variables (Meyer, 1983; Reitzug, 1994; Smircich, 1983). Thus, “context” may best be explored in this dissertation in terms of the individuals involved in the decision-making process.

In the following sections, the author will explore the “content” or decision situations encountered within the school setting, followed by a review of the “process” or the seven decision-making models figuring prominently in the extant literature surveyed. Finally, the “context” or the decision-maker/stakeholder role will be highlighted to conclude this literature review.

The Content: Decision Situations

Decision situations often occur quickly and require swift action in order to solve problems (Daft, 1989; Hoy & Miskel, 1991; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; March, 1994; Owens, 2001; Shapiro, Benjamin, & Hunt, 1995). In addition, these situations are fluid, changing over time. Likewise, while situations may appear somewhat similar, they are unlikely ever to be identical (Bendor, 1995). Given the dynamic, fluid, and unique nature of problems, decision-makers should carefully evaluate every situation before devising a plan or selecting a solution (Cheng, 1993; Vandenberghe, 1995).

According to Sergiovanni (1999), schools are unique environments. Moreover, the quality of that environment—the school’s climate and culture—rests with the outcomes associated with the decisions made by its leaders (Lindsay, Halfacre, & Welch, 2004; Nye, 2004; Thomas & Bainbridge, 2002). Indeed, these outcomes tangibly influence the environment which students inhabit, ultimately affecting the quality of the students’ overall educational experience.

However, the relationship between the school's environment and organizational decision-making is complex and interrelated (Senge, 1990). On the one hand, the existing environment influences the problems that emerge. Yet, on the other hand, problem resolutions shape the environment (Quick & Normore, 2004). This underscores the need for principals to understand the climate in which they function and to analyze the decision situation before attempting to select a solution (Nucci, 2001).

There have been many attempts at addressing decision situations. Duncan (1976) discussed circumstances in terms of "situational complexity," and White, Dittrich, and Lang (1980) elaborated upon Duncan's idea by classifying situations in two ways: highly structured and limited in scope, or loosely structured and unlimited in scope. Hoy and Tarter (2004), however, in the author's opinion, provides a more robust model for understanding the various decision situations that arise in educational institutions. Specifically, they highlight four archetypes of decision situations that a principal might face, ranging from the relatively simple to the complex. First, principals address situations in which the problem is specific and the information surrounding the problem is complete. As a result, the solution or goal remains narrow in focus, and the decision is relatively easy to make. However, while such circumstances are easier to address, Hoy and Miskel (1991) caution that no situation is entirely "simple," as there are always hidden aspects that may provide trouble for the decision-maker. Second, principals face situations in which the problem is not overly complex, but less information is available, as a result of time constraints or some other limitations. Consequently, the leader must make a decision with incomplete and/or imperfect information. Third, principals may face situations in which the information is incomplete and/or imperfect, the decision is complex, and the outcomes are uncertain, but where there is also a guiding policy for action. Fourth and finally, decision-makers may encounter situations that include incomplete information, complex decisions,

uncertain outcomes, and no guiding principles. In these circumstances, principals will often utilize short-term strategies until policy guidelines are established.

In addition to Hoy and Tarter's (2004) broad classification schema, other scholars have researched the decision situations faced by principals and other educational leaders. In one study, Savery, Soutar, and Dyson (1992) sampled 136 deputy principals employed by the Catholic Educational Office of Western Australia. Their research highlighted six different categories of situations that the deputy principals claim to have encountered at least once a month, involving school policy, student discipline, economic variables, teaching loads, parental involvement, and time allocation. Overall, these situations are diverse concerning both the individuals who are involved and the problems that are solved. These decision-making situations often occur spontaneously, frequently requiring immediate action.

The Process: Decision-Making Models

The literature contains numerous decision-making models that principals and other decision-makers may utilize in order to guide their decision-making process. Within the extant research on organizational decision-making, a considerable number of planning theories are described for consideration (Blau & Scott, 1962; Daft, 2001; Heller, Drenth, Koopman, & Rus, 1988). Although different in scope and purpose, all decision-making models overlap, drawing from one another's content and the context of the decision situation; solving problems effectively is the ultimate goal (Hoy & Tarter, 2004). Generally, there remains a good deal of agreement among theorists about how planning and policy-making have been done in practice; however, there is no general consensus about how these activities ought to be implemented (Zey, 1992). In reviewing the literature, the author identified seven such commonly cited models: the classical or traditional model, the satisficing strategy, the incremental model, the mixed-scanning model, the garbage can model, the political decision-making model, and the ethical decision-making model (Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000; March, 1994; March & Simon, 1968; Owens,

2001; Sergiovanni, 2000; Zey, 1992). In general, these models are normative, describing the steps associated with the decision-making process. However, they may also be used descriptively to explain how decision-making is operationalized within the school setting. The following sections describe each of these models in detail.

The Classical or Traditional Model

Philosophically, classical or traditional decision-making is grounded in the concept of scientific rationality. It is based upon the notion that leaders are endeavoring to “maximize the chances of achieving their desired objectives by considering all possible alternatives, exploring all conceivable consequences from among the alternatives, and then making a decision” (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000, p. 214). To those ends, clear steps are outlined for a decision-maker to follow. After all the steps are completed, a logical decision should emerge based upon the assumption that one best solution is possible for any given situation (Barnard, 1938; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Simon, 1964).

While a number of classical decision-making model variants are found in the literature, the fundamental elements and assumptions of classical decision-making remain similar throughout most texts. It is generally referred to as the “classical” or “traditional” decision-making model (Daft, 1989; Gardner, 1990; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000; March, 1994; Owens, 2001). Typically, scholars explain this model as having delineated steps that decision-makers can follow (Babbage, 1998; Haller & Strike, 1986; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000; Owens, 2001). Many texts list these steps as identifying the problem, generating the alternatives, evaluating the alternatives, choosing an appropriate solution, and converting the choice into effective action (Arrow, 1964; Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1963; Daft, 1989; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Kollman, Miller, & Page, 1992; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000; March, 1994; Owens, 2001; Taylor, 1984).

Clearly, identifying a problem is the first step in the classical or traditional decision-making process. If there is no problem, there is no need to make a decision. Hoy and Tarter (2004) emphasize: “Problems are discrepancies between actual and desired outcomes. Administrators monitor school operations to identify problems, that is, to determine when performance falls short of expectations” (p.11). After the problem has been defined, the decision-maker or a group of individuals generate alternative solutions for that specific situation. Once this process reaches completion, the generated alternatives are evaluated (Babbage, 1998; Webb, Neumann, & Jones, 2004). Joseph H. Reitz (1989) offers three steps to evaluate solutions:

1. The decision-maker must recognize all possible outcomes from each alternative solution, both positive and negative.
2. The decision-maker must assess the nature of each outcome, both positive and negative.
3. The decision-maker must assess the likelihood of each possible outcome to each alternative. (p. 91)

After evaluation, the leader or decision-maker chooses the alternative that is considered the best or most rational choice for the situation. The goals and objectives are measured against the solution to see if it is a good “fit” (Owens, 2001). Finally, the organization implements the solution. As a proactive element of the decision-making process, the leader constantly considers the problems that might occur after solution implementation (Haller & Strike, 1986; Heckman, 1996).

In school organizations, administrators are dependent on others to implement decisions. That is, a school administrator must have skills not only for problem solving but also for “selling” the decision to those affected by it (Babbage, 1998; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000). Decision-making does not end with implementing a solution. This precept is often forgotten. The administrator or individual responsible for the decision evaluates whether or not a solution is

achieving its desired objectives. Does the hard evidence of what is occurring match the expected or projected outcomes of the decision? If the specified objective does not match the reality of the outcome, the whole process needs to be recycled, and a new solution to the problem found (Burns, 1978; Reitz, 1989; Simon, 1978).

When researchers attempted to employ this model in real-world situations, problems were encountered with its feasibility. Scholars and practitioners came to question its efficacy in addressing problems amidst the “hustle and bustle” of daily activities within organizations (Arrow, 1964; Hoy & Tarter, 2004). Ultimately, many concluded the “classical” or “traditional” heuristic was flawed. While some organizational theorists and practitioners want to create new decision-making models, others simply wish to re-envision the classical model, so that it can be useful in a modern organization (Drucker, 1998).

Possibly, one of the greatest limitations of the aforementioned classical model is the assumptions under which it attempts to operate. For instance, it assumes that the decision-maker has a clear goal for the organization (Bowers, 1967; Rice & Schneider, 1994; Vroom & Yetton, 1974). Likewise, it anticipates the availability of both complete information and the assumed cognitive ability of the decision-maker to always correctly analyze a problem. In many circumstances, these assumptions are unrealistic (Tarter & Hoy, 1998). Many practitioners and scholars endeavor to use this model as a “jumping off point” for their own interpretations of the decision-making process (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1963; Daft, 1989).

Satisficing Strategy

The term *satisficing* originates from within the scholarship of Simon (1947, 1964), writer, professor, consultant, and Nobel Prize winner (Augier & Frank, 2002; Augier & March, 2001). While a professor at Carnegie Mellon University for the majority of his career, Simon (1947) wrote arguably his most influential work, *Administrative Behavior*. With Simon’s writings and

other research, his effect on the academic realm was wide-ranging, from public administration to economics to cognitive psychology (Rainey, 1991, 2001; Sent, 2002; Simon, 1991).

Much of Simon's work focused on the area of administrative decision-making, particularly the behavior of leaders in specific situations and the variations inherent in these differing environments (Hammond, 1990; Henry, 2001). Simon (1947, 1962) acknowledged that most scholarship in the field took an unrealistic view of human decision-making and its perception of rationality. To reconcile the ideal of rationality with the fallibility of human decision-making, Simon chose to perceive the world and its organizations as hierarchical (Simon, 1993a). Augier and Frank (2002) explained, "The economy, the society, the family, the organization – and even the individual – were all systems, decomposable into subsystems, characterized by the interdependence of their component elements" (p. 584). Simon's original research goal that fueled much of his future writings revolved around finding a usable solution to a problem. Given the satisficing strategy, an individual attempts to solve the problem with an answer that meets or exceeds expectations (Simon, 1993b). With this idea in mind, Simon (1947, 1962) organized decision-making according to the dictates of a hierarchical model of ends and means (Hammond, 1990; Simon, 1947); these nascent ideas developed into the full-fledged, recognizable concepts of *satisficing* and *bounded rationality* (Desquech, 2001; March, 1978).

Simon used the idea of *satisficing* to explain how leaders actually made decisions. Simon (1947) acknowledged that the "real world" contains uncertainties, conscious or unconscious biases, and a limited knowledge of any given situation. In essence, Simon (1947) stated:

...the capacity of the human mind for formulating and solving complex problems is very small compared with the size of the problems whose solution is required for objectively rational behavior in the real world – or even for a reasonable approximation of such objective rationality. (p.198)

When making decisions within an organization, the relationship between a decision-maker's mental ability and the complexity of the problem engenders uncertainty (Bendor, 2003; Camerer, 1994). In addition to the previous limitations, a decision-maker also does not have the time or resources to gather all relevant, available information prior to decision-making. In practice, it is virtually impossible for an individual to make a completely rational decision in a complex situation (Rainey, 2001; Rallis & MacMullen, 2000). Bendor (2003) describes this phenomenon: "The heart of the satisficing model is the assumption that a decision maker has an internal standard, an aspiration level, which partitions all current payoffs into two sets: satisfactory and unsatisfactory" (p. 451). The leader looks for how the various consequences compare to one other. There is no "absolute value" for the outcome of a given situation (Camerer, 1994; Rainey, 2001). So, decision-makers continue forward, taking into account their current resources and constraints (Simon, 1964).

In addition to situational complexity, other barriers in the environment prevent perfectly rational decision-making. For example, task demands are dynamic, while mental resources stay fixed (Sent, 2002; Simon, 1978). Bendor (2003) explains that leaders utilizing a satisficing heuristic reach a "crossing point," when cognitive capacities cease to affect decision-making. Usually, this occurs much later for novices than for expert decision-makers. In order to develop and maintain the status of expert within a given field, the individual must practice his or her decision-making skills and reflect upon the solutions that occur (Taylor, 1984).

What interested Simon the most involved how individuals within an organization cope with and/or work around their cognitive limitations (Simon, 1947, 1964). In essence, decision-makers, based upon ability level and situation, look for solutions that are "good enough." Simon (1947) also identified decision-making as a means-end chain. This view holds that organizations must attain certain goals, while various choices are available to assist in achieving those objectives. However, once an organization selects and implements an alternative, it begins a new

organizational circumstance, with challenges that must be addressed (Tversky & Kahneman, 1986). It is a cyclical process; one solution engenders another problem, which in turn brings about a new solution and so forth (Simon, 1979).

Similarly, this narrowing of the range of alternatives introduces another concept credited to Simon (1947, 1964), the idea of bounded rationality. In 1951, Camus stated that man was not intelligent enough to be a rational creature, and Simon built upon this idea. Simon derives many of his rudimentary thoughts on bounded rationality from his personal experiences dealing with the irrationality of man (Augier & Frank, 2002; Bendor, 2003). More specifically, Simon (1947, 1964) observed municipal administrators in the field making decisions and then constructing theoretical analyses using these observations. In Simon's early writings, bounded rationality provided a recognized and accurate portrayal of what leaders did when making decisions. Human beings, when faced with limited information, motivation, time, and resources, fall back on solutions to problems that are readily apparent (Bendor, 2003; Rainey, 2001). March (1978) explained how bounded rationality embodies logical behavior with constraints placed upon it. Speaking of Simon's work, March stated, "that human beings develop decision procedures that are sensible, given the constraints, even though they might not be sensible if the constraints were removed. As a short-hand label for such procedures, the researcher coined the term 'satisficing'" (p. 590).

Principals may not recognize or ascribe to Simon's concepts of satisficing, means-ends chains, and bounded rationality. Yet, due to the constraints they face, principals likely observe a simplified version of reality, using only those factors they deem important for making a decision (Hoy & Tarter, 2004). In so doing, principals sometimes ignore aspects of reality that may, in fact, be important when addressing a given issue. However, because of time constraints and the inability to rationally understand each and every nuance of a complex problem, leaders must stick to easily understood and attainable options to problem situations (Desquech, 2001). With the

daily stresses, requirements, and responsibilities faced by principals, a “satisficing” decision-making model, in which the decision-maker settles for an acceptable (rather than optimal) solution, may be an appropriate choice (Blau & Scott, 1962; Eden, 1997; Huber, 2004).

However, a satisficing strategy is not without its limitations. Throughout his entire career, Simon’s critics attacked him for his “over reliance” on empirical evidence and his insistence upon complicated cognitive models during the later part of his career (Bendor, 2003; Rainey, 2001). Recently, scholars in the social sciences have turned away from quantitative methodology in favor of qualitative methods and more postmodernist, interpretive, critical theory orientations (Wamsley & Wolf, 1996; Wamsley et al., 1990). In some organizational contexts, satisficing and bounded rationality may not work well, especially when the consequences of actions are unclear and alternative solutions cannot be adequately identified (March, 1978).

The Incremental Model

In the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, Charles Lindblom (1959, 1964, 1979) developed a theoretical construct to aid in making decisions within a business or political organization. He described this incremental model as “the science of muddling through” (p. 86). Lindblom (1959, 1964) illustrated the basic ideas of this heuristic in an extremely well-known series of publications (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1963). His 1959 essay alone was published in approximately 40 anthologies and is considered a classic in the field of organizational decision-making (Bendor, 1995; Lindblom, 1979).

According to Lindblom (1959, 1964, 1979), decision-makers do not always see a clear goal when solving a problem. Context is a major factor when assessing a problematic situation; it is extremely unlikely that one type of decision-making works best in all situations (Lustick, 1980). Braybrooke and Lindblom (1963) affirm that a decision-making strategy is strongly tied to the appropriate context. Despite a leader’s grasp of the context, addressing problems may make decision-makers uncomfortable because they perhaps lack the confidence to define clear

objectives. Instead, some leaders prefer to “muddle through” by making small decisions, checking the consequences, and continuing on until the problem is solved or an adverse reaction occurs from some stakeholder (March, 1994; Rallis & MacMullen, 2000). Lindblom (1959, 1965) formally refers to this process as incremental decision-making or incrementalism. The idea that incremental policy changes are superior to radical decisions remains a well-known theme, permeating the business and organizational change literature for thirty years (Bendor, 1995; Lindblom, 1979, March, 1994).

It seems intuitive that incrementalism involves small policy changes and non-incrementalism does not. It is important to assert, however, that non-incremental decision-making does not imply a comprehensive look at the solutions available for a specific problem. Even with large-scale decision-making initiatives, only a relatively small portion of the possible options to a problem are explored (Rice & Schneider, 1994; Tarter & Hoy, 1998). In essence, scholars and practitioners assume that non-incremental searches for problem solutions are risky and uncertain. Evaluating a new alternative that varies greatly from the status quo should be treated with uncertainty and caution (Dror, 1964; Etzioni, 1967).

In schools, monitoring the results of small decisions allow the principal to avoid negative outcomes, while working towards a larger goal (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000; March, 1994; Owens, 2001). The decision-maker is seen as fallible, choosing between relatively few options that appear to improve policy. “... the player simply compares the status quo with a new alternative, chooses the one that he or she believes is superior, and throws away the other one” (Bendor, 1995, p. 821). When practiced, principals consider a small number of options that are easily understood and analyzed. Then, they take small steps, solving problems as they occur, wary of changing the status-quo dramatically (Blau & Scott, 1962). An action plan emerges as alternatives are tested and consequences experienced. “Seriality” or repeated attacks on the same policy problem and “redundancy” or multiple decision-makers working on the same problem help

formulate plans that do not dramatically alter the environment or culture of an organization (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1963; Heller, Drenth, Koopman, & Rus, 1988).

Clearly, the incremental model differs in some critical aspects from both the classical and satisficing models. Unlike the classical or traditional model, when “muddling through” a complex situation, prior criteria for success, objectives, and a thorough scanning of relevant information is not necessary (Hoy & Tarter, 2004). The satisficing heuristic described by Simon (1947) looks for a “stopping point” in the search for alternative solutions. Once the decision-maker chances upon an option that exceeds the current status quo, the leader implements it and continues on to the next best solution (Simon, 1947, 1964). In addition, when compared with the incremental model, Simon’s means-end process is inappropriate; alternatives for action and decision-making goals occur together. Some scholars consider the incremental model much more difficult to comprehend and adapt to practice than that of Simon’s (1947) satisficing heuristic (Bendor, 1995; Dror, 1964; Kohn & Shavell, 1974).

Hoy and Tarter (2004) provide a succinct outline of the important characteristics and assumptions of the incremental model:

1. Means-end analysis is inappropriate because objectives and alternatives emerge simultaneously.
2. Good solutions are those upon which decision-makers agree regardless of objectives.
3. Options and outcomes are dramatically reduced by considering only alternatives similar to the current state of affairs.
4. Analysis is limited to differences between the existing situation and proposed alternatives.
5. The incremental method eschews theory in favor of successive comparisons of concrete, practical alternatives. (p. 43)

In all, the incremental model serves practitioners by providing an efficient decision-making heuristic. By limiting the decision-making focus and reducing information demands, outcomes may be more easily judged (Blau & Scott, 1962; Lindblom, 1980). Multiple decision-makers may also compensate for the inadequacy of the decision-makers' knowledge of options and possible solutions to problems. By increasing the number of individuals involved, the number of solutions will also increase. In viewing decision-making in this fashion, scholars and practitioners must assume that all individuals involved in decision-making share the same objective (Bendor & Moe, 1986; Kollman, Miller, & Page, 1992). Moreover, with the classical and satisficing models, theory guides practice. Yet, as problems become more complex, theories may seem more inadequate (Lindblom, 1959, 1964; Lustick, 1980). "Muddling through" offers an alternative that some scholars believe provides a way to effectively handle complex decisions in a practitioner setting (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972).

That said, however, the flexibility associated with the incremental model implies that it is unfocused, thereby potentially allowing decision-makers to drift from their intended purpose (Vandenberghe, 1995). Lindblom (1965) points out that decision-makers can only accomplish so much:

One can easily imagine a decision maker who can return in later policy steps to no more than a few of a variety of neglected adverse consequences resulting from an earlier policy step. This possibility points directly to the need for a multiplicity of decision makers and, more than that, to a multiplicity marked by a great variety of attitudes and interests, so that no line of adverse consequences fails to come to the attention of some decision maker (p. 151).

Critics raise other issues with this model. They argue that the process may neglect basic social innovations, focusing on the short run and seeking limited variations from past policies (Etzioni, 1967). The process may reinforce "the pro-inertia and anti-innovation forces prevalent in all

human organizations” (Dror, 1964, p. 155). The incremental strategy’s cautious approach may produce alternatives that are far from innovative.

Unfortunately, this decision-making methodology of incrementalism recently lost favor in the academy and practitioner publications. Possible explanations for this decline have been forwarded (Arrow, 1964; Bendor, 1995; Lustick, 1980). Lustick (1980) suggests that this model relies exclusively on informal reasoning, thus limiting its practicality for the working professional. There is no “full-blown formalization” of the model of incrementalism or “muddling through” (Bendor, 1995). Unlike Simon’s (1947, 1964) satisficing model that still remains current and viable for today’s organizational leadership, “muddling through” has been relegated to textbooks and rarely surfaces in the academic journals and professional publications (Bendor, 1995; Dror, 1964; Lustick, 1980).

Mixed-Scanning Model

Amitai Etzioni (1967, 1986, 1989) proposed an approach, known as the mixed-scanning model, that is pragmatic and attempts to meld the best aspects of the classical and incremental decision-making models together. The rationality of classical or traditional decision-making is often compromised by the costliness of data collection and human fallibility (Etzioni, 1968; Rallis & MacMullen, 2000). Decisions are viewed as the outcome of give-and-take or mutual adjustment between the various interests involved in the decision-making process (Etzioni, 1967). With incremental decision-making, the alleviation of present circumstances takes precedence over the formulation of future goals. The mixed-scanning approach attempts to mitigate the criticisms leveled at the incremental decision-making model, such as its constraints on innovation and its traditional reinforcement of inertia and conservatism (Etzioni, 1968, 1986). In doing so, the mixed-scanning method asks two questions when approaching decision situations. First, what is the basic mission of the organization? Second, what incremental decisions will move the organization in the direction of achieving its basic mission? (Wiseman, 1979).

A mixed-scanning approach allows the leader to broadly scan the field of interest, identifying which decisions can continue to be taken incrementally and which ought to be taken as rationally as possible. Wiseman (1979) claims that "...by varying the details of the scanning activity, such an approach would be flexible enough to deal with a wide variety of contexts, and environments of varying stability" (p. 104). In addressing these questions, mixed-scanning provides the leader with the benefits of the incremental model's flexibility and the satisficing model's rationality (Etzioni, 1992; Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood, 1988).

In schools, it is usually impossible to gather all the information necessary to make a decision. Within these circumstances, using the mixed-scanning method, the principal or decision-maker utilizes an incremental approach in order to approximate an answer to a given situation using an existing organizational policy or philosophy as a general guideline (Etzioni, 1986, 1988). In doing so, the principal may make decisions with limited information, while remaining confident the policies or the philosophy of the institution has not been compromised (Etzioni, 1967, 1986).

Etzioni (1989) outlined seven principles to guide mixed-scanning decision-making. First, decision-makers should continually search for alternatives and check the outcomes of decisions for changes in decision-making action. Second, decisions should be made slowly to allow for adjustments in strategy. Third, decision-makers should procrastinate, especially in cases where the situation is complex or objectives are uncertain. This stance allows the principal or administrator more time to look for information, analyze the data, and search for alternative solutions. Fourth, leaders should commit to decisions in stages, assessing prior outcomes before beginning the next phase. Fifth, if uncertain, decision-makers should test staged decisions prior to fully committing resources. Sixth, decision-makers should consider implementing competing alternatives that may lead to desired outcomes. Seventh, leaders must be prepared to reverse a decision that has already been made.

The mixed-scanning model provides many benefits. With it, decisions may be made flexible. Should a solution fail, the decision-maker might gather more data and try again (Brown, Boyle, & Boyle, 1999; Gammage, 1985; Taylor, 1984). By following the organization's policies and philosophies, decisions could further the goals of the organization, not the individual (Barnard, 1938; Cunningham & Gresso, 1993; Johnson & Scollay, 2001).

The Garbage Can Model

Unlike the previous heuristics that are primarily normative, the garbage can model remains more of a descriptive tool than a decision-making paradigm. It describes the way organizations make decisions, but it should not be used to solve problems that occur in an organization (Heller, Drenth, Koopman, & Rus, 1988; Janis & Mann, 1977; Pinfield, 1986).

Scholars argue that the garbage can model is an extension of the Carnegie Model of Decision-Making and the work of Richard Cyert and James March (1963) in their text, *A Behavioral Theory of the Firm*. Rainey (2001) regards this work and Simon's (1947, 1991) research on the satisficing strategy of decision-making as a direct link between previous research in the field and the garbage can model of decision-making. "The Garbage Can Model depicts organizational decisions, especially in certain more loosely organized organizations, such as universities and some governmental agencies, as more chaotic and chance-based than rationally controlled" (Rainey, 2001, p. 499).

Simply, the garbage can model infers that people often launch into action before they reflect on consequences (March, 1994). "Gut instinct" and "emotions" sometimes guide decision-making when "rationality" and "theory" would have served the organization and its individuals much better. The garbage can model aptly describes this *ad hoc* process (Cohen & March, 1974; Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972).

Essentially, the garbage can model rests on a simple precept: decision-making does not begin with a problem and end with a solution. Instead, decisions consist of four independent

streams of organizational events (Cohen & March, 1974; Cohen et al., 1972; Slater & Boyd, 1999). These four streams are comprised of problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities, which interact to form decisions. However, their interactions are not structured and do not flow in one direction—they are essentially random (Lindblom, 1965). Cohen and March (1974) describe in detail this fluid process, where solutions and problems coexist together. Under these circumstances, an organization and its leaders may not consider a problem until a solution is already available. When a problem and solution appear to match, a decision occurs (Hall, 1987; Pinfield, 1986). Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972) capture the essence of this process when they describe it as “a collection of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which there might be answers, and decision makers looking for work” (p. 2).

When high levels of uncertainty occur within an organization, researchers frequently observe the garbage can model in operation (Cohen et al., 1972). Moreover, such organizations function with inherent ambiguities within their decision-making process, thereby making it difficult to ascertain the cause and effect of its decisions (Cohen & March, 1974). Unfocused and unimportant activities often happen in such organizations, with limited time available to solve any one decision (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993; Savery, Soutar, & Dyson, 1992). As such, the garbage can model illustrates why alternatives are chosen that do not solve organizational problems (Daft, 2001).

A Political Model of Decision-Making

Organizations outline goals for institutional success; individuals hold goals for personal success. Often, these two forces collide and cause conflicts in the workplace (Barnard, 1938; Mintzberg, 1983). Optimally, these goals are reconciled for the benefit of both the organization and its employees. The pull between individual desires and group ideologies cause political forces to arise within an organization. Organizational personnel may sacrifice the “good of the whole”

for wealth, personal advancement, and/or power (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Nye & Capelluti, 2003). Conversely, organizational welfare may supercede an individual's goals and aspirations. "Political" decisions attempt to reconcile these two factions into a cohesive solution that claims to benefit all involved (Klein, 1998). Unfortunately, according to the decision-making literature, these "political" decisions and continuous environmental stressors often hamper organizations and the individuals involved, limiting, instead of enhancing, their goal attainment. The key to success involves institutions minimizing these constraints and maximizing their primary goals (Barnard, 1938; Klein, 1998; Mintzberg, 1983).

Within some organizational environments, no goals exist; superficially stated institutional directives are subjugated in favor of personal preferences. Chaos is the normal operating procedure, and power is related to who makes the decisions in an organization and for what purpose (Barnard, 1938; March & Simon, 1968). Political decision-making arises from the "push and pull" of organizational goals and individual desires. From a "political" perspective on decision-making, power remains the dominant component, a prevalent and integral part of organizational life (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Klein & Weitzenfeld, 1978; Reitman, 1965).

To prevent power from overwhelming organizational goals that can benefit all individuals, leaders must concern themselves with, "those situations in which control becomes the overriding force within the organization – that is, when politics replace the legitimate procedures for decision-making and substitutes for goals" (Hoy & Tarter, 2004, p .67). It would be unreasonable and foolish to imagine that political decision-making is absent entirely from some organizations. In most cases, personal goals and objectives inform organizational goals and help to attain benefits for all (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Mintzberg, 1983). In schools, administrators, teachers, and the community attempt to prevent personal politics from replacing legitimate and important institutional aims (Klein, 1998; March & Simon, 1968).

In some situations, political decision-making may be legitimate. It can help to ease gridlock imposed by traditional systems of decision-making or forge a path for an unpopular decision that may, in fact, work for the benefit of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Plous, 1993; Yates, 1990). However, leaders involved in organizational change must remember that political decision-making is primarily driven by personal needs and wants. Organizational priorities may become obscured by individuals striving for goals that may be in direct opposition to what is best for the group (Yates, 1990). When political decision-making is used, power is the primary component in the means-ends analysis. Because of the chaos and conflict inherent within political decision-making, much of the organization's activities concern "putting out fires" and resolving the most pressing conflicts that arise (Mintzberg, 1983; Simon, 1964). How can organizations guard against this problem; is there an alternative process that seeks to aid individuals and organizations to achieve their respective goals?

In the existing literature on political decision-making and power, scholars forward a naturalistic decision-making model as an answer to political decisions' flaws and pitfalls (Chi, Glaser, & Farr, 1988; Dawes, 1988; Klein, 1998). A naturalistic decision-making heuristic seeks to identify and understand an individual's flawed thinking and irrational wants/desires. Klein (1998) underscores that throughout the past twenty-five years, scholars and practitioners have focused on the flaws of individuals and the decisions that they make. Seeking to avoid individual weaknesses has been the goal. Recently, however, researchers have concentrated on positive human possibility, an area that has been overlooked in most of the scholarship on the subject (Dawes, 1998; Orasanu & Connolly, 1993). Education is a "high stakes" environment; wrong decisions lead to inadequate instruction for the young and ultimately a population unprepared to compete in the ever-increasing global economy (Chi, Glaser, & Farr, 1988). To counteract this possibility, Orasanu and Connolly (1993) suggest taking research into the field, the wider-world where the decision-making is actually occurring. A formulaic heuristic cannot cope with the

uncertainty and ever-shifting climate of an actual educational institution. Naturalistic decision-making attempts to reconcile this problem. Decision-makers in a school must deal with inadequate information and goals that are not clearly defined. When making decisions, situations are dynamic, and the procedures for solving problems may be poorly defined (Nisbett, 1993; Orasanu & Connolly, 1993). Naturalistic decision-making balances these previous factors to produce results and solve problems. The naturalistic decision-making philosophy stresses usability and practicality. Klein (1998) highlights this fact when he states, “If the things we learn do not have much practical value, perhaps we are investigating questions that are not important” (p. 6).

Naturalistic decision-making allows the leader or administrator to make choices that affect real situations and problems. Conflicts that require solutions occur on a regular basis with little or no preparation beforehand. A model with predetermined steps in a means-ends sequence does not fit all circumstances (Anderson, 1993; David, 1989; Ortiz & Ogawa, 2000). Naturalistic decision-making differs greatly from the classical or satisficing heuristics (Klein, 1998; McCarthy & Riner, 1996). It is a lens through which problems are viewed and evaluated, similar to the previously described garbage can model and the ethical model of decision-making detailed in the following section. In a “real world” environment, decision-makers may not have the time to evaluate the available choices for a given solution. Instead, naturalistic decision-making allows for “decision points” (Anderson, 1993; Dawes, 1988; Nisbett, 1993). White, Dittrich, and Lang (1980) explain that individuals do not fail or refuse to make decisions between various action choices. In many cases, no time exists for option evaluation. In other cases, there are few options to choose that are viable. Simply, the leader makes a decision and awaits the outcome. Then, he or she makes another decision that either rectifies the current situation or continues the present course of action. Naturalistic decision-making allows for leader experience to chart a path toward a correct decision (Chi, Glaser, & Farr, 1998; Dawes, 1988). While experts can think logically

through one option to its conclusion and decide whether or not to act upon it, novices are unable to do the same; they lack experience in “real life” situations (Blau & Scott, 1962; Conway, 1984). So, how can novice leaders gain the necessary experiences in order to make effective decisions? One way is to utilize mental simulations to help acquire the much-needed evaluative skills. Also, novices must learn to evaluate the options available at a given time. Once the novice leader learns and grows, he or she can think through solutions to their logical conclusion. Practice makes perfect for all leaders, even experts (Anderson, 1993; Baron, 1988; Klein, 1998).

In the 1930's and 1940's, a German psychologist from the Gestalt school, Karl Duncker, attempted to map the decision-making process of individuals working in the “real world,” not a laboratory. Using human subjects from factories around Germany, Duncker (1945) found naturalistic decision-making non-linear and imperfect. Once an individual begins work on a problem, the understanding of that goal and its assessed solution changes. Plous (1993) found that a worker in a factory would try a solution, realize it would not work, determine what was missing from the solution, and add to the definition of the goal in order to incorporate this new found information.

Duncker (1945) described naturalistic problem solving as consisting of four processes: problem detection, problem representation, option generation, and evaluation. Because scholars do not consider naturalistic decision-making a descriptive heuristic (Dawes, 1998; Klein, 1998; Nisbett, 1993; Plous, 1993), the steps in Duncker's (1945) model should be viewed as an illustration of how individuals make decisions, not steps to be followed (Baron, 1988; Chi, Glaser, & Farr, 1988). Additionally, evaluation of a decision can occur at any point along the continuum previously described. Naturalistic decision-making is a cyclical process, evaluating outcomes and possible outcomes continually (Dawes, 1998; Klein, 1998).

Because of its non-linear nature and process-orientation, naturalistic problem solving fits into most organizational environments (Isenberg, 1984). When uncertainty remains and political

forces are at work, naturalistic decision-making helps to cut through the unnecessary rhetoric and time-consuming consequence/option evaluation (Bell, 2002; March, 1994). Solutions are proposed and discarded as individuals work through options that define and redefine the goals that exist. Naturalistic decision-making helps the practitioner decide the proper course of action to pursue given time restrictions, limited options/resources, and unclear goal/ problem definitions (Dawes, 1988; Isenberg, 1984; Klein, 1998).

Of course, naturalistic decision-making is far from a panacea. Regardless of the model used or intentions professed, some leaders and organizations let “politics” get in the way of logical decision-making. Lopes (1991) and Russo and Shoemaker (1989) cite political forces as a major factor in poor decision-making. These scholars, however, stress that poor decisions are quite different than poor outcomes. Klein (1998) states: “A person will consider a decision to be poor if the knowledge gained would lead to a different decision if a similar situation arose” (p. 271). Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky (1982) also believe that biases, like a political viewpoint, account for most poor decision outcomes. Guarding against a political bias can substantially decrease poor outcomes but not necessarily poor decisions.

With naturalistic decision-making, however, reasoning errors play only a part in defective problem solving. Klein (1998) and Reason (1990), from their research in the field, divide faulty decision-making issues into three broad categories. One is a lack of experience with the decision-making process in a specific situation. The second is a lack of information about the situation. The final category involves decision makers “explaining away” a problem. Frequently, for example, leaders unfamiliar with a situation or unwilling to admit a conflict occurred will fail to define a problem and ascribe it to other origins. This problem is especially prevalent when political forces are involved (Lopes, 1991; Russo & Shoemaker, 1989). Regardless of situation or conflict, most decision-making abounds with ambiguity and uncertainty; that is precisely when

the decision-making process is vulnerable to outside forces that may shape decisions that do not benefit the organization (Kahneman, Solvic, & Tversky, 1982; Lopes, 1991; Reason, 1990).

A leader can help prevent biases if he or she surveys the information at hand, identifies the biases inherent in this information, understands the dynamic nature of the organizational environment, and makes a decision that takes the preceding two factors into account (Dawes, 1988; Isenberg, 1984). Even if time and effort are applied to the decision-making process, errors still occur. Accepting this fact helps alleviate the stress accompanying decision-making, and prepares the individual to make the best choice available considering the current situation (Ericsson & Charness, 1994; Shanteau, 1992).

Principals can protect their schools against political forces and pressures. As in any organization, decision-making requires patience and thoughtful consideration of the various options and consequences of any choice (Bell, 2002; White, Dittrich, & Lang, 1980). Strong leadership enables administrators to articulate positive policies and procedures in the school, supporting teachers and students with their professional goals. Leaders also know when to encourage others' involvement in the decision-making process (Conway, 1984; Weiss, 1993). Nye and Capelluti (2003) provide guidelines for avoiding expedient and "political" decision-making. They describe their philosophy as the "ABC's of Decision-Making" (p. 8). "A" decisions are those that principals make alone. These situations usually are decided autocratically or without input from other members of the school community. "B" decisions are bureaucratic and made with consultation from a specific organization within the school. "C" decisions require input from everyone in the school, leading to consensus (pp. 8-10). As Nye and Capelluti (2003) explain, consensus is key to avoidance of politically expedient decisions that favor one interest over another. With all members of the educational community giving voice to their concerns, problems, and conflicts, political influences can appear. Dealing with these factors "out in the

open” can remove some of the biases that cloud and obscure the daily decision-making procedure (Klein, 1998; Schweiger & Sandberg, 1989).

In summary, political decision-making fosters many problems, causing conflicts between personal interests and organizational goals. Trying to reconcile these two forces can be challenging and sometimes impossible. Ultimately, power plays a large role in decision-making (Klein, 1998; Mintzberg, 1983). Understanding this force can aid leaders to make the “right” decision, given a specific situation and the ultimate goals of those involved. A naturalistic decision-making process helps stem the influence of political forces and leaders/employees’ selfish ambition (Alinsky, 1971; Bolman & Deal, 1991). Naturalistic decision-making allows the leader or decision-maker to use experience in the field to guide his or her actions. Decision-making is nonlinear; its purposes and goals change and expand. Evaluation in a naturalistic decision-making process is continuous. Unfortunately, politics may get “in the way” of making good decisions (Conway, 1984; Klein, 1998; Schweiger & Sandberg, 1989; Weiss, 1993). However, principals or leaders can counteract these forces by getting others involved and providing a source of strength and stability for the organization and its decision-making process.

An Ethical Model of Decision-Making

Similar to the previously discussed garbage can and political decision-making models, ethical decision-making is again, more of a descriptive tool, a lens through which the decision process and its consequences/results can be viewed (Quick & Normore, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1999). This decision-making paradigm is broad in scope and encompasses many aspects of organizational change and control. At a basic level, within all educational environments, the goal of any decision process focuses on maximizing student achievement (Beckner, 2004). Simply, the school wants what is most beneficial for all students. In order to reach this goal, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community must make decisions in the best interest of the children involved. This simple precept can be achieved through effective and efficient decision-

making on the part of the educational institution and its leaders (Portin, 1999; Webb, Neumann, & Jones, 2004; Witherspoon, 1997). Throughout this section, ethical decision-making, with its different components and variations is explored. In addition, the principal's role as the moral/ethical leader within a school is briefly discussed.

Observing decision-making through an ethical lens requires an understanding of the school as an organization that daily makes decisions that affect and ultimately change students (Beckner, 2004; Kouzes & Posner, 1987). Miller (1990) stresses that schools are unique. They exhibit different goals and objectives that may or may not align with business or industry. The decisions that are made within educational institutions must align with the organization's purpose (Goodlad, 1979). Educators and administrators tend to pick problem solutions based upon prior experience and background. They must guard against this tendency, so the best solution for a given situation emerges (Hodgkinson, 1983; Kidder, 1995). No definitive guidelines or courses of action guide an administrator or leader toward an ethical decision. There are many paths one can take (Berreth & Berman, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1999).

Beckner (2004) suggests that a school's code of ethics is a good place to start when resolving an issue. A code of ethics is not a proscriptive evaluation rubric, but it does provide a groundwork for common rules/regulations and goals/values that an institution holds at its ethical foundation. Beckner (2004) and Wekesser (1995) warn, however, that these documents are open to interpretation, with the statements made within the text generalizable. The major weakness regarding schools' codes of ethics reside in their inability to be rigidly enforced. Essentially, the document should be revised on a yearly basis in order for it to remain current and relevant (Evans, 1996).

Decisions, viewed through the lens of ethical and/or moral behavior, can be divided into two broad categories. The first group contains decisions dealing with moral temptations. Some situations are clearly right, or they are clearly wrong. However, because of personal preferences

or weaknesses, moral temptations may be hard to resist. Within this broad grouping, there rests two subcategories: violations of law and departures from truth (Beckner, 2004). Kidder (1995) defines laws as instruments that define an orderly system of government, ensuring justice for members of society. It is generally accepted that these rules are obeyed, and not following them results in punishment from authority. A departure from the truth is a lie, ethically deplored by society. Standards regarding what constitutes the “truth” are relative and should be viewed within the context of a given situation (Cooper, 1990; Fleishman & Paine, 1980).

The second broad category of ethical/moral decisions deals with moral dilemmas. Sometimes individuals must choose a solution based upon two possible scenarios that seem equally plausible and beneficial to the people involved. The decision-makers must make an informed decision that attempts to maximize the situation’s positive outcomes (Cooper, 1990; Fleishman & Paine, 1980). Both moral dilemmas and moral temptations are the basis from which problems within the educational environment arise. Effectively dealing with these issues requires delving into situations rich with ambiguity. Beckner (2004) explains, “To deal with these it is helpful to recognize the typical types of dilemmas we face, the pressures which may create dilemmas, and considerations of organizational purpose and context that should be included as you develop a plan to guide your actions in difficult situation” (p. 91).

Although ethical decision-making is understood as a perspective from which to view the decisions that leaders/principals make, some scholars have provided various models that leaders can utilize when implementing solutions in the instructional forum (Covey, 1989; McGee, 1986; Webb, Neumann, & Jones, 2004). These heuristics aid the leader in making decisions that greatly benefit students, teachers, and the community. Haynes (1998) states that an ethical perspective to decision-making is cyclical; there is no clearly delineated beginning or conclusion to the process. His Triadic Taxonomy of Ethics (1998) consists of three components: consistency, consequences, and care. Combining these three aspects of decision-making produces interconnected results,

forming a system of ethics. Before any solution is attempted, Haynes (1998) suggests asking three questions about the situation:

1. What are the consequences, both short and long term, for me and others, and do the benefits of any possible action outweigh the harmful effects?
2. Are all the agents in this situation being consistent with their own past actions and beliefs?
3. Do they care about other people in this situation as persons with feelings like themselves? (pp. 28-29)

Following these steps prevents the leader/principal from delving into a situation without a course of action. These questions can focus the leader on the problem at hand. Adding to these questions, Green (1994) insists that ethical decisions are a product of logical, consistent steps that culminate in a decision that “might be reasonably thought of as being accepted by all members of society as a moral rule, that is, as an abiding form of conduct known by everyone and open to everyone in similar circumstances”(pp. 87-88).

As with other heuristics of decision-making, ethical decision-making is an ends-based model; the ultimate goal is to positively affect the greatest number of students with any given solution (Ortiz & Owaga, 2000). There are no “easy” decisions. Coming to terms with tough choices can clarify issues and delineate their meaning in order to strike satisfactory resolutions. Moral decision-making is a journey, not a destination with a proscribed ending (Green, 1994; Hodgkinson, 1991; Kidder, 1995). Tough situations begin the journey toward effective decisions.

As previously stated, the lead decision-maker in a school is the principal. A school-based leader must make decisions that define the educational environment. At the same time, the leader’s decisions illustrate his or her leadership style and situational efficacy. As argued by several scholars (Kirby, Paradise, & Protti, 1992; Quick & Normore, 2004; Samier, 2002; Taylor & Strickland, 2002), ethical decision-making originates from ethical leadership. Simply, “moral

leadership” rests with the institution’s leader (Quick & Normore, 2004). Berreth and Berman (1997) assert that leadership is a moral task, even more so for educational institutions. The principal or administrator’s decision affects the organization, but the decision also affects the individuals within the school, impacting them into the future. Ultimately, these children grow into adults who become the future leaders of society (Beck & Murphy, 1994). Ethical leadership entails the articulation of a vision and subsequently creating pathways for that vision to reach fruition (Senge, 1990).

Much research and writing has been devoted to the definition and illustration of ethical leadership and moral leaders. This viewpoint envisions leaders as the backbone and driving force behind decision-making and change within an educational setting. Greenleaf (1977) and Sergiovanni (1992) describe ethical leadership as “servant leadership.” Servant leadership is based upon a deep commitment to values, emerging from a groundswell of moral authority supported by teachers, staff, students, and the community (Greenleaf, 1977; McGee, 1986). This sort of leadership provides the legitimacy for a principal to grasp the reigns of authority and guide the institution toward its goals. Because of the ethical standards and benchmarks proposed by the administrator, leadership within a school gives the organization a sense of direction, an overarching purpose (Barth, 1990; Greenleaf, 1977).

Servant leadership can be achieved through the tenets of purposing and empowerment (Sergiovanni, 1992). Vaill (1984) describes “purposing” as “the continuous stream of actions by an organization’s formal leadership which has the effect of inducing clarity, consensus and commitment regarding the organization’s basic purposes” (p. 91). The building of shared values turns the school from a mere organization into a community of learners. The other tenant of servant leadership, empowerment, should be linked to purposing. With empowerment, individuals work alongside the leader to enact decisions that benefit all involved in the educational process.

Intertwining these two tenants provides a solid base from which moral leaders can be fostered and ethical decisions enacted (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Senge, 1990).

Apart from the principal as a “servant leader,” ethical decisions can also originate from principals or administrators who envision themselves as authentic leaders. Authentic leaders, similar in description to servant leaders, simply inspire trust among their constituents. These individuals are the embodiment of integrity, engendering a consistency with their values, goals, and actions (Evans, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 1987). With authentic leaders, values and personal integrity come first. These strongly held ideals will affect all other aspects of the individual’s life, thus providing for a framework from which to derive ethical solutions to complex problems. At the most fundamental level, authentic leaders are characterized by personal ethics, vision, and a strong belief in others (Badaracco & Ellsworth, 1989). A leader’s authenticity must also manifest itself in *savvy*, “a practical, problem-solving wisdom that enables leaders to make things happen” (Evans, 1996, p. 294). Simply put, authentic principals and administrators are psychologically hardy (Goleman, 1986), resourceful, and resilient (Maddi & Kobasa, 1984).

In viewing the world through an ethical lens, a leader must fundamentally understand what he or she “stands for” within the educational arena. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) forward three questions that leaders should ask themselves when approaching a problem.

1. How do I define my role as a leader?
2. What inspires the best in my staff?
3. What are my strengths? (p. 167)

By using these guiding queries, leaders can attempt to provide ethical solutions to the many complex problems that arise on a daily basis within their schools.

Although much scholarly research is devoted to ethics and decision-making (Beckner, 2004; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Goleman, 1986; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Sergiovanni, 1992), little progress has been made to implement these theories and ethical decision-making practices

into the nation's educational institutions (Bennis, 1989; Taylor & Strickland, 2002). Teachers, administrators, and community members grapple with few resources, such as time, funding, and interested participants. Ethical decision-making requires vigilance on the part of all organizational members. The leader's values and ethics become apparent over time, eventually impacting and hopefully raising the ethical behavior of the school (Taylor & Strickland, 2002). A leader's awareness and illustration of ethical values in the work environment is aided by the training he or she receives in post-baccalaureate leadership educational programs. Much has been written concerning the importance and necessity of pre-service administrative training in ethical decision-making (Evers, 1992; Pugh, 1991; Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 1988). The literature stresses a case-study based curricular program, where students can practice their skills using "real world" simulations (Kirby, Paradise, & Protti, 1992; Leslie, Snyder, & Giddis, 1988; Peterson & Finn, 1985). With the proper administrative training, beginning and practiced leaders can feel comfortable relying on their skills and ethical methodology to make decisions that can benefit all members of the educational community.

Summary

The previous sections described decision-making models, providing the reader with ways of understanding decision-making within a school setting. In general, these models are normative, outlining the processes by which organizations should make decisions. As such, four of the seven models are heuristics that a principal may utilize, step by step, for assistance in making decisions. All of these models form the "process" portion of the author's conceptual framework and may be utilized descriptively to understand the decision-making processes used by educational administrators.

The Context: Decision-Makers and Stakeholders

The "context" of decision-making involves the individuals who will participate in the decision-making process. In some cases, the principal or lead decision-maker must act alone,

deciding where and when a solution is implemented. At other times, a group of decision-makers may be more effective in reaching a decision (Beebe & Mastertson, 2000; Petress, 2002).

Working with a team of interested individuals allows teachers, administrators, and parents to foster ideas that no single individual would easily originate. Klein, Orasanu, Calderwood, and Zsombok (1993) define the essence of an effective team as possessing an understanding of competencies/routines and forming a clear identity of the team's goals and objectives. An effective team learns to manage the flow of ideas and adjust the group's way of thinking to match the needs and goals of the organization (Brown, 1990; Evers, 1992; Hackman & Johnson, 2000). Implementing these qualities provide the educational institution with a broad distribution of leadership, a "community of leadership" (Grace, 1995).

Recent literature has called for the active involvement of teachers in the decision-making process within schools (e.g., Blase & Blase, 1999; Eden, 1998; Geijsel, Slegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003). This sort of leadership action involves both democracy and cooperation in aim and method to insure decision-making success (Huber, 2004). On the other hand, many advocate a more limited involvement of subordinates, for example, involving teachers only when the outcomes of a decision are directly related to their interests or welfare (Johnson & Scollay, 2001; Ortiz & Ogawa, 2000; Vandenberghe, 1995). To date, deciding when and to what extent others should aid the principal in making decisions for the school remains an unresolved—though vitally important—issue (Klein, 1998; Vroom & Yetton, 1974).

At the most fundamental level, without staff involvement and participation, many decision-making functions fail (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Ortiz & Ogawa, 2000). As mentioned previously, however, the extent of organizational involvement fluctuates based upon the decision at hand and who is ultimately responsible for the consequences. Fortunately for the organization, teachers and faculty members gain and retain knowledge that other policy makers may not have access to in the organization (Thomas & Bainbridge, 2002). Educators are "in the trenches"; with

their information, administrators can facilitate successful reform attempts (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). To this end, Portin (1999) devised a Tridactic Model of Leadership to explain how and to what extent teachers should or should not be involved in the decision-making process. At any given point, an organization can use either a transactional, critical, or transformational view of leadership to enact change and facilitate growth. Webb, Neumann, and Jones (2004) explain:

The model examined alternatives to traditional allocations of power through positional hierarchies. Although the model organized and categorized different aspects of leadership, it was not intended to draw absolute boundaries around these distinctions.... The triadic model of leadership approximated the practice of leadership from multiple perspectives that depend on and interact with one another. (p. 256)

The first facet of Portin's (1999) Tridactic Model, transactional leadership, describes action as leader-centered. As a term coined by Burns (1978), transactional leadership is dominated by rational models of leadership and governed by a concern for organizational efficiency. A second facet, transformational leadership, describes leaders who "shape, alter, elevate the motives and goals of the institution's members" (Webb, Neumann, Jones, 2004, p. 257). Transformational leadership fosters a collaborative school culture. The transformational administrator influences followers concerning the intrinsic value of their daily tasks and responsibilities (Leithwood, 1988). The third component of the Tridactic Model of Leadership, critical leadership, does not establish power relationships that define the leaders and followers in an organization. Power is used as neither an influence nor an authority. The question of "who is the leader" cannot be defined in traditional terms, such as titles in a hierarchy (Beebe & Mastertson, 2000; Leithwood, 1988). Leader empowerment occurs through reflection and dialogue with the community. In the future, Portin (1999) and Webb, Neumann, and Jones (2004) stress that critical leadership must be fostered and maintained in the schools. Students remain viable participants in the decision-making process and can learn from decision-making experiences in school, applying these skills

to future endeavors. Portin's (1999) Tridactic Model of Leadership provides a way of understanding the complex nature of decision-making, and who should be involved in the process. Understanding leadership from multiple perspectives provides leaders with tools, strategies, and practices to help respond effectively to complex and competing problems within the educational environment (Beebe & Mastertson, 2000; Burns, 1978; Fullan & Hargraeves, 1996).

For many, as illustrated by the previous leadership heuristic, involvement in the decision-making process should exist on a continuum, with different degrees of shareholder participation dependent upon the given situation (David, 1989; Ortiz & Ogawa, 2000). If a decision affects only one person, then that person should make the decision. Sometimes participation by others impedes the decision-making process (Conley, 1990; Fullan & Steigelbauer, 1991; Likert, 1961; Sirotnik, 1988). Greenblatt, Cooper, and Muth (1983) speculate that many teachers wish to have direct involvement in the decision-making process at their schools. However, this does not mean they want to deal with all aspects of the organization, perhaps just those areas that directly involve them. Duke, Showers, and Imber (1980) and Weiss's (1993) research support the hypothesis that shared decision-making detracts, instead of enhances, teacher work. In other words, when educators become involved with activities outside the classroom, their teaching may suffer.

Also, Maslow (1954) observed that the lifting of authoritarian, autonomous leadership sometimes precedes chaos and conflict. These effects can lead the organization to disillusionment with shared decision-making; ultimately this disappointment can end again in the reinstatement of authoritarian control (Conway, 1984; Duke, Showers, & Imber, 1980; Weiss, 1993). These concepts raise an obvious question: under what circumstances do principals involve others in the decision-making process?

The Zone of Acceptance theory attempts to address this dilemma (Barnard, 1938; Bridges, 1967; Simon, 1947). The Zone of Acceptance, or the Zone of Indifference as Barnard (1938) referred to it, outlines when individuals will accept decisions imposed upon them from their “superiors.” Sometimes employees accept decisions because they are indifferent to their outcomes. If this is the case, the leader should make the decision. In another circumstance, an employee may be very interested in the outcome of a decision and want to be a part of the problem’s solution (Simon, 1947). In this case, a shared decision-making model becomes beneficial.

Based upon the work of Barnard (1938) and Chase (1952), Bridges (1964) first developed a model of shared decision-making. Bridges (1967) forwarded two ideas to consider when deciding who should be involved in a decision-making process:

1. When workers are involved in a decision that resides within their Zone of Acceptance, the subordinates’ participation will be less effective.
2. When workers are involved in a decision that resides outside their Zone of Acceptance, the subordinates’ participation will be more effective.

Of course, there are situations where the delineation between when a decision is within or outside an individual’s Zone of Acceptance is blurred. In these cases, it is difficult for an administrator to decide whether or not a person should be involved in the decision-making process (Hoy & Miskel, 1991). For example, some teachers or staff members may find a particular question important, whereas others may not acknowledge its relevance or significance. Given such circumstances, the decision to include or exclude these individuals relies on the collection of more information (Geijsel, Slegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003). To answer this question, Bridges (1964, 1967) developed two rules to guide the principal. One is the relevance rule; the other, the expertise rule. The relevance rule asks whether subordinates have a personal interest in the decision outcome. The expertise rule queries whether subordinates have the

expertise in order to solve the problem. By applying these rules in a two-dimensional matrix, leaders can clearly define who should be involved in the decision-making process within an organization. Overall, Bridges' (1964, 1967) approach provides a way of looking at this continuum and using the appropriate members of an organization to reach the best solution possible for a given situation.

Summary

Throughout the course of this chapter, the researcher reviewed the relevant literature related to the field of educational decision-making. The text began with a brief introduction to the components of decision-making, and the principal's role as lead decision-maker in the school setting, highlighting the role of decision-maker as a primary activity associated with educational administration. In order to comprehensively address this topic, the author proffered a framework, based on Pettigrew's (1985) contextualist framework of organizational change, to synthesize the three primary elements of decision-making found in the literature: the decision situation (the "content"), the individual(s) involved in making the decision (the "context"), and the methods used in the decision-making process (the "process"). The decision-making process was discussed in terms of the various decision-making models found within the extant literature. Here, these included the classical or traditional model, the satisficing model, the incremental model, the mixed-scanning model, the garbage can model, the political model of decision-making, and the ethical model of decision-making. These heuristics were wide-ranging. For example, the classical model stresses a formal process of identifying various decision choices and outlining the benefits and consequences of each. On the other hand, the garbage can model emphasizes matching a solution to a problem with a randomness that suggests an organization that is "more chaotic and chance-based than rationally controlled" (Rainey, 2001, p. 499). Other models discussed in this chapter revolved around ways of looking at decision situations, not rules or processes designed to be followed explicitly. The political model highlights an individual's preference for personal gain

over organizational needs when making decisions. The ethical model, in direct contrast, holds that the organization and its members are of supreme importance, and all decisions made should benefit those within its structural confines. Within this literature review, these models were discussed, and their attributes described. Ultimately, the author elaborated on each of these topics in detail, attempting to provide a succinct, yet thorough, overview of the relevant literature.

Chapter Three

Methodology

While navigating my way through the “perils” of high school administration, I often find myself relying on various models of decision-making and involving multiple members of the staff in the decision-making process. As the problem situation varies, so does my procedure for reaching positive decisions for all involved (i.e., parents, teachers, students, staff). Acting as a practitioner, I often spend time analyzing a decision-making situation, allowing my mind to range across the various problem solutions for a given situation. Many times throughout the school year, I discuss with my fellow assistant principals and principal the numerous problems faced and the method(s) undertaken to solve a specific dilemma. Sometimes, another administrator will stop me in mid-sentence and say, “Whoa... never thought of compromising that way. Good job!” or “Oh, man.....really wouldn’t have come to that conclusion, if that was me.” These differing options about the same situation intrigued me. Initially, I was curious and wanted to understand better how administrators perceived they reach decisions in the practitioner setting. From my reading within the literature, I realized that practicing administrators deal with three factors when making daily decisions: What is the situation? Who are the individual(s) involved? And what process do school leaders use to make these decisions (Pettigrew, 1985)? All of these factors and the previously discussed literature informed the following text and the dissertation study.

In this chapter, the researcher utilized the insights afforded by the prior literature review (see chapter 2) to guide the construction of a field-based study of decision-making attitudes and perceived practices among secondary school principals and assistant principals. Specifically, in

this chapter, a discussion of the study's research design, population/sample to be used, and variables/concepts of interest is forwarded. This discussion is followed by an explanation of the instruments and procedures of data collection and the method of data analysis used within this research project. Within this overview, specific relevant issues, such as sampling techniques, internal/external validity, and ethical considerations are discussed in each section as appropriate.

Qualitative Research Design

The purpose of this research study was to explore practitioners' perceived understanding and situational use of decision-making models in the domain of educational administration. This project provided a clearer picture of how decisions are made within a high school setting. From examining the literature, it was clear that scholars and practitioners alike do not understand how decisions are made in the school environment. Do administrators follow models to reach decisions, or does the situation dictate the outcome of the process? Who and to what extent do they involve stakeholders in decision-making? Ultimately, scholars and practitioners fail to understand how school administrators make decisions in the workplace. More specifically, scholars do not fully comprehend how school leaders perceive their decision-making strategies and actions. That is the problem this study addressed. Specifically, the researcher developed a series of questions to address within this research project:

1. What degree of familiarity do school administrators have with the different decision-making models (e.g., satisficing model, garbage can model, incremental model, classical or traditional model) outlined in the existing literature?
2. Under what circumstances do school administrators perceive they employ various decision-making models?
3. How and in what way do school-based leaders perceive they make decisions in their schools? What are the emergent themes/patterns/ideas among their perceived decision-making actions?

4. In which situations are school-based leaders willing to involve other stakeholders in the decision-making process?
5. How frequently and to what degree do institutional leaders perceive they involve other stakeholders in the decision-making process?

To address these questions, the researcher selected a qualitative approach because this method seeks to understand a particular social situation, event, or interaction (Creswell, 1994; Maxwell, 2004; Mullen, 2004b). Indeed, qualitative research can heighten understanding of complex educational situations and lead researchers to identify emerging themes, questions, biases, and patterns for future research opportunities (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Patton (1990) stresses that qualitative research provides a deep and detailed picture of a situation as it is occurring and evolving.

Given the nature of this study, a qualitative approach offers certain advantages over a quantitative design. Qualitative research attempts to explain how events occur (Merriam, 1998; Mullen, 2004b; Silverman, 2004). Unlike the quantitative tradition that employs formulas and statistical calculations to draw broad conclusions, qualitative studies are highly descriptive in nature; they are reported in a multitude of words rather than numbers (Creswell, 1994). As such, qualitative designs are optimal for investigating human behavior and events as they occur. Consequently, since the decision-making behavior and perceptions of school-based administrators (in their natural setting) was the focus of this study, a qualitative design was advantageous (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Because of the aforementioned research methodology, this study proceeded without preconceived notions or hypotheses about the study's results. Instead, the researcher leveraged the flexibility and openness to discovery of the qualitative research tradition for maximum benefit (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Patton, 1990).

More specifically, the researcher employed a qualitative case study research design to interpret and describe individuals' conceptualizations of the world around them (Creswell, 1994;

Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Seidman, 1998). Simply, the qualitative researcher is more interested in studying a person's view of reality rather than the actual, objective nature of reality. In this case, the researcher attempted to discover more about practitioners' comprehension and contextual employment of decision-making methods within secondary schools (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002). This type of qualitative research is interview driven. However, the researcher's study did not address each decision-maker's total experience of educational decision-making, including issues such as the emotions and/or reflections associated with prior life experiences. Instead, the researcher focused on understanding the participant's perceptions of the knowledge and actions behind the decision-making process, the situations where leaders make decisions, and the stakeholders involved in the decision-making process.

In addition, given the qualitative nature of this study, the research project did not utilize independent and dependant variables (as used in quantitatively-oriented studies) *per se*. Indeed, an important distinction must be drawn between case-oriented and variable-oriented research (Bogdin & Biklen, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Mullen, 2004b). Variable-oriented research excels at locating the probabilistic relationships between variables in a large population, whereas case-oriented research does extremely well in beginning to form general explanations of phenomena based upon a (usually) limited number of cases (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Both approaches have unique strengths and weaknesses; it is, therefore, not a matter of selecting the "best" orientation, but rather a matter of selecting the most appropriate approach based upon one's research objectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). That said, in this study, the researcher focused on specific cases in particular school settings in order to understand the interplay of the three constructs outlined in this study's conceptual framework: the role of the decision-making situation, the decision-making methods used by the decision-maker(s), and the involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process (see chapter 2).

Research Participants: Principals, Assistant Principals of Curriculum, and Assistant Principals for Student Affairs

The research population consisted of the principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and the assistant principals for student affairs within approximately 20 high schools of a county school district located in west central Florida. A sample was selected from among this population, and a purposeful sampling method was used to identify the participants. Patton (1990) describes a “purposeful sampling method” as selecting cases that are information-rich with respect to the purposes of a qualitative study. Samples selected for qualitative studies are usually, but not always, nonrandom, purposeful, and small when compared to the random sampling techniques employed in quantitative studies (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). “Buy-in” at a school site was crucial. In addition to the principal, the assistant principal of curriculum and the assistant principal for student affairs were also willing to participate in the interview process in order for a school site to be included in the sample. In summary, three schools were asked to participate. One principal, one assistant principal of curriculum, and one assistant principal for student affairs from each school was interviewed for a total of nine respondents participating in this research project.

Prior to selecting the sample and contacting potential participants, many procedures were followed. Initially, the researcher sought approval for the study from the University of South Florida’s Institutional Review Board and obtained permission to interview participants from the school district’s Professional Standards Office. Once granted, the researcher contacted each of the selected high school administrators within the school district, inviting their participation.

Data Collection Techniques

In this study, two instruments for data collection were employed: a demographic survey/decision-making survey and a list of questions for conducting semi-structured interviews with the nine participants (see Appendix A, Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for

Administrators; see Appendix B, Semi-Structured Schedule of Questions for Administrative Interviews). A brief demographic survey/decision-making survey (see Appendix A) was administered to all the principal and assistant principal participants. The instrument was used to gather pertinent information including age, gender, ethnicity, title, level of education, and years of experience. Also, this survey explored the administrators' familiarity with decision-making models. As a new instrument, the researcher subjected it to the review of the dissertation committee members, and the researcher piloted the instrument with members of the study's population not in the sample group. This pilot consisted of one additional principal and assistant principal within the same county district from which the rest of the data was collected.

Second, the researcher employed a schedule of questions for conducting detailed, semi-structured interviews with the principals and assistant principals participating in this research project (see Appendix B) (Creswell, 1994; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Rubin & Rubin, 2004). Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) describe the semi-structured interview technique as "asking a series of structured questions and then probing more deeply using open-form questions to obtain additional information" (p. 240). In face-to-face interviews, each participant was asked the same set of pre-determined questions, which was interspersed with impromptu follow-up queries, intended to clarify participant responses (Seidman, 1998). Specifically, these questions consisted of descriptions of educational decision-making situations along with specific inquiries regarding: 1) the decision-making model(s) that would theoretically be used in those situations within the context of their school, and 2) the individuals that would likely participate in those situations within their school. Considering this new instrument, the researcher subjected the schedule of questions to the review of her dissertation committee members, and the researcher piloted the instrument with the previously mentioned respondents.

Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Administrators

The demographic questions on this survey were taken from Mullen's (2004a) original instrument used to collect information from practicing administrators (see Mullen, 2004a). The researcher revised Mullen's (2004a) instrument to fit the purpose of the dissertation. To help gather information to address the research questions of this project (see Qualitative Research Design), three additional queries were added to the demographic portion of the survey. All three addressed a different aspect of the decision-making process, as described by Pettigrew's (1985) Conceptual Framework of Organizational Change (see chapter 2 for discussion). In addition to gaining demographic insights into the individual principals and assistant principals participating in this research project, the researcher also wanted to address the first research question: What degree of familiarity do school administrators have with the different decision-making models (e.g., satisficing model, garbage can model, incremental model, classical or traditional model) outlined in the existing literature? One query on the survey directly asked the participants about their familiarity with various decision-making models, using a Likert scale to assess this familiarity. The decision-making models included on this instrument are some of the most prevalently cited in the existing decision-making literature (see discussion in chapter 2). Both the second and third questions were drawn from the first. In considering the decision-making models with which the participants were familiar, the instrument asked the respondent to write when he or she would use the model. The last query questions whom the administrator would involve in the decision-making process.

The information from this survey was analyzed and coded similarly to the data derived from the semi-structured interview (see Data Analysis Procedures). These questions were also reviewed by the author's major professor and cohort writing group consisting of practicing administrators and school leaders.

Semi-Structured Schedule of Questions for Administrative Interviews

In order to construct a schedule of interview queries that addressed the research questions (see Qualitative Research Design), the researcher went back to study the literature review (see chapter 2) of this dissertation. Within this literature review, a theoretical model (see Pettigrew, 1985) was presented to help organize and structure the extant decision-making research. Simply, Pettigrew (1985) conceptualized and divided decision-making at its broadest theoretical level into three elements: the decision situation, the decision-making process, and the individuals involved in the decision-making process. In order to address the purpose of this study, practicing administrators' perceived situational use and understanding of decision-making, the researcher constructed/wrote decision-making scenarios for the research participants to read. Then the respondents were asked how they would solve the given problem contained within the scenario. The concept of these "real world" decision-making scenarios or "situations" was discussed more fully within the literature review (see chapter 2) of this dissertation.

In the literature review, decision-making situations were described as fluid, dynamic, and varied (Daft, 1989; Hoy & Miskel, 1991; Shapiro, Benjamin, & Hunt, 1995). Also, the relationship between the school environment and organizational decision-making is complex and interrelated (Senge, 1990). The existing environment influences the problems that emerge, and the problem resolutions shape the environment. This and other factors lead, according to Sergiovanni (1999), to a unique environment with its own climate and culture.

Before formulating the scenarios for this dissertation, a final review of the literature took place. Within the literature review (see chapter 2), the concept of "situational complexity" was discussed (see p.18). Within chapter two, a description of Hoy and Tarter's (2004) four archetypes of decision situations that a principal might face were described. Keeping this in mind, the researcher, during a staff meeting where she worked, discussed informally various problems that have occurred over the past two years. Using their informal feedback/ "real world" insights

and Hoy and Tarter's (2004) four archetypes of decision situations faced by principals, the author began to create the scenarios and questions for the semi-structured questions for administrators (see Appendix B).

In order to address the research questions (see Qualitative Research Design), the researcher asked each principal and assistant principal in the study individually to identify their perceptions of how they would solve a given scenario. Scenarios are often used to teach pre-service administrators how to solve problems within a "real-world" setting. Students can feel free to express their opinions about a given decision situation and discuss various solutions before picking the most beneficial one (Abbott & Ryan, 1999; Haas, Laughlin, Wilson, & Sunal, 2003). Hung, Chee, Hedberg, and Seng (2005) stress the use of scenarios with pre-service administrators as a foundation stone for a community of learners that stretches past the college years and extends into a cohort of practitioners. Scenarios allow both pre-service and practicing administrators the flexibility to explore options without the "pressure" or "stress" of implications for a real learning environment, such as a high school (Bickerstaffe, 1994; Evans, 1992; Knowles, 1990). This benefit attracted the researcher of this study. The ability of the principal or assistant principal to "work out" a problem orally seemed optimal for data collection within this research project's methodology.

Simulation modeling was another data collection method considered for this research study. Hung, Chee, Hedberg, and Seng (2005) describe simulation modeling as "learning environments where attempts are made to simulate real world scenarios and practices" (p.161). These simulation models are also known as "practice fields" (Senge, 1994). Although incredibly valuable in a classroom setting for teaching problem-solving skills and techniques, simulation modeling usually requires multiple participants at one time and at least an hour to work effectively through a single practice field (Jonassen, 2000; Perkins, 1992; Schank, Berman, & Macpherson, 1999). Also, the situational complexity of simulation modeling must increase slowly

over time. There are varying stages of the process that must be approached in a linear order with multiple steps (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Given the time constraints of this study and the methodology employed for data collection, the simulation modeling technique would not be an optimal approach for this study. However, the use of simulation modeling to supplement the results of this study and/or extend the study's range of generalizability to different populations should not be eliminated for the future.

Using the information received through the principal or assistant principals "working with" the scenario, the researcher matched as closely as possible the administrator's description to the decision-making model within the extant literature. Of course, a leader's decision-making technique and a normative model found within the decision-making literature (see chapter 2) may not match directly. In such cases, the differences were dully noted by the researcher. To address the other research questions (see Qualitative Research Design), the interview queries included a section asking when and to what extent others were included in the decision-making process. An additional question for the assistant principals concerning how they think the principal would solve a given scenario aided the researcher in understanding from another vantage point how decision are made at a particular school site.

Once a draft was finished, the researcher's major professor and cohort writing group, consisting of practicing administrators and school leaders, reviewed this research instrument, helping to solidify the version that is included in this dissertation as Appendix B.

Instrument Pilot

In an attempt to provide further validation for the research instruments (i.e., Appendix A: Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Administrators; Appendix B: Semi-Structured Schedule of Questions for Administrative Interviews), the researcher sent both tools via electronic mail to two practicing administrators, one principal and one assistant principal. These administrators were potential members of the sample participant group. They were randomly

selected from the population of non-participants. The researcher and these administrators met for an informal meeting to discuss the research instruments the day after the e-mail was sent. At the beginning of this meeting, two questions were forwarded to help these leaders focus on providing feedback/improvements for the surveys. These queries were as follows:

1. Are there any words or phrases that are unclear or confusing in the survey questions?
2. On the survey entitled, Semi-Structured Schedule of Questions for Administrative Interviews, are the scenarios presented realistically and believably?

Both the principal and assistant principal considered Appendix A to be clearly worded. However, the assistant principal suggested more space be given for the answer to question number eight in the decision-making section of Appendix A. Both felt the demographic information requested from the respondents was appropriate and not too invasive.

The administrators especially resonated with the questions attached to the scenarios within Appendix B, Semi-Structured Schedule of Questions for Administrative Interviews. The principal stated, "I think that is it. How you solve the problem, and who you involve in that process. That is the essence of it, and that is what is important." The assistant principal thought that the instrument was, "Down to earth. It will get you the information you will need to get some answers or at least to get some information that may impact the field, at least a little." The assistant principal continued on to add that Scenario one did need some clarification. She pointed out that some restrictions from the state did dictate how the Title I money can be spent when a school raises its grade one letter. Neither administrator felt the investigator needed to describe these restrictions explicitly within the scenario. However, they did feel the researcher needed to obliquely refer to the restrictions in Scenario one. Their feedback and input on both surveys is included in the version of Appendix A and B at the end of this dissertation.

Data Collection Procedures

Following the creation and validation of the study's instruments and the gathering of institutional approvals, the researcher began to contact high schools via telephone to determine whether or not they would be interested in participating in this research study. If the principal was interested in participating with his or her assistant principal of curriculum and one of his or her assistant principals for student affairs, the semi-structured interviews was scheduled.

The semi-structured interview of the participants was designed to last approximately 50 minutes. Using an interview guide for these administrators aided the clear flow and sequence of questions, thus allowing for quality control across the collected data (see Appendix B) (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002). Yet, while the constructs addressed in each question were identical, the specific wording of the questions differed for principals and assistant principals based upon the role that participant assumed within the school. Each interview began with an explanation of the informed consent form and time provided for the participant to sign the document. Also, each interview was tape recorded for later transcription and analysis. The last 10 minutes of the scheduled interview time was utilized to allow the principals and assistant principals time to fill out the Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Administrators (see Appendix A). While this was occurring, the researcher waited in the office lobby for the principal or assistant principal to finish. Once the administrator completed the form, he or she handed it back to the researcher in the blank envelope provided.

In all, a semi-structured interview approach has the advantage of allowing for the collection of standardized data across respondents, and it also provides a capacity for a greater depth of information than a structured interview can allow (Patton, 1990). As such, during the interview process, the researcher asked follow-up questions when further clarification was needed. These questions provided additional insights and outlined a more complete understanding of the participants' responses (Merriam, 1998).

Assumptions

The validity of the study's results rested on the assumption that all participants, principals and assistant principals, were truthful in their responses to the interview questions asked by the researcher. Furthermore, it must be assumed that all research participants believed that their responses accurately portray their role in the decision-making process. These assumptions, however, do not suggest that discrepancies may not exist between participants' perceptions of objective reality. However, this study deals with the administrator/leader's perception of how they would solve a given problem. The study did not directly observe administrators making decisions in the school setting. The investigator was relying solely on the participant's perception of how they make decisions, not empirically observed reality.

Ethical Considerations

When conducting field-based research, it is important that researchers respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of all the informants (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). While collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher included multiple safeguards to protect the rights of the principals and assistant principals participating in this study. In an effort to establish mutual respect and trust, the researcher began the interview process by sharing her personal history with each participant. The researcher explained fully who she was: both a doctoral student at a local university and a fellow school-based administrator in the county. In addition, the researcher reconfirmed that participation in this project was entirely voluntary and that withdrawal from the study at any time was a right. Furthermore, a participant's withdrawal from the study was not held against him or her either personally or professionally.

To ensure accurate representation of the collected data, participants were given a copy of the transcript to review once the interview process had been concluded. Confidentiality was maintained by keeping all research data in a file cabinet in the researcher's home office. Also, in all research reports, the participants were given pseudonyms, and their colleagues were not

identified by name when quoting from the transcription text. Finally, the research study followed all additional requirements set forth by USF'S Institutional Review Board.

Data Analysis Procedures

Following its collection, the researcher analyzed the data. In general, the investigator's focus was to identify common ideas, themes, and/or patterns that emerged from participant responses (Karlsson & Ahlstrom, 1997; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Mullen, 2004b; Mullen & Tuten, 2004). Specifically, the researcher utilized the data collected to help inform the project's research questions (see chapter 1, 3, & 4). The following seven steps comprised the data analysis procedure:

Step 1: The interview data was transcribed by the researcher immediately following the scheduled interviews.

Step 2: The researcher sent the transcripts back to the participants who checked the material for accuracy, noting any problems or concerns with the data on the transcripts. Then, in a self-addressed stamped envelope, the participant was instructed to send the transcript back to the researcher if changes needed to be made to the text.

Step 3: The researcher read all the transcribed material, noting important ideas/themes/patterns in the margins of the text. She also noted the textual material that addressed the five research questions guiding this study.

Step 4: Utilizing word processing software (e.g., Microsoft Word), the investigator wrote brief documents (i.e., memos) attempting to capture in more detail some of the transcripts content that focused on the project's research questions, and the ideas/themes/patterns that could be derived from the collected interview and survey data.

Step 5: The data was then color-coded using a traditional coding/labeling process for emergent ideas/themes/patterns and their relevance to the study's research questions.

Step 6: The emergent ideas/themes/patterns and transcript text related to the project's research questions were communicated through the dissertation results in detail, along with direct interview quotes that supported these results.

Step 7: The ideas/themes/patterns and transcript material relevant to the study's research questions were compared and contrasted with texts found within the extant literature in the field.

In analyzing data collected in qualitative research studies, it is important for the researcher to understand and identify his or her personal values, assumptions, and biases (Creswell, 1994). Janesick (1998) points out that, "qualitative researchers have an obligation to fully describe their theoretical postures at all stages of the research process" (p. 5). Consequently, an understanding of the researcher's role in interpretive inquiry should be delineated (Piantanida & Garman, 1999). Moreover, in order to counteract some of the biases the researcher may introduce, he or she must incorporate some measures to guard against this possibility. To do so, the researcher periodically debriefed her major professor and graduate peer reviewers as to her results, hoping they would call attention to any problem areas that may occur in her writing, results, and/or interpretations. In addition, a major emphasis was placed upon ensuring both the internal and external validity of the study, while remaining cognizant of the study's limitations.

Internal Validity

The interview data from the assistant principals (assistant principals of curriculum and the assistant principals for student affairs) was intended to help provide a richer and deeper picture of decision-making in a high school setting. Also, collecting data from more than one participant on the same topic helped provide corroborating evidence from multiple perspectives (principals, assistant principals of curriculum, assistant principals for student affairs). Another procedure for insuring authentic analysis was achieved by sharing the research results with the study participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002). After the transcription was completed, the researcher sent each transcript along with a letter asking the participant for verification of the text. In the

letter, the participant was asked to make any changes to the transcript that seemed appropriate and to return the transcript in a self-addressed stamped envelope. If there were no changes necessary, the respondent was asked not to return the text to the researcher.

External Validity

External validity was supported by including a detailed description of the study's research procedures and interviews, thus allowing anyone interested in transferability to have a template from which to work and a model for comparison (Merriam, 1998). In particular, when reporting results, it can be helpful to the participant to provide a detailed account of the study's focus, understand the researcher's role, outline the basis for the selection of the participants, and explore the context from which the data was collected. In addition, all data collection and analysis procedures were explained thoroughly in order to provide a clear and accurate picture of the methodology used.

Limitations of Study

In discussing data analysis procedures, it is important to outline clearly the limitations of this study design. First and foremost, because a strictly qualitative research design was selected, caution was exercised with any attempts to generalize results. Indeed, broad generalizations beyond tentative hypotheses may be completely unwarranted.

Second, as the principle mode of data collection was interview, the data collected may contain interviewer bias. To counteract this possibility, the researcher conducted interviews in a systematic manner, using a semi-structured sequence of questions. Also, assuring the confidentiality of the data collected reassured the respondents that their answers will not reflect unfavorably upon them (Angrosino & Mays de P rez, 2000; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Salvia & Mersel, 1980).

In the end, however, all individuals bring certain preconceived notions and biases to a situation based upon their prior experiences and individual belief structure. This must be taken into account when considering the results of this study (Seidman, 1998).

Third, the data collected by the researcher was not a comprehensive view of decision-making as it exists in the “typical” United States high school. Decision-making is both complex and dynamic in nature. Its ever-changing characteristics is difficult to fully explicate within the limits of this study, particularly given the study’s limitations with respect to number of research sites, sampling method, and geographic concentration (i.e., all research sites being located within the confines of a particular school district).

Fourth, the data collected from this study was derived solely from interview and survey. The researcher did not observe the principals and assistant principals actually make decisions in a real-world setting. Simply, the investigator is limited to what the administrator perceives and reports are his or her attitudes and actions concerning a hypothetical scenario. Although scenarios are an effective way to assess an administrator’s decision-making thoughts and procedures, the leader’s “real” actions in authentic situations cannot be ascertained through scenario-based inquiry. Clearly, the interviewer was only privy to an administrator’s perception of how he or she makes decisions. Administrators’ perceptions of decision-making and their actual actions in the workplace may be quite different. This study focused primarily on the principal and assistant principal’s perceptions of their decision-making techniques and practices within the school setting.

Fifth and finally, this study is exploratory in nature and limited in scope. As a result, immutable laws or theories are not its intended goal. Instead, the thrust of this research is to help other practitioners and scholars understand how decision-making permeates various aspects of organizational functioning within an educational institution. Hopefully, this study will raise

important questions that foster more research in the area of decision-making in secondary schools.

Summary

Within this chapter of the dissertation, the researcher outlined the general methodology followed throughout this qualitative case study. Utilizing the insights afforded by the previous literature review (see chapter two), the investigator constructed a field-based study of decision-making patterns and perceived practices among secondary principals and assistant principals. Specifically, a discussion of the study's phenomenological design, the population/sample of principals and assistant principals, and the variable/concepts of interest are delineated in this chapter. The author also described the original instruments for use in this study (i.e., Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Secondary Administrators, Semi-Structured Schedule of Questions for Administrative Interviews). The pilot study, the procedures for data collection, and the method of data analysis within this research project were also touched upon in this portion of the dissertation. Finally, a discussion of specific relevant issues, such as sampling technique, internal/external validity, ethical considerations, and study limitations conclude this chapter.

Chapter Four

Results

It was 1:45pm, and the allotted time for my interview with a practicing high school principal had almost arrived. I was understandably nervous. The IRB had approved my research study, and a mere week before, my dissertation committee had accepted my formal dissertation proposal. I was now an “official researcher,” with paperwork to prove it. Still, I was tense. Making the appointment for my first interview had been the easy part. During our telephone conversation, this participant had been kind and rather curious; willing to participate if he could have a copy of my completed dissertation. So there I was, a week later and 30 minutes early, sitting in front of the high school, ready to collect my first data sample.

With 10 minutes left to wait before the interview, I mentally rehearsed the schedule of interview questions. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a figure emerge from the building. Since I had checked out the school’s website earlier in the day, I immediately recognized this well-dressed man as the principal. The bell had rung only five minutes ago, and there he was outside by himself, picking up garbage around the front of the campus. He methodically retrieved pieces of refuse all along the sidewalk and lawn near the main office, and placed them into a plastic bag he had unfurled from the front pocket of his dress slacks. I silently wondered, “What is this guy doing? Isn’t that what custodians are for?”

Just before I dismissed his actions as a personality quirk, I thought, “Hmm... maybe I’m actually witnessing the result of some decision that was made. Could there be a background story to his ‘garbage-collecting mania’? Perhaps trash is a problem, and maintenance just can’t cope. Possibly he’s modeling for the faculty how they should act when they encounter a messy hallway? Could be he is doing this to show the kids that he is just a ‘regular guy’?” The principal

worked steadily for a full five minutes, and just as quickly as he had emerged, he disappeared back into the main office. Realizing it was time for our interview, I tidied my swirling thoughts and walked through the front door of the building. Still, I wondered, “What was that ‘garbage collecting’ all about, and could it relate to decision-making?”

As a high school assistant principal, I often find myself making multiple and varied decisions throughout the school day that result in actions that can be either misinterpreted or understood, disastrous or successful, depending upon the situation and the parties involved. With each new dilemma or challenge, I strive to make the best possible decision using the information given and the time allotted. Sometimes these decisions go awry, spawning negative or unwanted conclusions that perhaps lead to more problems and issues at a later date. Other times, however, the decisions I make result in positive conclusions, greater productivity, and growth for the faculty and students at my school.

Regardless of the outcome, decisions are often made by multiple members of the school staff under and within various circumstances and environments. Keeping all this in mind and informed by the extant literature in the field, a research problem began to emerge for this dissertation. From examining the relevant research and writing on the topic of educational administrative decision-making, it seemed clear that scholars and practitioners do not understand completely how decisions are made within the school environment. Do administrators follow models to reach decisions, or does the situation dictate the outcome of the process? Who and to what extent do they involve stakeholders in decision-making? Ultimately, scholars and practitioners perhaps fail to understand how school administrators make decisions in the workplace. More specifically, scholars and practitioners may not fully comprehend how school leaders perceive their decision-making strategies and actions. This was a problem that needed addressing.

With these ideas in mind, I constructed the outline and methodology of the study that has been detailed in chapter three of this dissertation. To begin, I wanted to comprehend more fully how administrators perceive their decision-making actions in a practitioner setting. From reading within the literature, I realized that practicing administrators deal with three factors when producing daily decisions: the situation, the individual(s) involved, and the decision-making process (Pettigrew, 1985). All of the aforementioned factors, the previously discussed literature, and the researcher's methodology informed the following text and the results from this study.

The researcher will briefly describe the study's methodology and outline the research questions that guided this project, presenting each research question separately. These queries will then be addressed through the data collected, from the interviews and surveys of the high school principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and the assistant principals for student affairs participating in this project.

Summary of Methodology

A brief description of the study's methodological structure is included within the following pages. The project's research methodology was described more completely in chapter three of this dissertation. Contained here, therefore, is an outline of the basic methodological tenets that were followed to collect, code, and describe the data. The following methodological information will be outlined: qualitative research design, research questions, research participants, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures.

Qualitative Research Design

The purpose of this research study was to explore practitioners' perceived understanding and situational use of decision-making models in the domain of educational administration. This project hoped to provide a clearer picture of how decisions are made within a high school setting. From examining the literature, it became clear that scholars and practitioners alike might not understand how decisions are made in the school environment. Do administrators follow models

to reach decisions, or does the situation dictate the outcome of the process? Whom and to what extent do they involve stakeholders in decision-making? Ultimately, scholars and practitioners struggle to understand how school administrators make decisions in the workplace. More specifically, scholars strive to comprehend how school leaders perceive their decision-making strategies and actions. That is the problem this study attempted to address.

Throughout the literature, researchers have called for more empirical studies of decision-making in the context of educational leadership (Brown, Brown, & Boyle, 1999; Petress, 2002). Scholars have written extensively concerning a multitude of decision-making models, describing in detail how decisions should be made. However, researchers have emphasized an ideal of decision-making, not what practitioners really perceive as happening in the school environment. As a result, scholars have called for additional empirical studies to better understand what is happening within schools. This project was an attempt to add another chapter to an already growing narrative of how decisions are perceived to be made on a daily basis in the “real world” of educational administration.

Given the study’s emphasis on understanding how practitioners perceive their decision-making actions within a high school, the researcher selected a qualitative approach. This method seeks to understand a particular social situation, event, or interaction (Creswell, 1994; Maxwell, 2004; Mullen, 2004b). Indeed, qualitative research can heighten understanding of complex educational situations and lead scholars to identify emerging themes, questions, biases, and patterns for future research (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative designs are indeed optimal for investigating human behavior and events as they occur. Consequently, since the decision-making behavior and perceptions of school-based administrators (in their natural setting) is the focus of this study, a qualitative design is advantageous (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher leveraged the flexibility and openness to discovery of the qualitative research tradition for maximum benefit (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Patton, 1990). In

this study, the researcher focused on specific cases in particular school settings in order to understand the interplay of the three constructs outlined in the conceptual framework: the role of the decision-making situation, the decision-making methods used by the decision-maker(s), and the involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process (Pettigrew, 1985). A more comprehensive explanation of this conceptual framework and the related literature is found in chapter two of this dissertation.

Research Questions

Based upon Pettigrew's (1985) conceptual framework and the relevant literature in the field (see chapter 2), the researcher developed a series of questions in order to explore school administrators' perceived understanding and situational use of decision-making models. Specifically, the study centered on three principals, three assistant principals of curriculum, and three assistant principals for student affairs within three high schools in a large county district located in west central Florida. The research questions were as follows:

1. What degree of familiarity do school administrators have with the different decision-making models (e.g., satisficing model, garbage can model, incremental model, classical or traditional model) outlined in the existing literature?
2. Under what circumstances do school administrators perceive they employ various decision-making models?
3. How and in what way do school-based leaders perceive they make decisions in their schools? What are the emergent themes/patterns/ideas among their perceived decision-making actions?
4. In which situations are school-based leaders willing to involve other stakeholders in the decision-making process?
5. How frequently and to what degree do institutional leaders perceive they involve other stakeholders in the decision-making process?

Research Participants: Principals, Assistant Principals of Curriculum, and Assistant Principals for Student Affairs

The potential research population consisted of the principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and the assistant principals for student affairs within approximately 20 high schools of a county school district located in west central Florida. A sample was selected from among this population, and a purposeful sampling method was used to identify the participants. “Buy-in” at a school site was crucial. In addition to the principal, the assistant principal of curriculum and the assistant principal for student affairs were required to participate in the interview process in order for a school site to be included in the sample. In summary, three schools were asked to participate. One principal, one assistant principal of curriculum, and one assistant principal for student affairs from each school were interviewed for a total of nine respondents participating in this research project.

Prior to selecting the sample and contacting potential participants, many procedures were followed. Initially, the researcher sought approval for the study from the University of South Florida’s Institutional Review Board and obtained permission from the school district’s Professional Standards Office to interview participants. Once granted, the researcher contacted each of the selected high school administrators within the school district, inviting their participation.

Data Collection Instruments

In this study, two instruments for data collection were employed: a demographic survey/decision-making survey and a list of questions for conducting semi-structured interviews with the nine participants (see Appendix A, Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Administrators; see Appendix B, Semi-Structured Schedule of Questions for Administrative Interviews). A brief Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey (see Appendix A) was administered to all the principal and assistant principal participants. The instrument was used to

gather pertinent information including age, gender, ethnicity, title, level of education, and years of experience. Also, this survey explored the administrators' familiarity with decision-making models. If the participant were familiar with a particular decision-making model, he or she was then instructed to briefly outline the situations in which he or she would employ the heuristic. In addition, respondents were also told to list who and to what extent they would involve other stakeholders in the decision-making process. As a new instrument, the researcher first subjected it to the review of the dissertation committee members and also piloted the instrument with members of the study's population not in the sample group. This pilot consisted of one additional principal and one assistant principal within the same county district from which the rest of the data was collected.

Second, the researcher employed a schedule of questions for conducting detailed, semi-structured interviews with the principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and assistant principals for student affairs participating in the research project (see Appendix B) (Creswell, 1994; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Rubin & Rubin, 2004). In these face-to-face interviews, each participant was asked the same set of pre-determined questions, which were interspersed with impromptu follow-up questions, intended to clarify responses. However, in some instances, the administrator anticipated the questions. In these situations, the leader proceeded to answer the requisite queries without prompting from the researcher. This phenomenon appeared after the participant had completed one or more scenarios, and the flow and sequence of the interview process was established.

The semi-structured interview questions consisted of descriptive, educational decision-making "real world" scenarios along with specific inquiries regarding 1) the decision-making processes theoretically used by leaders in those situations within the context of their school, and 2) the individuals that would likely participate in those situations. Considering the researcher had newly constructed this instrument, it was subjected to a review by her dissertation committee

members. In addition, the schedule of questions was piloted with the previously mentioned respondents.

Data Collection Procedures

Following the creation of the study's instruments, the gathering of institutional approvals, and the final dissertation proposal defense, the researcher began contacting high schools via telephone to determine whether or not they would be interested in participating in this research study. If the principal was interested in participating with his or her assistant principal for curriculum and one of his or her assistant principals for student affairs, the semi-structured interview was scheduled.

Overall, the researcher was very successful in attracting willing participants for this research study. She began by contacting the chairperson of the High School Principal's Council. This county decision-making body facilitates the formulation of policy and provides the communication link between site-based principals and district administration. This group meets once a month for an entire day. The chairperson chooses a different school site each month for the location of this meeting, and it is done in a rotating fashion. A new chairperson is elected every year by the committee's majority vote. Because the chairperson is elected by his or her peers, this individual is highly regarded by both high school principals and the county administration. As one principal explained, "The chairman of the High School Principal's Council is a leader among leaders. This person is smart, savvy, highly-educated, and doesn't take crap from this district. They are willing to go the extra mile."

Considering this information, the investigator decided to begin her interview cycle with the chairperson of the High School Principal's Council. When contacted via phone, the chairperson was very helpful and readily agreed to be interviewed along with his administrative staff. This principal gave the researcher the names and numbers of his assistant principal of curriculum and assistant principal for student affairs. The interviews were scheduled for the

following week, and the study's basic methodology and informed consent form were briefly described, with assurances that more details would be forthcoming at the interview.

After the interview with the chairperson of the High School Principal's Council, he suggested names of other principals the investigator might want to interview. These were leaders whom he personally respected, and who had won leadership awards and recognition from both the school district and their fellow peers. The researcher accepted his suggestions and called both principals. One of them agreed to be interviewed; the other did not. This cycle of recommendations continued: the researcher asked each school principal for possible participants, and one or two names were suggested at each school site.

In the end, the purposeful sampling process described in chapter three evolved into the purposeful sampling method termed "Chain Sampling" (Creswell, 1994; Patton, 1990; Seidman, 1998). Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) describe this purposeful sampling method as asking "...people to recommend cases to study. As the process continues, the researcher might discover an increasing number of well-situated people and an increasing number of recommended cases, all or some of whom can be included in the sample" (p. 179). As the investigator interviewed respondents for her dissertation, more leaders at each high school were asked to recommend other high school administrators as potential participants. Some names were forwarded many times; the researcher targeted those individuals as potential candidates for this research project. Maxwell (2004) stresses that "chain sampling" creates a pool of individuals that form a highly credible sample to include as a data set.

The semi-structured interview of the participants was designed to last approximately 50 minutes. Most principal, assistant principal of curriculum, and assistant principal for student affairs interviews actually lasted a total of 25-30 minutes. Only one leader, a principal, took the entire 50 minutes to finish the schedule of questions. However, one research participant did exceed the allotted time frame. This principal completed the interview process in 60 minutes. To

interrupt him would have seemed discourteous. So, although “time was up,” the researcher waited until the principal had finished responding before concluding the interview.

Using an interview guide for these administrators aided the clear flow and sequence of questions, thus allowing for quality control across the collected data (see Appendix B) (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002). Yet, while the constructs addressed in each question were identical, the specific wording of the questions differed for principals and assistant principals based upon the role that the participant assumed within the school. Each interview began with an explanation of the informed consent form and time was provided for the participant to sign the document. All administrators were satisfied with the investigator’s explanation of the form; they skimmed the contents and signed the required page. Also, the investigator asked all administrators’ permission to tape record their interview for later transcription and analysis. All leaders gave their consent.

The last 10 minutes of the scheduled interview time was utilized to allow the principals and assistant principals time to fill out the Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Administrators (see Appendix A). While this was occurring, the researcher waited in the office lobby for the principal or assistant principal to finish the task. Once the administrator completed the form, he or she handed it back to the researcher in the blank envelope provided.

Overall, the semi-structured interview approach had the advantage of allowing for the collection of standardized data across respondents, while also providing a capacity for a greater depth of information than a structured interview could allow (Patton, 1990). As such, during the interview process, the researcher asked follow-up questions when further clarification was needed. These questions provided additional insights and outlined a more complete understanding of the participants’ responses (Merriam, 1998).

Data Analysis Procedures

Following its collection, the researcher analyzed the data. In general, the investigator’s focus was to identify common ideas, themes, and/or patterns that emerged from participant

responses (Karlsson & Ahlstrom, 1997; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Mullen, 2004b; Mullen & Tuten, 2004). Specifically, the researcher utilized the data collected to help inform the project's research questions (see chapter 1, 3, & 4). The following seven steps comprised the data analysis procedure:

Step 1: The interview data was transcribed by the researcher immediately following the scheduled interviews.

Step 2: The researcher sent the transcripts back to the participants who checked the material for accuracy, noting any problems or concerns with the data on the transcripts. Then, in a self-addressed stamped envelope, the participant was instructed to send the transcript back to the researcher if changes needed to be made to the text. In only one case did a participant send back the transcript with corrections, and these changes were duly made.

Step 3: The researcher read all the transcribed material, noting important ideas/themes/patterns in the margins of the text. She also noted the textual material that addressed the five research questions guiding this study.

Step 4: Utilizing word processing software (e.g., Microsoft Word), the investigator wrote brief documents (i.e., memos) attempting to capture in more detail some of the transcript content that focused on the project's research questions, and the ideas/themes/patterns that could be derived from the collected interview and survey data.

Step 5: The data was color-coded and labeled using a traditional process for emergent ideas/themes/patterns and their relevance to the study's research questions.

Step 6: The emergent ideas/themes/patterns and transcript text related to the project's research questions were communicated through the dissertation results in detail, along with direct interview quotes that supported these results.

Step 7: The ideas/themes/patterns and transcript material relevant to the study's research questions were compared and contrasted with texts found within the extant literature of the field.

In analyzing data collected through qualitative research studies, it is important for the researcher to understand and identify his or her personal values, assumptions, and biases (Creswell, 1994). In order to counteract some of the biases the researcher may introduce, the investigator incorporated measures to guard against this possibility. To do so, she periodically debriefed her major professor and graduate peer reviewers as to her results, hoping they would call attention to any problems that may have occurred in her writing, results, and/or interpretations. This happened multiple times throughout the course of the dissertation process.

Summary

The researcher briefly described the general methodological format followed within this qualitative case study. Using the insights afforded by the previous literature review (see chapter two), the investigator constructed a field-based study of decision-making patterns and perceived practices among secondary principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and assistant principals for student affairs. The major problem that supported this study acknowledged that scholars and practitioners may not understand how school administrators make decisions in the workplace. More specifically, scholars perhaps do not comprehend fully how school leaders perceive their decision-making strategies and actions, so a study was constructed to help begin addressing this issue.

This section began with a discussion of the study's phenomenological design, research questions, and description of the population/sample of principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and assistant principals for student affairs included in this project. The author also described the original instruments used to collect data (i.e., Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Administrators, see Appendix A; Semi-Structured Schedule of Questions for Administrative Interviews, see Appendix B). Finally, a discussion of the data collecting techniques occurred, and the study's data analysis procedures were highlighted.

Research Questions and Resulting Data

Through the following discussion of each research question and the subsequent analysis of the material collected, the investigator began to examine a problem inherent within the extant literature of the field. In considering the literature, it appears that scholars and practitioners are uncertain how decisions are made in the school environment. Do administrators follow models to reach decisions? Does the situation dictate the outcome of the process? Whom and to what extent do they involve stakeholders in the decision-making process? Generally, scholars and practitioners are perhaps unclear how school administrators make decisions in the workplace. More specifically, scholars and practitioners may not comprehend fully how school leaders perceive their decision-making strategies and actions. This qualitative case study helped to provide practitioner data to illuminate and describe this problem.

Through qualitative analysis, the researcher also wished to highlight the study's purpose: to explore practitioners' perceived understanding and situational use of decision-making models in the domain of educational administration. Providing a clearer picture of how leaders perceive their decision-making actions remained a primary goal of this research project.

The following section outlines the five research questions guiding the focus of this study. Each query will be informed by the data collected from the interviews and surveys of the principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and the assistant principals for student affairs within a county district located in west central Florida.

Question 1

The researcher attempted to assess the administrators' familiarity with the various decision-making models prevalent within the existing literature (see chapter 2 & 3) using the Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Administrators (see Appendix A). On this form, the high school leader was presented with seven decision-making models and their subsequent descriptions. These heuristics included the classical or traditional decision-making

model, the satisficing strategy, the incremental model, the mixed-scanning model, the garbage can model, the political model of decision-making, and the ethical model of decision-making. Using a Likert scale, each administrator rated their familiarity with each model, circling the number 1-5 that corresponded to the descriptions: “never heard of,” “heard of,” “somewhat familiar,” “familiar,” and “very familiar,” respectively. If the participant was familiar with a particular decision-making model, he or she was then instructed to briefly outline the situations in which he or she would employ the heuristic. Each leader completed the survey, placed it into the blank envelope provided, and handed this instrument to the investigator before she left the school site. Table 1 contains the information that was collected from the participants’ Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Administrators (see Appendix A).

Table 1 Administrator Familiarity with Decision-Making Models

	Very Familiar 5	Familiar 4	Somewhat Familiar 3	Heard of 2	Never Heard of 1
Classical or Traditional Decision- Making	4	0	4	0	1
Satisficing Stragegy	0	0	1	1	7
Incremental Model	1	3	2	1	2
Mixed- Scanning Model	0	1	1	2	5
Garbage Can Model	0	2	2	2	3
Political Model of Decision- Making	2	2	2	2	1
Ethical Model of Decision- Making	3	4	2	0	0

The research literature (see chapter 2) describes the classical or traditional decision-making model as rational, providing one solution to every problem, and emphasizing organizational goals over personal gain. Classical decision-making follows a proscribed set of steps including: problem identification, problem diagnosis, alternative identification, probable effect of consequences, evaluation of alternatives, selection of solution, and implementation of solution (Barnard, 1938; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Simon, 1964). In the above table, eight out of a total of nine respondents indicated they were either “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with the classical or traditional decision-making model. So, it may be safe to assume that most administrators (i.e., principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and assistant principals for student affairs) were familiar with this decision-making process. However, it is interesting to compare these results with those from the interview.

Of the four people who marked that they were “very familiar” with classical decision-making, only two of these individuals actually perceived its usefulness in solving problems within the workplace. Two participants utilized elements of the classical or traditional decision-making model to describe their actions concerning the interview scenarios. One principal described the process of dividing up the State of Florida’s A+ money rationally (scenario 1), in the mode of classical or traditional decision-making, as follows:

You need to develop a process where teachers can also input and implement what they feel is the best plan. Then, come back and create an opportunity for all teachers to respond to the options, the plans. And from there, with the options and the plans, come up with what you feel is the best plan. And then from there, once everyone has voted on it, then incorporate the plan.

This administrator described his decision-making process using rational steps, hoping his efforts would lead to a solution acceptable to most stakeholders at the school site.

As with the aforementioned principal, an assistant principal also described a set of steps he would implement to assure himself of the validity of a student's accusation against a teacher (scenario 2). He wrapped up his position in the following way, focusing on the decision's benefits. He explained, "I would basically do it myself initially. I wouldn't want to put too many people into the position to deal with this.... Because, if it is unfounded, of course, then you've brought other people into the mix....The morale of the organization can disintegrate."

Although two more respondents indicated that they were "very familiar" with the classical or traditional decision-making model, they did not seem to utilize any elements of this heuristic when solving the issues outlined within the four interview scenarios.

The Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for administrators (see Appendix A) describes the satisficing strategy as a heuristic that accepts a decision-maker's limitations. His or her decision-making rationality can be compromised by the uncertainty of a situation, unavailable information, and unconscious biases. In most settings, the satisficing strategy acknowledges that individuals are simply incapable of making rational decisions, and the aforementioned limitations narrow the range of alternative solutions available to the decision-maker (Bendor, 2003; Camerer, 1994; Rainey, 2001). Overall, the study's respondents were the least familiar with this model. It could be considered the "least popular" of all the decision-making models described on the Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey (see Appendix A). Seven administrators out of nine marked this model a "one" on the Likert scale, signifying these leaders had "never heard of" it. One respondent had "heard of" the satisficing strategy; another was "somewhat familiar" with it. The participant who was "somewhat familiar" with the satisficing model was an assistant principal for student affairs, recently graduated from a local university with a specialist's degree. His advanced degree and recent attendance in a graduate school program could account for his familiarity with this decision-making model.

Although seven leaders indicated on the survey they had “never heard of” the satisficing strategy, during the interview, four of their decision-making process descriptions matched with elements of the satisficing strategy. For example, one principal perceived that decision-making was “not perfect” and “not rational.” Speaking of dividing up the A+ bonus money from the State of Florida among his faculty (scenario 1), the principal admitted the process “... does create some tough feelings among faculty and staff. Who would get what? Who should have what?” One assistant principal of curriculum confessed she had little personal control over some decisions. Speaking again of the theoretical A+ money, she stated: “So, we need to make it known to anyone that disagrees with the final vote of the majority that they would be more than welcome...to express their displeasure and concerns with me. But, beyond that...I don’t control the majority.”

Another principal admitted flaws may appear in any policy; nothing is foolproof, and he added, “You have to pick your battles; there were bigger issues I had to deal with.” A further principal concluded, concerning the tardy policy problems outlined in scenario three:

You need to understand the tardy policy thoroughly, but is that possible? There are so many variables. You need to look at it to see the distance the children are moving from point A to point B. Can it be done within the time limit given to them? How can we find out?

Although the aforementioned individuals had “never heard of” the satisficing strategy, these administrators did use components of this heuristic to explain their perceptions of decision-making. They perceived decision-making as sometimes lacking rationality, lacking control, and lacking certainty, all benchmarks of the satisficing strategy (Sent, 2002; Simon, 1947, 1964, 1978).

Table 2 Question 1: Classical/Traditional Decision-Making and Satisficing Strategy

Classical/Traditional Decision-Making	Satisficing Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight out of nine total respondents indicated that they were either “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with this decision-making model. • Two individuals used elements of the classical or traditional heuristic to solve the interview scenarios. • Scenario One – A+ bonus money – rational steps • Scenario Two – inappropriate student/teacher relationship – rational steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Least popular” of all the decision-making models described • Seven out of nine administrators marked they had “never heard of” this heuristic. • Four leaders used elements of this model to solve the interview scenarios. • Scenario One – A+ bonus money – not perfect/not rational – little personal control concerning the outcome • Scenario Three – tardy policy – nothing is foolproof.

When situations are overly complex and difficult, obscuring the consequences of a given decision outcome, leaders can utilize the incremental model. Using this heuristic, decision-makers undertake small incremental changes in order to avoid unanticipated negative consequences, monitoring the outcomes of each successive decision (Lindblom, 1959, 1964, 1979). As outlined in Table 1, only one individual was “very familiar” with this decision-making process, while three other leaders noted familiarity with this heuristic. Two leaders were “somewhat familiar” with incremental decision-making, and another administrator had “heard of” this process. One participant had “never heard of” this model. Clearly, these respondents’ perceived familiarity with the incremental model ranged widely.

One principal in the population sample indicated he was “very familiar” with this decision-making heuristic. He actually used components of this model to solve one of the interview scenarios. Improving a high school’s ineffectual tardy policy (scenario 3) required small steps, not sweeping changes. He felt that small, incremental steps could avoid unanticipated

negative consequences; also, monitoring the outcomes of these changes was essential to organizational success. He explained:

... I need to do research; I would find out what it is I have a problem with. I would then go and try to work from within out. One of the things that you cannot do is demoralize a faculty. You need to gage their reactions every step of the way. You cannot bring up issues that you don't have solutions in place for or partially worked out solutions.

So, not only does the principal believe that he is “very familiar” with this decision-making protocol, he also utilized elements of this heuristic (i.e., small incremental steps, assessing outcomes) to solve a theoretical scenario.

The Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey (see Appendix A) describes the mixed-scanning model as reconciling the rationalism of the satisficing strategy with the flexibility of the incremental heuristic. Mixed-scanning involves “trial and error,” the slow deliberation of possible solutions, procrastinating if required, staggering decisions, and reversing decisions if necessary (Etzioni, 1967, 1986, 1989). Of the nine respondents participating in this research project, five indicated they had “never heard of” the mixed-scanning model. Two administrators had “heard of” the heuristic; one leader was “somewhat familiar” with the process. Besides the satisficing model, the mixed-scanning heuristic also had a high number of administrators (five) who claimed they had “never heard of” this decision-making process.

Although five leaders appeared to have “never heard of” the mixed-scanning model, all of them used elements from this heuristic to describe their decision-making actions concerning the theoretical interview scenarios. For example, one principal described his deliberation of possible solutions to the tardy policy problem presented in scenario three by stating that the perceptions of the faculty towards the situation were uncertain. He explained: “This is what the perception is, and how do we correct this? Is this going to involve getting together a little task

force committee, a little discipline committee together to look at it, address it, and involve our kids?”

One of the assistant principals for student affairs indicated the need for staggering decision-making in her interview responses. When dividing the theoretical A+ bonus money among the school’s faculty and staff (scenario 1), she explained her thought process as follows: “Think about it; you may want to do this in stages.... I think that if you don’t give the money across the staff, there will still be that hostility, but that hostility will be directed at you.” While discussing scenario three in her interview, an assistant principal of curriculum described her decision-making process as more “trial and error” than classical or traditional in form:

Based on my information, I would then decide whether or not the problem originates from within the administration or because tardies are not being turned in. Or if the tardies are not being turned in, then we would start looking at why the teachers are not turning them in and the inconsistencies... you make adjustments along the way.”

Although these three administrators’ surveys indicated they had “never heard of” the mixed-scanning model, they solved various problems using elements of the mixed-scanning model (e.g., slow deliberation, staggering decision-making, and trial and error) throughout the interview process.

Table 3 Question 1: Incremental Model and Mixed-Scanning Model

Incremental Model	Mixed-Scanning Model
<p>Perceived familiarity was wide-ranging. One principal who was “very familiar” with this model used components of it to solve an interview scenario.</p> <p>Scenario Three – tardy policy – small steps, not sweeping changes – avoid unanticipated negative outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not very popular • Five out of nine participants had “never heard of” the mixed-scanning model. • All of the five respondents used elements of this heuristic to solve various interview scenarios. • Scenario Three – tardy policy – uncertain perceptions • Scenario One – A+ bonus money – staggering decision-making – trial and error

The garbage can model operates within situations that exhibit extremely high levels of uncertainty. Sometimes leaders must act before they think; the garbage can model acknowledges this possibility. It also recognizes that decisions are a product of problems, solutions, stakeholders, and choices colliding. When a problem and solution match, a decision results (Heller, Drenth, Koopman, & Rus, 1988; Janis & Mann, 1977; Pinfield, 1986). Two leaders indicated that they were “familiar” with this concept of decision-making. Two were “somewhat familiar” with the garbage can model, and another two administrators had “heard of” this heuristic. However, three of the respondents in this study had “never heard of” the garbage can model. It is interesting to note that both individuals who were “familiar” with the garbage can model (two assistant principals for student affairs) are currently doctoral students at different universities. Their recent coursework and resulting knowledge of the educational leadership field, could perhaps account for their familiarity with the garbage can model of decision-making. Although both assistant principals for student affairs were “familiar” with the garbage can model, when analyzing their decision-making techniques concerning the interview scenarios, they did not seem to use any elements of the garbage can model to solve these theoretical problems in the

workplace. In fact, both of these particular respondents were very methodical (i.e., classical or traditional decision-making) when describing their perceived decision-making actions. One assistant principal for student affairs concerned himself primarily with following prescribed steps to solve the second interview scenario dealing with an improper relationship between a teacher and a student. He explained, “Johanna, she is kind of an emotional source, not a factual source....If you gather some facts that show that there was some activity or behavior that was inappropriate, of course, you are going to take steps there, depending on the process that is in place.” The other assistant principal for student affairs, who remarked that she was “familiar” with the garbage can heuristic, did not use any of its elements to describe her decision-making actions concerning the interview scenarios. She would stress professional dress within her school (scenario 4) and attempt to correct teachers’ “sloppy” attire. She stated: “I would work through the department heads... I would inform them of the level of expectations that I have for professionals in my school. And those teachers who come to work dressed inappropriately...will be sent home to get clothes that are professional.”

Although both respondents were familiar with the garbage can model, their interview responses did not match this assertion. They appeared somewhat rational (i.e., classical or traditional), deliberating on each scenario situation carefully before undertaking a necessary action. Control and power are the key elements of this heuristic. Personal interests and individual needs supersede organizational goals and objectives (Barnard, 1938; Klein, 1998; Mintzberg, 1983). Most respondents indicated familiarity with this model. Only two individuals had merely “heard of” the political heuristic, and one assistant principal for student affairs indicated that he had “never heard of” it. Interestingly, this leader appeared to use elements of the political model when solving some of the issues presented within the interview scenarios. In fact, he was the only participant who utilized elements of this model to solve a problem. This assistant principal for

student affairs described in detail how he would disperse the A+ bonus money to his faculty and staff (scenario 1). He stated:

The problem is you can't dictate that, so basically what you are going to do is work with those groups of those people given the responsibility. You want to almost direct them to get the desired outcome that you want. So, not only do you pick the influential people, but also those that buy-in to the same philosophy as yours.

It can be inferred that this assistant principal for student affairs may wish to benefit the goals and objectives of the organization as a whole. However, he may want to forward his own agenda, favoring personal wants over institutional needs. There could quite possibly be a conflict between individual goals and organizational objectives. It appears the political model may be at work here. More data concerning this point would be needed to make a determination of this leader's intentions.

Table 4 Question 1: Garbage Can Model and Political Model of Decision-Making

Garbage Can Model	Political Model of Decision-Making
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two leaders: "Familiar" • Two leaders: "Somewhat Familiar" • Two leaders: "Heard of" • Three leaders: "Never Heard of" • "Familiar" leaders are doctoral students. • Neither of the "familiar" leaders used elements of this model to solve the interview scenarios. Instead, they were very methodical, more "classical" in their approach to problem solving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most participants had "heard of" this model. • One individual had "never heard of" the political model; he was the only one to use elements of this heuristic to solve an interview scenario. • Scenario One – A+ bonus money – "direct them to desired outcome"

Ethical decision-making is more of a general decision-making philosophy than a step-by-step process. This heuristic is broad in scope and encompasses many aspects of organizational change and control. According to Quick and Normore (2004) and Sergiovanni (1999), ethical decision-making focuses around students' academic goals and aspirations. In order to reach these

goals, teachers, administrators, parents, and community stakeholders must make decisions in the best interest of the children involved (Portin, 1999; Webb, Neumann, & Jones, 2004; Witherspoon, 1997). Obviously, this heuristic is well-suited to an educational setting: an institution understood to revolve around the goals and objectives of student success. As might be expected, all administrators queried were either “very familiar,” “familiar,” or “somewhat familiar” with this model. This is the only decision-making heuristic with which everyone professed familiarity. This familiarity was echoed throughout the interview transcripts.

All participants often claimed within the interview process that a student’s well being and intellectual growth were major decision-making factors. One assistant principal of curriculum expressed her concern for the children at her school when discussing the inappropriate student/teacher relationship (scenario 2). Speaking about students and their welfare, she stated: “They [parents] need to know you are there to protect their child. What you are doing to be able to pursue the situation and putting them in a situation that they have the ability to protect themselves as well is important.” Discussing the same scenario, a principal explained, “A lot of times, the kids don’t make this stuff up. I’ve seen it; it’s been rare. Most of the time, they are dead on the mark. You got to protect the kid.”

Another principal reiterated this concern for students; he believed role models within the school setting were important (scenario 3). He said, “So, if you’ve got teachers that are well-dressed and show the importance of coming to school, you are now supporting what good business practices are. So, your kids are going to emulate you or model you. You are modeling for them.” A final example arose from an assistant principal for student affairs with a unique point of view concerning the A+ money awarded by the state (scenario 1). He highlighted his position as follows: “I have always been of the opinion that the teachers taught the material, but the students did the work, and so maybe turning money back into more programs for the classroom....What’s best for the kids should be the outcome.” Regardless of scenario, all

administrators acknowledged student growth and achievement as the ultimate decision outcome. Considering this premise, it is not surprising that all administrators questioned were familiar with the ethical model of decision-making.

Table 5 Question 1: Ethical Model of Decision-Making

Ethical Model of Decision-Making
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All individuals were familiar with this model.• Students' well-being and intellectual growth were major decision-making factors.• Scenario Two – inappropriate student/teacher relationship – welfare of student• Scenario Four – dress code – teachers as role models• Scenario One – A+ bonus money – student effort/student reward

Question 2

This question can also be addressed using the responses from the interviews (see Appendix B) and the Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Administrators (see Appendix A) given to each participant at the conclusion of the interview session. Administrators were instructed to rate their familiarity with a specific decision-making model on a Likert scale of 1-5; they were then asked to indicate under what circumstance(s) they would be willing to use that model in the workplace. Only if they were “very familiar,” “familiar,” or “somewhat familiar” with the model did they indicate when they would utilize it within their schools. The responses were varied. Similar to the previous research question, the participant responses will be organized via the decision-making models listed on the Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Administrators (see Appendix A).

Eight out of nine participants indicated familiarity with the classical or traditional decision-making process. Only one administrator had “never heard of” classical or traditional decision-making. After assessing the respondents' familiarity with the decision-making model, the survey required the participant to relate the various situations in which he or she could possibly use the classical decision-making heuristic.

Administrator answers were wide-ranging, from every day situations to school-wide initiatives. One leader focused on "...developing policies such as tardies, sign-in/outs, reducing suspension rates, reducing excessive absences." An assistant principal of curriculum indicated that "90%" of his day involved "making decisions or answering questions for others" using the classical or traditional model. One leader claimed that "some of the everyday decision that we make fall in this model."

Similarly, other administrators perceived that they utilize the classical decision-making heuristic when dealing with district-wide procedures and policies. An assistant principal of curriculum explained, "This [classical model] could be used when working with a problematic teacher to move the teacher closer in teaching methods to the expectations of the administrators (alternative identification and evaluation of alternatives suggest that there may be or is more than one solution)." An assistant principal for student affairs described this model's suitability for situations that "involve all kids – schools, a new principal, raising the grade of a 'D' school to a 'C'." As previously mentioned, in addition to the aforementioned survey, the administrators were presented with four "real world" scenarios and then asked to describe how they would solve the problem situation. Three administrators utilized portions of the classical or traditional decision-making heuristic to describe their perceived decision-making actions. One principal said, concerning the tardy policy situation (scenario 3): "So, go internally, go into your administration and staff. Identify the problem and then seek solutions. Evaluate your outcome. Simple as that." An assistant principal for student affairs emphasized a rational, step by step process to deal with the dress code scenario (scenario 4). She stated:

In this situation, I would meet with the administrators the following day.....And then from that point, I would sit down with the expectations that they would enforce the policy. And then as the principal, if that were me, I would address the faculty either through e-mail or the next faculty meeting, if we had a weekly one, outlining what the policy is and that we all need to be on the same page.

These administrators perceived elements of classical or traditional decision-making useful in various situations ranging from institutional policies to county initiatives. These leaders also utilized portions of the classical model to solve interview problems concerning the ineffectual tardy policy (scenario 3) and dress code infringements (scenario 4).

Two individuals acknowledged familiarity with the satisficing strategy. However, only one participant attempted to outline the situation in which he would use it. This assistant principal for student affairs claimed, “This strategy would be employed when a situation requires immediate to slightly delayed action.” Although the aforementioned response appears rather vague and inexact, this administrator did use elements of the satisficing strategy to describe his solution for the tardy policy scenario (scenario 3). During the interview, he described his procedure, step by step. He also assessed consequences and acknowledged the unknown variables that may exist within this “real world” environment. He explained:

I’d want to put a group of teachers together, through a voluntary process and maybe the department heads....We’ll probably need not more than eight people involved in coming up with a solution to the tardy policy. But, a tardy policy is in effect whether it is agreed upon, or it is not agreed upon. We just have to see where we are; assess the situation.

Most individuals in this research study were not familiar with the satisficing model; consequently, only one leader attempted to describe this heuristic’s utility on the survey (see Appendix A). However, during the interview process, this same administrator did use elements of the satisficing strategy to deal with the tardy policy scenario (scenario 3).

Table 6 Question 2: Classical/Traditional Decision-Making and Satisficing Strategy

Classical/Traditional Decision-Making	Satisficing Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranging from everyday situations to school-wide initiatives • District-wide procedures and policies • Scenario Three – tardy policy – identify problem, seek solution, evaluate outcome • Scenario Four – dress code – rational, step-by-step process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One answer, slightly vague dealing with delayed action • Scenario Three – tardy policy – assessing consequences, acknowledging unknown variables

The incremental model seemed to resonate with this sample population of high school administrators. On the Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey (see Appendix A), seven school leaders indicated various situations in which they would use this heuristic. One assistant principal of curriculum considered using the incremental model when constructing the school’s master schedule; another principal acknowledged its relevance in situations that contained multiple, uncertain variables, like “teacher effectiveness, physical restraints of the school environment, and excessive traffic getting to school in the morning.”

Two other participants believed this methodology to be effective for new principals. One assistant principal for student affairs explained, “If appointed to a new principalship in the middle or end of the year, rather than making drastic changes, I would use this model until I got to know the new school.” The other leader thought it especially relevant for high performing schools. This administrator cited the heuristic’s usefulness with, “unknown circumstances – organizational change within an experienced or stable environment, primarily one that is successful.”

Two other leaders claimed the model’s implementation would raise high school standardized test scores. An assistant principal of curriculum said, “ In attempting to move your children to a higher score, you might identify strategies, set them in a priority fashion, try one or two, review outcomes, then decide [the] next strategy.” The other assistant principal of curriculum described this phenomenon from a more global perspective. She would use this model

in “situations like raising school test scores, changing [the] tardy policy, or conduct rules. This would allow for the opportunity to evaluate each step of the way; see the big picture.”

It is interesting to note that in four out of the seven responses to this query, the principal or assistant principal actually incorporated parts of the incremental model’s definition into his or her answer. For example, these leaders would not want to make “drastic changes,” so they could “identify strategies, set them in a priority fashion, try one or two, review outcomes, then decide [the] next strategy.” Simply, they would use this heuristic in various situations because it “would allow for the opportunity to evaluate each step of the way.” This utilization of the definition’s incremental elements within the survey responses and interview transcripts may indicate a true understanding of this model. However, further research would be required to substantiate this claim. Many administrators found the incremental model useful to their decision-making and described various situations where its elements could be relevant.

Incremental decisions are produced within the context of an existing organizational framework and relevant institutional policies (Etzioni, 1992; Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood, 1988). As a result, mixed-scanning, the researcher believed, seemed relevant to the field of educational leadership. Contrary to this thought, however, five individuals claimed to have “never heard of” this heuristic. Four participants were either “very familiar,” “familiar,” or “somewhat familiar” with this decision-making methodology. Only three of these leaders described situations in which they would use the mixed-scanning model. All three responses on the survey were negative. One administrator claimed she “would never use the model,” and another leader would implement it when “political gains were at stake.” One assistant principal for student affairs wrote, “I would use it in day to day decisions only if I had to. It is so political; that is not who I am.”

Two survey answers focused on the “trial and error” element of the mixed-scanning process (Etzioni, 1967, 1986). Again, the responses from the leaders were negative. One claimed, “I would not use this model as a leader. Trial and error can be avoided by utilizing knowledge of

other professionals.” Another principal added, “Why don’t you label it just ‘trial and error’; that’s what it is, and I really don’t use it.” For some reason, these individuals found this model and its use of “trial and error” ineffectual and “wrong.” Even though multiple high school leaders answered this question, they really did not respond with any specific “real world” situation or circumstance.

Table 7 Question 2: Incremental Model and Mixed-Scanning Model

Incremental Model	Mixed-Scanning Model
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructing master schedule • Situation containing multiple, uncertain variables – teacher effectiveness • New principals • High performing schools • Raise standardized test scores • Definition incorporated into respondents’ answers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All three responses were negative. • Too political • Too uncertain • Trial and error viewed negatively • No “real world” examples

According to the relevant literature in educational leadership, administrators often act before they think, and many situations exhibit high levels of uncertainty within the high school setting (Cohen & March, 1974; Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972). The Garbage Can Model of Decision-Making describes this phenomenon. Six individuals were familiar with this ideology and its assertions. They appeared to understand decisions as a product of problems, solutions, stakeholders, and choices colliding. On the other hand, however, three other administrators had “never heard of” this methodology. Of the six leaders who indicated their familiarity with the garbage can heuristic, four described circumstances in which they would use it.

Most answers seemed vague, stating, “I would use this model when faced with a deadline to meet.” One assistant principal for student affairs wrote, “Crisis situation.” These individuals appeared to understand the basic tenants of the garbage can model: leaders are often stressed for time and forced to think before they act. They also must operate in environments with extremely

high levels of uncertainty (Hall, 1987; Pinfield, 1986). Because their answers seemed vague and lacking in detail, the responses did not allow for in-depth examination by the investigator.

On the survey, one assistant principal for student affairs did indicate that she would use this decision-making process when “a policy has been handed down to the school from the district, but we have been given some room to develop and implement.” Her responses to the interview scenarios, however, could conflict with her answer to the survey question. Two of the interview scenarios were district policy issues (scenario 1 & scenario 2). The basic guidelines were in place, but the administrator was “given some room to develop and implement.”

Although both scenarios dealt with district policy problems (scenario 1 & scenario 2), in neither situation did this assistant principal for student affairs utilize the garbage can model. Instead, she was proactive, preparing the way for possible bonus money from the state (scenario 1): “How it would be solved? I would already have brought it to our SIT or SAC committee ahead of time in preparation of finding out if our grade is raised what our plan is for the money.” Is this perceived solution indicative of the garbage can model? She didn’t appear to act before she thought. She hardly seemed to struggle, as she stayed one step ahead of the newest district mandated initiative. In place of permitting solutions and problems to match randomly, this administrator highlighted her detailed plans.

Addressing the dress code interview scenario (scenario 4), this leader wished to improve the quality of professional attire at her school. This administrator would work “through the department heads.” She “would review with them [teachers] the dress code policy...inform them of the level of expectation...for professionals. And those teacher that come to school dressed inappropriately... will be sent home to go get clothes that are professional.” Although this leader did seem to understand the underpinnings of the garbage-can model, she may not actually have used it when faced with a “real world” situation. The garbage can model may resonate with this sample group, but they do not perceive its usefulness when faced with educational scenarios.

The key elements of the political decision-making model are control and power. Personal interests and needs override organizational goals and aims (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Nye & Capelluti, 2003). Eight out of nine leaders had “heard of” this model; however, they all appeared uncomfortable using it within the school environment. Three participants claimed they would not utilize it, while two others noted its usefulness when dealing with forces outside of their control. One assistant principal of curriculum wrote, “I would use this model when faced with questions of curriculum from a supervisor downtown (i.e., area director, assistant superintendent).” An assistant principal for student affairs admitted, “I would only use this when forced to (i.e., state requires x, y, z done a certain way).” Outside forces, rules, regulations, and perhaps even coercion, seemed to be the necessary components for leaders to implement this model within a high school setting. One assistant principal for student affairs claimed it might be used in a crisis circumstance: “This is used in a situation that requires immediate organizational restructuring. The decision-maker would use the strategy in an effort to change the direction of an organization.” According to these participants’ responses, this model is only useful when faced with a crisis or when an outside force dictates what a leader must do in his or her workplace.

Table 8 Question 2: Garbage Can Model and Political Model of Decision-Making

Garbage Can Model	Political Model of Decision-Making
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vague answers • Deadlines, crisis situations • Policy handed down from district, administrative latitude for implementation • Two interview scenarios match this description – scenario one and scenario four • Administrator didn’t use garbage can model. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many familiar, very few professed to using it • Outside force – district supervisor – state mandate • Crisis situation

Ethical decision-making centers on student achievement and aspirations. These values resonated with all participants. All nine leaders either were “very familiar,” “familiar,” or “somewhat familiar” with this decision-making model. Each administrator provided detailed answers as to when and under what circumstance he or she would employ the ethical model of decision-making. These leaders thought of ethical decision-making as a “way to operate on a daily basis within the educational environment.” They appeared to view this model as overarching, affecting their daily activities and actions as high school leaders. One assistant principal for student affairs wrote, “Ethics are a part of every decision-making process when children are involved. I do not see this as being mutually exclusive from others [decision-making models].” Another principal explained, “This is one that I use all the time. It is my guide-point.” An assistant principal for curriculum provided a more detailed answer, “The majority of what I do everyday falls in this model. The use of the SAC team for various issues, the use of involving parents, students, teachers, the guidance department to help resolve an issue; I use this most often.”

Overall, however, the administrative participants saw ethical decision-making as most relevant to student academics and/or student performance. For example, one leader explained, “I use this model whenever I must make a decision involving a student and his/her progress or academic future.” An assistant principal of curriculum contributed to this line of thought: “Letting the needs, potentials, and goals of students all combine when deciding what curriculum a student will follow- that’s an ethical decision.” A principal participant expanded the reach of the ethical model to encompass “all situations that require the common good of the school (i.e., school-wide policies, classroom policies, teacher performance, and student performance, all administrative performance).”

To conclude, one assistant principal for student affairs seemed to encompass the ideals of ethical decision-making when she wrote, “I would use it in situations that could have a lasting

impact (known or unknown) on a student. We are here for the kids. Let's keep that in mind.”

From the data collected, administrators appeared both familiar with this heuristic and also willing to utilize it when applicable for the benefit of all students.

Table 9 Question 2: Ethical Model of Decision-Making

Ethical Model of Decision-Making
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Detailed answers• Daily operations• Not mutually exclusive of other decision-making models• Student achievement/student performance

Question 3

This question is multi-faceted. The investigator was interested in understanding administrators' perceptions of their decision-making behaviors in a high school setting. The researcher also hoped to discover themes/patterns/ideas that were held in common among the research participants. In order to help address this question, the researcher conducted interviews and administered surveys to nine high school principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and assistant principals for student affairs from a large county school district in west central Florida.

Within the following section, the general decision-making processes of the administrators interviewed will be described. An attempt will be made to match their responses with a decision-making model presented in the literature review (see chapter 2) and the heuristics described on the Demographic Survey/ Decision-Making Survey for Administrators (see Appendix A). Also, the patterns/themes/ideas that administrators held in common will be outlined.

In scenario one, Holly Heights High School raised their school grade from a “D” to a “C,” as rated by the State of Florida's A+ plan. Now, the leader must decide how to divide the 70,000 dollars awarded to the high school. Do teachers get the majority of the dollars? How much

are the custodians, lunchroom staff, and office secretaries awarded? Who decides the money allotment?

All administrators interviewed described how they would solve this issue. Most approached the situation in a rational way, weighing the options presented, devising different choices, and assessing the consequences of each decision. Overall, these participants seemed to follow a classical or traditional decision-making model, seeking to maximize the results of a decision to achieve the goals of the organization (Bowers, 1967; Rice & Schneider, 1994; Vroom & Yetton, 1974). When using a traditional or classical heuristic, clear steps are outlined for a decision-maker to follow. After completing this process, a logical decision should emerge, based upon the assumption that one best solution is possible for any given situation (Barnard, 1938; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Simon, 1964). The classical or traditional decision-making model involves: identifying the problem, generating the alternatives, evaluating the alternatives, choosing an appropriate solution, and converting the choice into effective action (Arrow, 1964; Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1963; Daft, 1989; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Kollman, Miller, & Page, 1992; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000; March, 1994; Owens, 2001; Taylor, 1984).

These elements of classical decision-making are echoed in the interview responses from the study's participants. One principal described the steps he would take to divide the A+ money equitably:

... you have to ask your leaders to sit down and come up with some proposals. You need to develop a process where teachers can also input and implement what they feel is the best plan. Then, come back and create an opportunity for all teachers to respond to the options, the plans. And from there, with the options and the plans, come up with what you feel is the best plan. And then from there, once everyone has voted on it, then incorporate and evaluate your plan.

Another principal stressed the importance of meeting with his administrative staff to “weigh the options” and “discuss all the issues... right there on the table.” Through this process, the administrators and the principal would review the consequences of the various choice options. Another principal perceived his actions as “cut n’ dry” and “logical in the circumstances.” He explained, “I came up with three plans....I got input from the faculty, presented it to the SIT team, and we came up with a plan.” Overall, the responses from these leaders indicated a perceived classical or traditional decision-making methodological mindset when dealing with scenario one.

In examining the interview responses from scenario one, three themes/patterns/ideas emerged from the transcript text. First, five leaders concerned themselves with the potential benefits teachers received from the bonus money. These educators “empowered the students... they are the part of the school that worked hard in the classroom with those kids. They are the ones that got them to that grade and moved them up.” Consequently, most administrators acknowledged educator efforts and wanted to reward them with a portion of the state’s A+ money. One principal stated, “... I want to say my initial goal was to put a check, a net check into the hands of my faculty, counselors, and administrators in the amount of a thousand dollars.” These teachers went “above and beyond the call of duty”; they were “responsible for the ‘A’ grade. We went from a ‘C’ to an ‘A,’” one administrator proudly admitted. Another principal summed up his viewpoint: “I truly believe in the power of involvement, in order to run a school, you have to have a school of believers. So, you are going to have to put your confidence in the people and into the faculty.” He used his “administrative power” to award the teachers a majority of the state monies. Most leaders in this study wished to reward their teachers for their efforts; that was their main goal.

Another theme/pattern/idea that arose from the interviews centered on “consensus-based” leadership, as one principal termed it. Other participants referred to this type of leadership as

“shared” or “a community of leaders.” Most administrators, when faced with such a substantial sum of money, decided to either turn the decision over to the SIT/SAC committee or construct a new committee to deal with this issue. The SIT/SAC committee is comprised of faculty representatives from the instructional staff (i.e., teachers, administrators, department heads, and guidance counselors) and non-instructional staff (i.e., lunchroom workers, custodians, office secretaries). One assistant principal for student affairs explained the SIT (School Improvement Team) and SAC (School Advisory Council) teams are synonymous, both referring to a “school-based volunteer committee made up of teachers, department heads, guidance counselors, administrators, parents, students, and community leaders.”

When discussing scenario one, the same assistant principal for student affairs indicated that these “interested” individuals of the SIT/SAC team “are chosen to represent all those given bodies; they can come to a decision, and then we could announce it to the staff.” Another leader explained the advantages of allowing this committee to determine the outcome of the State of Florida’s A+ bonus money: “Seeing as they are representatives from the parties that have a vested interest in it, it seems rather representational. I would use them because if it [the group] gets any larger, than it [the group] would develop factions” and perhaps become ineffectual. Many principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and assistant principals for student affairs favored using their SIT/SAC committee as a decision-making body in scenario one.

Other administrators, however, wished to form a committee expressly for dealing with this bonus money. An assistant principal for curriculum explained:

You know, I'm going to go democratic. I'm going to get all parties involved, meeting all the people within the school, which would be instructional and non-instructional that played a part. And then the first thing I am going to do is I'm going to ask them for different ideas on how to divide up the money. Give them a period of time to submit those things, and I would probably also, you know, devise a committee. I don't want to spearhead it. As a principal, I would not want to be the person in charge of it.

Regardless of their leadership role within the school, all administrators used committees to decide how the state's A+ bonus money should be divided. These leaders' responses seemed to embody the notion of "shared leadership." One principal affirmed, "I have to give people the opportunity to make decisions. If I don't give them an opportunity to make decisions, then they don't have the chance to know the risk that comes with it.... We run a school; my goal is to run a school of leaders."

A final theme/pattern/idea that appeared within the interview transcripts involved the potential contention and controversy surrounding this bonus money. Many administrators acknowledged that friction arises when members of a school community are trying to decide how to deal with a large sum of money. An assistant principal for student affairs admitted, "If you don't give the money across the staff, there will still be that hostility, but that hostility will be directed at you." Another quipped, "If you think it's going to be an issue...well, let's be honest, it's going to be a problem; you better have a plan!" In general, administrators in this study were concerned about staff morale when faced with dividing up the bonus money equitably. Most believed, as mentioned earlier, that committees would be a viable vehicle by which to make decisions, especially if friction may arise in the workplace. Talking about the current situation at her school, one participant noted, "Well, right now it's not a problem. But, to go about distributing money to avoid complications, you are going to have to involve people within the school community." There is no other choice if you want to avoid problems "down the road."

Table 10 Question 3: Scenario One

<p>Scenario One</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rationality + weighing options + devising different choices + assessing consequences of each decision = Classical or Traditional Decision-Making• Themes/patterns/ideas• Potential benefits for teachers• “Consensus-Based” leadership• Contention and controversy over bonus money
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Scenario two involved an administrator, a student, and a teacher. A student told one of the administrators that her best friend, Joanna, was having a sexual relationship with a popular social studies teacher named Mr. Antoine. The student had never seen anything unprofessional or unethical occur between Mr. Antoine and Joanna. However, she explained, “Of course, everybody knows it. I just don’t think anyone wants to say anything.” As with the previous scenario, the administrator was asked how he or she would solve this issue in the workplace.

Most administrators sampled in this study arrived at the same conclusion. Every administrator, somewhere in their answers, claimed they would call Professional Standards. Within this large county district in west central Florida, Professional Standards is the district’s investigative branch of the Human Relations Department. It is their job to examine allegations of misconduct by school employees. They either clear the individual of the allegations against him/her, or they charge the educator with misconduct. If misconduct is evident, Professional Standards may then formally reprimand the employee, revoke his/her teaching license, remove him/her from the classroom, and/or charge him/her with a criminal offense. The Professional Standards Office can undertake all these actions.

Although most administrators relied on Professional Standards to solve this problem, these principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and assistant principals for student affairs also utilized the classical/traditional heuristic or mixed-scanning model to reach conclusions in this

case. For example, some administrators had pre-determined, fully outlined steps to follow if a situation, like the one in scenario two, actually arose at their school site. An assistant principal of curriculum claimed:

I think the first thing I would do is to call Professional Standards because of the severity of the issue; it involves a sexual relationship between a student and a teacher. And then from there... I would get a written statement from the student and one from the teacher. And, then I would follow the procedures that they have after that.

Another assistant principal echoed this statement: "I'm going to pick up the phone, and I'm going to call Professional Standards.... I'm going to basically explain this scenario right here." Within these responses, the leaders attempted to maximize the results of a decision in order to achieve organization goals. They followed proscribed steps for the good of all stakeholders involved.

In addition to the classical or traditional process of decision-making, some leaders also utilized elements of the mixed-scanning method to address this dilemma. As outlined within the literature review (see chapter 2), mixed-scanning unites the rationalism of a satisficing model with the flexibility of the incremental model. Leaders operating within the boundaries of the mixed-scanning model realize the rationality of classical decision-making is often compromised by the costliness of data collection and human fallibility (Etzioni, 1968; Rallis & MacMullen, 2000). Decisions are viewed as the outcome of give-and-take or mutual adjustment between the various interests involved in the decision-making process (Etzioni, 1967).

One administrator realized that scenario two was not "all cut and dry." He wished to rationally consider the situation, analyzing decision choices and their consequences. However, this leader also understood the impracticality of the situation. In scenario two, the situation was evolving, needing immediate action and attention. This administrator believed she did not have all the facts to solve this problem:

You need to go out and see if you can find other reliable people that surround Mr. Antoine, and see if they can support the allegations. Once you establish the consensus that there is something unusual that is a breach of professionalism, I think at that point you need to think out loud with someone else. Don't rush things; think about it, and take things step by step.

The mixed-scanning heuristic provided a rational basis for slowly deliberating solutions within an educational environment. Also, a mixed-scanning approach allowed the leader to broadly scan the field of interest, identifying which decisions can continue to be taken incrementally and which ought to be taken as rationally as possible (see chapter 2). An assistant principal for student affairs explained, "Um... based on what you get as far as you poking around with the students....if you gather some facts that show...some activity or behavior that was inappropriate, of course you are going to take steps there, it all depends..." The administrators in this sample valued rational decision-making, but they also acknowledged it was not always possible. The situation determined the model used by the participants in scenario two.

There were four themes/patterns/ideas that surfaced from the interview transcripts of the principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and assistant principals for student affairs. As mentioned previously, all administrators wanted to involve a district level administrative department when dealing with the inappropriate relationship between a student and a teacher at their school site. Usually, the Department of Professional Standards was the optimal choice. However, other leaders cited the Human Relations Department, the area director, the Department of School Security, and the local law enforcement agencies as possible contacts to help aid the administrator with the situation. A principal encapsulated this idea when he said, "You just have to let somebody know. You can't deal with it by yourself.... It's too big."

In addition to involving district agencies in the decision-making process, another theme that arose from the interview texts revolved around immediacy. There was a definite push among

all the administrators to notify the authorities, the parents, the teacher, and the students involved immediately. Once the information was known, all leaders took immediate action concerning the situation. A leader explained, “Okay... it needs to be addressed immediately. And, it should be addressed by the person in charge of the school at that point.... It’s not something that you can put off and wait [until] another day.” This administrator and the others at her school stressed the importance of immediate action. Speaking of Professional Standards and the perceived rapidity with which administrators must work, one assistant principal of curriculum noted, “They helped guide me through the process. But still, in order to validate what is going on, and what’s been said, you need to deal with it immediately and take care of the situation.”

Although most of the high school leaders interviewed opted to call Professional Standards at the beginning of their investigation, some administrators did feel the need to gather more information. One principal and an assistant principal of curriculum believed that Professional Standards would require they “get a written statement from the student and one from the teacher.” Also, they would need to “start poking around a little bit.” Discussing Joanna and the information provided, an assistant principal for student affairs noted, “She stated that there were a lot of people that know this was going on or had seen things.” He wished to go back and try “to construct some sort of facts.” While all high school leaders contacted Professional Standards or some other outside district entity, some administrators felt a need to protect the teacher against unfair attacks or unwarranted judgments made against his character. A few administrators felt more information was needed to counteract these forces. A principal explained his viewpoint:

Well, the most important thing is to get accurate facts...perceptions can sometimes seem like reality, and not necessarily is it reality. This child says she's heard it; she hasn't said she's seen it... However, the first thing you do is you need to be very careful about your source. You need to go out and see if you can find other reliable people that surround Mr. Antoine, and see if they can support the allegations.

Information collected enabled the leaders to make informed decisions and rational choices between the alternatives presented. Often "life is hectic," but information allowed the administrator to make "decisions with confidence."

A final theme that surfaced from the interviews involved viewing teacher impropriety more generally, more globally. One principal stated emphatically, "It's not just one kid and one student. It can be anyone, anywhere. It's not an isolated incident." Another assistant principal of curriculum added:

I think most principals do this when you've got young faculty members, and you used to give this kind of advice to young, male teacher, but now you say it to all your young teachers. You remind them that they are professionals, and there is a line that you do not cross. You have the right rapport with the kids, but you don't cross that line.

In addition to warning young teachers and other faculty members not to "cross that line" with students, other administrators cautioned the investigator that students do not always speak the truth. To protect her teachers, this assistant principal for curriculum "encourage[s] them to respond to it [allegations] in writing... because we always want to defend out teachers, and I also want them to know in the first place we need to protect you, just like we need to protect the students." One principal echoed this statement:

I think as a principal I have to demonstrate loyalty to my staff. I need to make sure that once I've gotten some facts and if there is going to be an investigation, that teacher not be blindsided.... You are going to develop a high performing school; it is important that the teachers trust you.

Although the leaders interviewed seemed supportive of their staff and cautious to accuse any faculty member of “wrongdoing” without due process, they did understand these situations do occur within a high school setting. As one principal explained, “Every principal, sooner or later, will encounter that problem in a senior high school.” However, they were unwilling to let such an important issue slip by without a proper investigation. It needed to be dealt with “by the book because it would be a shame to drop the ball in an incident like this and allow someone to leave the district without repercussions.” This could negatively affect the school’s environment and educational climate.

Table 11 Question 3: Scenario Two

<p>Scenario Two</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional Standards Office integral• Classical or Traditional heuristic = proscribed, fully outlined steps• Mixed-Scanning model = give and take, mutual adjustment, scanning the field for possible solutions• Themes/patterns/ideas• District level personnel• Immediacy• More information – protect against “unfair” attacks• Not just an isolated incident – more global
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Scenario three involves an ineffectual tardy policy. The teachers felt that the administrators did nothing when tardies were reported to the office. Students perceived that teachers did not mark tardies in their grade books, so they could be late to class regularly. Finally, the administration believed teachers did not “pay attention” to tardies, and the students were continually tardy without repercussions. So, this contentious situation finally came to the

forefront during a faculty meeting. Now, the administration must fix the tardy policy quickly before staff morale and the educational culture plummets to an all-time low.

Most administrators were very familiar with the “old tardy policy problem.” Overall, they seemed to resonate with this issue. Many participants acknowledged its relevance across school sites within the district; they also admitted solving the tardy problem is not easy. One leader claimed, “Well, it needs to be addressed....However, there’s no perfect system; there’s no fool proof system for tardies, simple as that.”

The majority of the individuals responding to scenario three seemed to utilize elements of the incremental model to solve the tardy policy problem. The incremental model operates in situations that are overly complex, when it is difficult or even impossible to discern the consequences of a situation (Lindblom, 1959, 1964, 1979). Unlike the mixed-scanning model that views decisions as the outcome of give-and-take or mutual adjustment between the various interests involved in the decision-making process (Etzioni, 1967), the incremental model encourages the decision-maker to make small incremental changes in order to avoid unanticipated negative consequences. The leader constantly monitors the outcomes of each successive decision, carefully assessing the results of each minor change (Bendor, 1995; Lindblom, 1979).

One administrator stated, “We need to come to conclusions and some suggestions...because there needs to be a plan of action.” She was willing to take small steps, like “selling the rules by posting, by re-advertising, putting out fliers to parents, putting out fliers to kids, and going to the faculty” in order to reach the ultimate goal of an efficient tardy system. She didn’t have an overall vision of the process, but she knew “a plan of action” was essential to success. Another assistant principal for student affairs also stressed the incremental approach, taking small steps leading to an ultimate goal: “What I probably would do is look at the tardy policy.... Bottom line is we are going to come up with a policy or procedure that everyone is happy with and assess the outcome.” “There is no magic wand,” said an assistant principal for

student affairs, "... you're going to have to start to almost change a way of thought." He insisted that small steps towards an ultimate endpoint was ideal, but "You have to check that you are doing everything you can. What are the outcomes of your decisions?" Decision outcomes remain the deciding factor when determining the incremental model's success or failure (Lindblom, 1959, 1964, 1979).

Themes/patterns/ideas abound within the content of scenario three's interview responses. First, most administrators stressed the importance of obtaining all available information concerning the tardy policy prior to making a decision. Many administrators hesitated to rush into a decision without the proper background knowledge, such as, "evidence of whether or not they [the administration] have been enforcing the tardy policy." A principal also added that leaders should understand the policy thoroughly and get to "the meat of it." He or she should "look at the distance the children are moving from point A to point B. Can it be done within the time limit given them?"

Also, administrators wanted to know how teachers were enforcing the tardy policy because, as one assistant principal of curriculum commented, "I would do my research. You cannot bring up issues that you don't have a solution in place for or partially worked out. Don't go to a faculty meeting and expect to get an answer to a problem." A final leader urged, "Let's take a look at what types of teachers are enforcing it [the tardy policy]; what types of teachers aren't enforcing it. Basically, take a look at it from a global perspective." With information, administrators were more comfortable making decisions regarding the tardy policy issue outlined in scenario three.

A second theme/pattern/idea emerged from the interview transcripts: most administrators acknowledged the strength of committees' decision-making. Committees generally involve the stakeholders of an educational community (i.e., teachers, department heads, guidance counselors, teachers, students, etc.) to provide decision-making input that is relevant and integral to the

school's instructional processes. Here, administrators were relatively unanimous: "When we get together, more gets done." One assistant principal of curriculum explained his thought process: "... in order for a school to run effectively, you got to have the kids, the students in class, and you have to have your teachers on the same page. So, we are going to talk about it as a faculty."

Committees facilitate discussion and change. The same assistant principal of curriculum continued, "Bottom line is, we are going to come up with a policy or procedure that everyone, when I say everyone, my API's, my department heads, and my teachers are happy with." Another assistant principal for student affairs explicitly described a committee's function:

I'd want to put a group of teachers together, through a voluntary process and maybe the department heads. We'll probably need no more than eight people involved in coming up with a solution to the tardy policy. But, a tardy policy is in effect once the committee agrees on our course of action. We provide the catalyst to make it a reality.

Regardless of its composition or the decision-making strategies utilized, a committee should act on behalf of its stakeholders within the educational environment. Most administrators in this study considered committees important tools for effective decision-making.

In order for the tardy policy to operate successfully within a high school, leaders felt its enforcement was important. This was a final theme/idea/pattern within the interview transcripts. A policy with no consequences for misconduct cannot be effective. As one principal emphasized, "I am a strong believer that you don't have a policy that you don't intend to enforce, and if you have the policy, you better enforce it because then you become nothing more than a 'paper tiger'." Another principal expressed the same idea slightly differently. He said, "We can have all the rules in the world, but unless we have 200 people following the same procedures and policies with consistent enforcement, it is not going to do any good."

Both leaders stressed the importance of following verbal directions with deliberate actions. Not only should students be held accountable, but teachers should also follow the policies

and procedures put in place. “People need to be and feel accountable. If administration is not doing their part, then they need to be accountable. If teachers are not doing their part, then likewise, they need to be accountable.” If accountability is established, teachers and students will know the policy works. As one assistant principal for student affairs noted, “There’s got to be a lot more pro-activity.” Another assistant principal of curriculum said, if “...those people are not on board, you’ve got to talk to them; you’ve got to bring them back on-board. It is like a long, heavy tug rope. You know, you’ve got to get everyone going on the same lines.” When everyone works together toward a common goal, more is accomplished and student learning is accentuated and heightened.

Table 12 Question 3: Scenario Three

<p>Scenario Three</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex situations + uncertain outcomes + incremental changes + assessment of successive outcomes = Incremental model of decision-making • Themes/patterns/ideas • Gathering information prior to decision-making • Committee decision-making • Enforcement of tardy policy

The final scenario of the interview process, scenario four, revolves around problems with teacher dress code. In a suburban secondary school, teachers and staff were not dressing professionally, and the parents were noticing. Shorts and t-shirts became the norm in the English department, and faculty and staff wore jeans most days. Before parents began to complain, the administrator wanted to change the way teachers were dressing.

Generally, the participant sample used elements of the ethical decision-making model to solve the dress code issue. Simply, the ethical model emphasizes decisions that engender the most benefits for the students involved (Beckner, 2004; Kouzes & Posner, 1987). In order to reach this goal, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community must always favor choices

that are in the best interest of the children. This simple precept can be achieved through effective and efficient decision-making on the part of the educational institution and its leaders (Portin, 1999; Webb, Neumann, & Jones, 2004; Witherspoon, 1997).

Throughout the interview transcripts, a student's success and well being seemed paramount. School leaders felt employee dress to be indicative of how staff members were perceived by the community. For example, one assistant principal for student affairs asserted, "...when people come in, they need to know that teachers, administrators, everybody that works at this school are professionals. It is not a job; they are professionals. They hold certificates; they have degrees." The effectiveness of the instruction should mirror the professional dress of the teacher. Another assistant principal of curriculum added, "I'm going to try to get them to understand that they represent an image, and sometimes when they are having difficulties within the class it could go back to dressing appropriately." All administrators considered professional dress important. A dress code created a positive image, illustrating the dedication of educators working towards educational advancement for all students.

Within scenario four, three ideas/themes/patterns emerged concerning professional dress. Almost every leader viewed teachers as professionals and potential role models for student behavior and attitude. Appropriate dress figured highly in these administrators' estimation. One leader explained, "So, we are presenting them the way we want our kids to look...we expect them to dress well. So, the principal needs to set a vision, a precedent of what he expects, and what he doesn't expect." It should all start "with the teacher." When parents arrive at a school site, "you want them to respect you as a teacher or even as a secretary, if you want to be treated with a level of professionalism, you need to dress like it." If you dress well, the students will "follow your lead." Another principal summed up his general feelings about dress code and its importance to the learning environment:

Because what happens with your teachers and professional staff, it will bleed into your student body too. Your student body is affected; it's not just people coming from the outside... if you have a school of motivated, involved, professional, self-driven, teachers moving around your high school, your kids are going to emulate that.

Although professional dress seemed important to the leaders interviewed, they admitted a dress code policy was difficult to enforce within this county's schools. Simply, there is no formal policy. An assistant principal of curriculum explained, "This is probably tougher than the others [scenarios] because there is no teacher dress code. In our county, so I can only speak about our county, although they have asked that teachers dress professionally, it's really subjective. There are no guidelines." One principal expressed his frustration: "Now, you have 200 principals, and you have 200 definitions of that standard. How am I going to enforce that? It's kind of like the old adage from the Supreme Court, 'We know obscenity when we see it'." Although this leader maintained a clear vision of professional dress, it was hard for him to enforce his viewpoint.

One principal interviewed "sat there through the development of a...site-based management instrument that addressed dress code." The leaders gathered for this discussion, however, could not agree on a definition for professional dress. Although this principal was part of the development team, he felt that "it was difficult," and they "didn't get anywhere." Another principal went a step further and admitted, "I sure wish our county had a stronger dress code for teachers," while another cautioned principals to "be careful" when reprimanding employees for inappropriate dress. She explained, "I'd look very closely at what union contract allows because that is the first thing that will be brought to the front when you tell individuals that they should wear professional attire." One assistant principal of curriculum did forward a possible solution to correct this unfortunate problem. She stated, "You know, teachers get a new contract every year, and I do think, feel strongly enough that they do need to dress professionally, and we do need to

be able to back it up with something. So, we need to get it into the contract some kind of wording, verbiage, something.” That may be the only way this “problem situation” could be solved.

Although most administrators felt strongly about professional dress, they also realized there was very little reason to reprimand a staff member for perceived violations of the district’s dress code when no definitive policy existed. Some administrators described infractions that were “so extreme and vulgar” that something had to be done and “quickly.” As one principal explained, when teachers “lean over and expose” their “buttocks” in class or “dress with tight fitting things,” a leader “cannot turn a blind eye.” Overall, most administrators agreed that a one-on-one approach was the best possible plan of action. Leaders within this study recommended calling the educator “into your office” to discuss “inappropriate dress.” As one principal admitted, “...I have dealt with it; I have called teachers in, and I’ve spoken to them about their dress attire, and I’ve defined what it is that I don’t like.” Another principal said, “I think what I would be doing is individually addressing those with which I had an issue.” Mostly, the administrators were concerned with getting the “behavior corrected.” Talking with staff individually allowed the administrator to be viewed as “non-threatening” or “trying to help.”

Table 13 Question 3: Scenario Four

<p>Scenario Four</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student success and achievement are of the utmost importance = Ethical model of decision-making• Themes/patterns/ideas• Role models for student attitude and achievement• Hard to enforce, no proscriptive policy• Individually reprimand teacher
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Question 4

In order to ascertain the administrators' perceived decision-making strategies, the researcher devised four "real world" scenarios using the current literature in the field (see chapter 2) and Hoy and Tarter's (2004) four archetypes of decision situations. During the interview process, the administrators silently read each scenario. Then, the investigator asked each leader two questions: (1) Now that you have read this scenario, please describe how you would solve this problem in the workplace, and (2) Who and to what extent would you involve others (i.e., assistant principals, department heads, teachers, students) in the decision-making process? Through these queries, the researcher hoped to address some of the research questions guiding this dissertation. The following section focuses on the second interview question. Utilizing the data gathered from the leaders' interview responses, the investigator will explain whom these administrators would involve in the decision-making process, and to what extent their input would be encouraged. She will also explore and attempt to explain why these leaders involved others in their decision-making actions.

Scenario one describes a school on the verge of a potential crisis. Holly Height High School has been awarded money. Over the past three years, the institution has been a "D" school, as rated by the State of Florida's A+ plan. During the previous school year, however, after much hard work on the part of the teachers and innovative literacy programs instituted by the principal, Holly Heights High School earned a grade of "C" for the 2005-2006 school year. Now, the administration has to decide what to do with the bonus money. These dollars can go back into the school's funds to finance existing programs or can be portioned among the faculty and staff. The school's leaders must make a decision. Who will they involve in the decision-making process?

No principal, assistant principal of curriculum, or assistant principal for student affairs wished to make this decision alone. As one administrator explained, leaders "want to form a committee, that consisted of the entire faculty and staff...[it] would have so many teachers there

and so many non-instructional people there to represent everybody, and again direct them to go ahead and basically open it up to any suggestions.”

Other leaders recommended utilizing the SIT (School Improvement Team) or the SAC (School Advisory Council) to make this decision. Because these groups exist at every school across the district, forming a brand new committee with its own unique set of standards and rules seemed unnecessary. In other words, “It is a convenient option,” one assistant principal of curriculum admitted. Another principal explained, the SIT/SAC team is “really just a representative from each department, or something like that, depending on the school.” Getting all these individuals together “let[s] them be in the decision-making body and work that through the whole faculty. We need to vote, giving up ideas and putting those ideas into writing and then letting the group, faculty and staff, vote on the choice.” Another leader decided to involve the SIT/SAC committee, but also wanted to “spearhead” the process. She explained, “I came up with three plans. I polled the faculty at a faculty meeting, and told them that under state law at the time, the final decision would be made by the SIT team and the principal....I got input from the faculty, presented it to the SIT team, and we came up with a plan that we felt was fair.”

During the interview process, the investigator utilized the semi-structured interview protocol to probe more deeply into the participants’ responses. The researcher wished to know why these leaders employed committees to help them make decisions in scenario one. Some administrators may have inadvertently provided answers to this question within their interview responses. One principal recalled a past experience: “But to go at distribution of money to avoid complications: one, of course, you are going to have to involve people within your community.” “Going through the route” of using a committee is “smart,” claimed another principal. It sets “parameters for the staff” and keeps “the staff and faculty happy.”

Overall, utilizing committees allowed leaders to involve the faculty and staff, providing these groups with “ownership” and “buy-in” of the decision-making process. When a committee

makes the decision, it is difficult for the faculty and staff to blame the school leaders if they do not like the outcome. Speaking of committees, one assistant principal for student affairs stated:

I think you should look at how other schools use committees.... I think that if you don't give the money across the staff, there will still be that hostility, but that hostility will be directed at you. And so, what you have is a united front among the teachers directed at you. It depends on how broad and big your shoulders are respectively. Are you willing to take that kind of heat?"

Using a committee to help make important decisions within the school environment prevents some faculty hostility. A solution that benefits all stakeholders involved in the educational institution should come from "a bunch of educators working toward a common good in a shared leadership mode," admitted an assistant principal for student affairs.

Scenario two deals with an inappropriate relationship between a student and a social studies teacher. This student's best friend finally tells an administrator, and now the leader has to decide what to do and who to involve in the decision-making process. Unlike scenario one, administrators were hesitant to involve other people in this decision-making endeavor. Mostly, the leaders wanted to include "as few people as possible" in the decision-making process. One assistant principal of curriculum when asked whom he would involve in the decision making process replied, "Me. Nobody. No one." Another principal confided it was "not likely" he would get help from others to make this decision. He continued, "I don't think I would want to bring in a department head, unless that department head has privileged information." One assistant principal of curriculum explained, "No one else needs to know what is going on."

Although leaders wanted to make this decision themselves, most did wish to involve "district level personnel." "So, the first person I would probably call is Professional Standards. I'd also call someone at district to find out what we need to do to follow this by the book," explained one assistant principal for student affairs, "So, in my opinion, it would have to be

handled from the top down.” Another assistant principal for student affairs added, “Because of the sensitivity of the case, through Professional Standards the police would also be involved....I would let the area director know. A superior needs to be in on this case.”

While many high school administrators hoped to keep the situation “quiet,” all of them usually “debriefed” their leadership team concerning the situation. One principal claimed he would “make sure his APC (Assistant Principal of Curriculum) was involved and updated.” He continued, “They need to know if something is going on. Just in case I am out, I don’t want them blindsided.” Another assistant principal for student affairs would inform the administrative staff of the situation and ask them to “keep [their] eyes open, and be receptive to rumors and such things.” Although most administrators needed their leadership staff fully informed of this delicate situation, this group was not included in the actual decision-making process.

The investigator wanted to understand why these administrators endeavored to act alone, without help from their administrative team. To delve more deeply into the participants’ responses, the researcher inserted well-placed, probing questions into the interview protocol. Using this technique, the researcher found that most leaders acted alone because they felt the students’ allegations “too serious” for a shared decision-making model. One principal explained, “The case is so sensitive. I can’t let this information out. What if it isn’t true? You’ve just ruined a person’s career and perhaps life.”

All leaders were cognizant that rumors can start and spread rapidly within an organization. The individuals questioned for this survey wished to “stem the flow” of “gossip” and “innuendo” as much as possible. An assistant principal for student affairs cautioned, “I wouldn’t want to put too many people into the position to deal with this...Because, if it is unfounded, or course, then you’ve brought other people into the mix and then you can face complications that way.” As one leader explained, individuals who are “in the loop” need to remain silent. A teacher’s career “hangs in the balance, and you need to be serious about that.”

So, in general, keeping fewer people “in the know” permitted these administrators to protect the student and the teacher from unwarranted gossip and perhaps damaging, unfounded repercussions.

Table 14 Question 4: Results for Scenario One and Scenario Two

Scenario One	Scenario Two
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group decision-making • Committee • SIT/SAC team • Why? • Prevents hostility • Provides “ownership” and “buy-in” concerning the solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hesitant to involve others • District level personnel • Debrief leadership team • Why? • “Too serious” for shared decision-making • Rumors and gossip

An institution’s tardy policy is central to scenario three, and it seems the staff, students, and faculty’s perceptions of this policy are negative. In fact, when asked, both teachers and students found it ineffectual. The students believed teachers didn’t mark tardies in their grade books, and the teachers felt the administration failed to punish students when too many tardies were accumulated. So, these divisive feelings emerged at a faculty meeting, and the leaders of the school began to realize something had to be done; the situation was getting out of hand. Administrative effectiveness was diminishing in the eyes of the faculty, staff, and students. This could not continue. The leaders questioned for this study suggested who and to what extent others could be involved in this decision-making process.

Most principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and assistant principals for student affairs thought they would begin by involving the administrative staff in the decision-making process. One leader believed that involving her staff in the decision-making process allowed her to see “the big picture.” Viewing the tardy policy in its totality allowed “the administrators to go over the terms of the tardy policy before sending it to the faculty to discuss.” One assistant principal of curriculum explained, “In this situation, I would meet with the administrators the

following day. I would review the tardy policy and ask them for evidence of whether or not they've been enforcing it." Every decision-making process will begin here. "You are going to use them [the administrative staff] as a catalyst to get across your message," an assistant principal for student affairs explained, "...tardies aren't acceptable; this is what we are doing. And, this is how we are doing it. You've got to set the tone."

Once the leadership of the school initiated tardy policy improvements, then administrators wanted to involve their faculty in the decision-making process. One principal suggested, "...putting together a committee of people from the various groups, giving them the opportunity to speak." He would continue on to include the department heads to "see if the policy we have in place currently is fair, is consistent, is effective for [the] school." Department heads must buy-in to the tardy policy because "...they are the ones that are going to have the most influence over the conduct of their teachers within their departments. You are going to use them effectively." Putting a "group of teachers together, through a voluntary process and maybe some department heads and then begin to make some decisions" seemed a viable option for many of the leaders interviewed.

By probing more deeply into the participants' responses, the researcher discovered that many administrators utilized others in this decision-making process to help dispel the idea that they were apathetic concerning the tardy policy problem. These leaders didn't want to be perceived as "ineffectual or unconcerned" about tardies "running rampant." As one administrator phrased it, "Well, with sharing the message, you get them all involved in it." Then, the administration can be perceived as "doing something about the issues raised." Because many members of the faculty may be "laboring under a false impression," One principal asked, "Why do teachers have the perception that we aren't doing anything? Evidently, they feel that nothing will be done, so why should they continue to send students for tardies?" By involving the staff

and faculty in the decision-making process, the myth of administrative inactivity perhaps would be expelled, and consequently the climate of the high school would improve.

Scenario four describes a suburban high school with a dress code problem. This time it is not the students; the teachers are the issue. Some employees are arriving to work dressed in shorts, while others are wearing blue jeans and tennis shoes almost daily. The administration has noticed disapproving looks from parents during teacher conferences and when picking up their children after school. To be treated as a professional, as one principal explained, “You have to act the part.” So, to remain proactive, the leaders of the institution decided to correct this problem. The investigator asked whom and to what extent they would involve others in the decision-making process.

Most leaders decided to solve this issue themselves, involving administrative staff only when necessary. As one principal explained, “I don’t think I would involve anyone else. I think I would handle it on an individual level.” Another assistant principal for student affairs stated, “You need to get it across to them, talk to them, try to get them on-board with you and basically rationalize your expectations.” As mentioned previously, the county represented in this research study has no official dress code policy for teachers. So, there are really “no repercussions besides poor yearly evaluations” that can affect teachers’ adherence to the dress code. “It is difficult,” one principal admitted:

The district is taking a round-about approach on dress code. So, me as a principal, I need to be very careful about how I go with this thing....You need to be real careful that you are on a playing field that’s going to be very wide. It’s not going to be as restrictive.

This leader seemed to realize the district may not “back him up” when he addresses and reprimands teachers for dress code infractions.

A couple of leaders did want to involve department heads to help them address, change, and implement the dress code policy. One principal attempted to explain his rationale. He would

perhaps involve his “department heads because they are going to have the most influence over the conduct of their teachers within their departments.” Another assistant principal of curriculum claimed she would discuss dress code problems “one-on-one” with a teacher or staff member. Then she would “involve department heads as well; it helps strengthen and set standards that way.” One assistant principal of curriculum stated, “I would approach it through my department heads and talk with them as a reminder, ‘I need you to go back and convey to your departments that a professional atmosphere is important’.” Finally, one assistant principal for student affairs admitted, “I would probably use the department heads because most of them have some sort of rapport with their teachers, you know, in their respective departments. And then anyone who is really not complying, I would meet with them individually.” Ultimately, these leaders wanted their schools to present a “professional front” to the “outside” community. And the administrator, sometimes with the help of his or her department heads, could accomplish this goal.

Using the semi-structured interview schedule, the investigator clarified participants’ answers and asked follow-up questions that illuminated and/or extended these responses. Through this process, the researcher realized that many administrators cared about the dress code policy, but were frustrated by their lack of control. Some leaders wanted to change the status quo. As one assistant principal explained, “You know, teachers get a new contract every year, and I do think, feel strongly enough that they do need to dress professionally, and we do need to be able to back it up with something, So, we need to get it into their contract.”

Most administrators also felt that professional dress was integral to a successful school’s climate. Teachers, administrators, and staff members are role models for the students in their building. These adults needed to comprehend that “students are watching you; they look at you everyday.” As one assistant principal of curriculum stated:

...we unite to educate our students as professionals. They are going to go out into the world as a professional, you know we want them to present that way, all the way down to

when they leave this building to go on field trips. We need to show them the way by the way we dress.

We are “asking them to help model appropriate attire for the students,” said one assistant principal for student affairs, “You are going to have to use the teachers as vehicles.” One principal summarized this argument when he explained, “So, if you’ve got teachers that are well-dressed and show the importance of coming to school, you are supporting what good business practices are, so your kids can emulate you or model you.” Teachers are modeling “success in the ‘real world,’ beyond the walls of the high school.”

Table 15 Question 4: Results for Scenario Three and Scenario Four

Scenario Three	Scenario Four
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative staff • Faculty, especially department heads • Why? • Deny apathy • Climate improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve administrative staff only when necessary • Department heads • Why? • Frustration over lack of control • Successful school climate

Question 5

Based upon the responses provided by the study’s high school administrators, they seemed to utilize stakeholders (i.e., teachers, staff members, counselors, assistant principals, department heads, parents, students, etc.) in their decision-making endeavors frequently and within multiple and varied situations. When examining the results from this case study, the researcher found administrators involved others in decision-making as often as possible. Only when detrimental to the decision-making process did the principal, assistant principal of curriculum, or the assistant principal for student affairs act alone (i.e., scenario 2).

Data from the Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Administrators (see Appendix A) and the Semi-Structured Schedule of Questions for Administrative Interviews (see

Appendix B) was used to help inform research question number five. Again, the use of organizational stakeholders was widespread throughout the interview responses and survey answers.

The Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey (see Appendix A) asked participants to rate, using a Likert scale, their familiarity with the seven decision-making models (i.e., classical or traditional decision-making, satisficing strategy, incremental model, mixed-scanning model, garbage can model, political model of decision-making, and ethical model of decision-making) found within the extant literature of the field (see chapter 2). Once the administrators indicated their level of familiarity with the model, they were also asked in which situations they would use that particular heuristic and whom and to what extent they would involve individual(s) in the decision-making process. If the leader marked they had “never heard of” or had just “heard of” the model, they did not have to answer the two questions presented above. In four out of the seven decision-making models, administrators frequently perceived they used others to make organizational decisions.

With the classical or traditional decision-making model, leaders indicated that “other administrators, teachers, department heads, peer teachers, district mentors” could help them solve problems by making rational choices and weighing the consequences of their actions. One assistant principal for student affairs wrote, “All stakeholders would be affected, ideally.” The incremental model was also popular with the leaders selected for this study. One believed that “group consensus” was of the utmost importance with “administrators, department heads, specific school leaders, and parent leaders” all dealing with an overly complex situation. Another leader stressed that “administration, department heads, teachers, students, and parents” all needed to work together, making small incremental changes in order to avoid unanticipated negative consequences.

Administrators also resonated with the garbage can model. Many principals and assistant principals embraced the tenant: leaders often have to act before they think. Educational stakeholders should be involved in this decision-making methodology. An assistant principal for student affairs indicated that “colleagues” should be involved with the garbage can model, while a principal simply indicated “all” needed to be “involved” in the decision-making. Especially popular was the ethical model of decision-making, holding students’ goals, aspirations, successes, and happiness above all other factors when making decisions within an educational environment. Every participant expressed familiarity with this model and all wanted to involve other stakeholders in ethical decision-making. As one administrator explained, “Depending on the specific situation...I often try to use various individuals to make a decision, so that it can be very well-rounded and try to meet the needs of all students from various perspectives.” One principal simply wanted to involve “staff, parents, and students.” Another assistant principal of curriculum wrote, indicating the survey question, “All of the above—myself, colleagues, teachers, parents, and students.”

The satisficing strategy, the mixed-scanning model, and the political model of decision-making were not “familiar” to most respondents enlisted in this study. So, consequently, they did not indicate whether or not they would use others in the decision-making process when employing these models in “real world” situations.

The interview portion of data collection (see Appendix B) also wished to ascertain how administrators perceived using other stakeholders in making decisions. The respondents were instructed to read a theoretical, “real world” scenario and then describe how they would solve that problem in the workplace. Then, they were asked whom and to what extent they would involve others in the decision-making process. Throughout the data collected, within almost every scenario, leaders felt it helpful to involve other stakeholders in their decision-making actions. In scenario one, when dividing the State of Florida’s A+ bonus money among faculty and staff,

leaders never made the decision by themselves, they always wanted to include others. One principal stated, “If you are going to put confidence in the people and into the faculty... you’ve got to get group consensus if you are going to be effective, and you are not going to have infighting.” Another leader explained, “I think the first and foremost thing is that I wouldn’t make it the administration’s decision.” She wanted to involve “everyone.”

Leaders viewed the “ineffectual” tardy policy of scenario three, and the perception of “administrative indifference” as solvable. However, “faculty buy-in” was necessary for a positive change to occur. One principal stated, “Probably we’d get together with the faculty first and maybe include some kids.” An assistant principal of curriculum explained the need for stakeholder involvement in this decision-making scenario: “It is an opportunity to reflect amongst your administrators. But I think the key thing to begin to resolve this situation is to put together a committee of people from the various groups, giving them the opportunity to speak.”

The fourth scenario also provided leaders with the opportunity to involve other employees at the school site in their decision-making procedures. The participants understood dress code was important; clothing reflects an educator’s effectiveness in the classroom, and it underscores a professional image, which most teachers wish to demonstrate to the community. When shorts, t-shirts, jeans, and low-cut female blouses appear, the leaders of the school were expected to do “something.” When addressing this problem, the administrators readily used their department heads and administrative staff to solve the issue. Because no set standard for professional dress existed, many leaders felt they had to “tread carefully.” One principal admitted, “...I can’t do it by myself. The dress code, the tardy policy, it is all a school initiative. It is not the principal’s initiative; it is the school’s initiative.” As an assistant principal for student affairs explained, “I would probably use the department heads because most of them have some sort of rapport with their teachers, you know, in their respective departments.”

With scenario two, however, most administrators wished to act alone. Here, an allegation is made by a student; her best friend and a teacher are having a sexual relationship. When questioned further, the student admitted, “Of course, everybody knows about it. I just don’t think anyone wants to say anything. We don’t want to get Jodie in trouble, and we love Mr. Antoine.” Because of this theoretical scenario’s sensitive nature, most leaders chose to solve this issue by themselves. One assistant principal of curriculum stated he would involve, “Me. Nobody. No one.” As an assistant principal for student affairs explained, he would inform “as few people as possible, because then the rumor mill is going to be started about how things were handled and what was going on.”

Although most leaders wanted to “act alone” on this potentially damaging issue, all administrators did hope to inform their administrative staff about the situation. One principal explained, “I don’t want them blindsided. In a scenario like this, I would probably involve the entire administrative staff, and then probably conduct a short meeting to discuss it.” Another principal said, “If I am the principal...and it is brought to me or I have an assistant principal that brings it to me, the two of us would share it. Thinking out loud, we can then develop a plan of action.” The final principal also wanted to act alone; however, involving an assistant principal was vital to the investigation he had to do:

If it was a female student, I would want a female administrator with me when I talked to the young lady. Also, it is a good thing, let’s say a male student comes forward, and he is having a relationship with a female teacher, I would have another administrator present...I would do that only because then I have another person who had heard the first person testimony.

Although most administrators wished to make the final decision alone, they were all very willing to let their administrative staff “in on the problem,” perhaps guiding them toward a possible solution.

Table 16 Question 5: Results

<p>Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants used other stakeholders as frequently as possible.• Only when detrimental to the decision-making process did leaders act alone (i.e., scenario two).

Summary

In chapter four, the researcher briefly described the methodology for this study and outlined the research questions guiding this project. Then, each query was presented, and the responses were provided through the data collected from the interviews and surveys of the high school principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and the assistant principal for student affairs.

The purpose of this research study was to explore practitioners' perceived understanding and situational use of decision-making models in the domain of educational administration. This project helped to provide a clearer picture of how decisions are made within a high school setting. The qualitative design of this research project highlighted the major problem informing this study. From examining the literature, it is clear that scholars and practitioners alike do not understand completely how decisions are made in the school environment. Do administrators follow models to reach decisions, or does the situation dictate the outcome of the process? Whom and to what extent do they involve stakeholders in decision-making? Ultimately, scholars and practitioners perhaps fail to understand how school administrators make decisions in the workplace. More specifically, scholars may not comprehend fully how school leaders perceive their decision-making strategies and actions. That is the problem this study addressed.

Although I had finished transcribing and describing the collected data, my thoughts still turned to the first interview I conducted. This principal was the one picking up trash in front of the school, while I watched from my car. Although I was apprehensive about letting him know I had been watching him earlier, I couldn't contain my curiosity. Once our interview concluded, I

had to ask what he was doing picking up trash; he had custodians to do that for him. He just laughed and explained, “Oh, I just have always done that. It might be a habit. I just can’t stand a messy environment. A messy life leads to a messy mind. I decided long ago, if you don’t do it yourself, who will? You know?” I nodded my head as he kindly walked me to the front of the school. At that moment, I realized it was wise to step into the practitioners’ world and immerse myself in their decision-making process. It is the “real world.” As I collected data in the following weeks, I discovered the decisions that guide our actions are as varied and multifaceted as the administrators who lead them.

The data collected for this dissertation carries with it implications for pedagogy, practice, and future research within the educational leadership field, and also decision-making within high schools. In the following chapter, the researcher will summarize the findings of this study and highlight its implications.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

Once I conducted all the scheduled interviews, I reviewed the participant responses. From my perspective, most administrators had been open and honest, sharing their feelings concerning decision-making and its ramifications on their daily lives. My questions and concerns regarding the daily decision-making actions of practicing administrators began this journey, and the general themes and conclusions that emerged from my fellow practitioners' responses will conclude this dissertation.

Within the following chapter, the author will provide an overview of the research conducted with nine leaders in a large county school district in west central Florida. Emerging themes are presented and discussed. Finally, implications and recommendations for future research will be forwarded, touching upon the areas of pedagogy and practice.

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to explore practitioners' perceived understanding and situational use of decision-making models in the domain of educational administration. This project attempted to provide a clearer picture of how decisions are made within a high school setting. From examining the literature, it is uncertain whether or not scholars and practitioners understand how decisions are made in the school environment. Do administrators follow models to reach decisions, or does the situation dictate the outcome of the process? Whom and to what extent do they involve stakeholders in decision-making? Ultimately, scholars and practitioners seemed unclear in their understanding of how school administrators make decisions in the

workplace. More specifically, scholars do not appear to comprehend fully how school leaders perceive their decision-making strategies and actions. That was the problem this study addressed.

The available literature contains many models of normative and descriptive decision-making (Bendor, 1995; Brown, Boyle, & Boyle, 1999; Daft, 2001; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; March, 1994; Shapiro, Benjamin, & Hunt, 1995). While some of these models are descriptive, most are normative. That is, they describe how decision-making should be conducted in practice. Many scholars have argued that decision-making models should be more grounded in empirical reality, and that more research should be done in this area (Evers & Lakomski, 1991; Rallis & MacMullen, 2000; Willower, 1994). In the literature, researchers have called for more empirical studies of decision-making in the context of educational leadership (Brown, Brown, & Boyle, 1999; Petress, 2002).

To accomplish the goals of this study, the researcher utilized a conceptual framework (Pettigrew, 1985) to synthesize the disparate educational decision-making literature into a comprehensible body (see chapter 2), and developed research questions to guide the project.

1. What degree of familiarity do school administrators have with the different decision-making models (e.g., satisficing model, garbage can model, incremental model, classical or traditional model) outlined in the existing literature?
2. Under what circumstances do school administrators perceive they employ various decision-making models?
3. How and in what way do school-based leaders perceive they make decisions in their schools? What are the emergent themes/patterns/ideas among their perceived decision-making actions?
4. In which situations are school-based leaders willing to involve other stakeholders in the decision-making process?

5. How frequently and to what degree do institutional leaders perceive they involve other stakeholders in the decision-making process?

Next, the insights afforded by this framework and the aforementioned research questions guided the subsequent construction of a field-based study of perceived decision-making patterns and practices among three secondary school principals, three assistant principals of curriculum, and three assistant principals for student affairs (see chapter 3). Finally, an analysis of the study's results was conducted. A written report (see chapter 4) followed, addressing the demand for more empirically grounded research examining educational decision-making practices.

Conclusion

Pettigrew's (1985) framework consists of three parts. In broad terms, "content" refers to the *what* of change, "context" refers to the *why* of change, and "process" refers to *how* change takes place. However, in the case of this study, the researcher adapted Pettigrew's framework in order to align it better with the three primary concerns identified in reviewing the extant literature on educational decision-making: the decision situation (the "content"), the individual(s) involved in making the decision (the "context"), and the methods used in the decision-making process (the "process"). These elements also guided the construction of the study's research questions (see chapter 3). Within the following section, Pettigrew's (1985) heuristic will serve as a framework, helping to outline the emergent themes found within the data collected from the high school principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and assistant principals for student affairs in this study.

Decision-Making Process: A Disconnect in Thought

The high school administrators included in this study appeared to resonate with several decision-making models presented on the Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Administrators (see Appendix A). Most were familiar with the classical or traditional heuristic, using elements of this framework to solve various "real world" scenarios presented within the

interviews. They also strongly identified with the ethical model, describing its usefulness. As one assistant principal for student affairs explained, in “all areas of decision-making... it [the ethical model] is not mutually exclusive of other decision-making models. It really all goes together.”

Although respondents resonated with some of the decision-making models and/or claimed familiarity with them (i.e., classical or traditional decision-making, incremental model, garbage can model, political model of decision-making, ethical model of decision-making), this familiarity did not translate smoothly to perceived “real world” practice as illustrated by the interview scenarios. For example, one assistant principal of curriculum indicated on his survey that he was “very familiar” with classical or traditional decision-making. He also wrote on the Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Administrators (see Appendix A) that “90% of my [his] day is making decisions or answering questions for others” using a classical or traditional heuristic. This leader found classical or traditional decision-making familiar and claimed he would utilize it often. However, during the interview process, this administrator did not use any elements of the heuristic to solve the “real world” scenarios. Thus, there appears to be a disconnect between perceived decision-making practice and leaders’ familiarity with the decision-making models presented in this study.

Another example revolved around the garbage can model of decision-making. Two assistant principals for student affairs indicated on their surveys they were “very familiar” with this heuristic. Also, one of the administrators claimed she would use this framework “when a policy has been handed down from this district, but we have been given some room to develop and implement.” When examining her responses to the interview scenarios, however, it appears that this assistant principal does not use the garbage can model; neither does her fellow male assistant principal for student affairs. Although one scenario dealt with a district/state policy (i.e., distribution of the State of Florida’s A+ bonus money), the female assistant principal still did not

utilize the garbage can heuristic. Administrators might resonate with the model, but they seemed to disregard its use with theoretical scenarios.

This disconnect between thought and perceived action can also be viewed in the opposite way. Throughout the collected data, various leaders claimed to have “never heard of” the political model of decision-making, the satisficing strategy, and the mixed-scanning model. However, faced with “real world” scenarios during the interview process, many leaders utilized portions of these models to solve the theoretical problems. For example, the only administrator in the study, an assistant principal for student affairs, who claimed to have “never heard of” the political model of decision-making, appeared to be the only leader who utilized portions of it to solve an interview scenario. Regarding the distribution of the A+ bonus money of scenario one, this leader stated: “... you want to almost direct them to get the desired outcome that you want. So, not only do you pick the influential people, but also those that buy-in to the same philosophy as yours.” He admitted during his interview session that he would “direct” the committee toward “the desired outcome.” Is the “desired outcome” an organizational goal or a personal initiative? Clearly, a disconnect has occurred between a theoretical understanding of the decision-making model and its perceived application.

In the same way, almost every administrator included within this study had either “heard of” or “never heard of” the satisficing strategy. Although indicating this on the Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Administrators (see Appendix A), a couple of leaders utilized elements of the satisficing strategy to solve various interview scenarios. One principal in particular claimed that he had “never heard of” the satisficing model, but he did incorporate components of this heuristic to resolve the issue contained within scenario three’s tardy policy problem. This principal wanted to make small decisions, narrowing the range of possible solutions. He realized his knowledge of the situation was limited, requiring him to ask various questions: “What are the group consensus feelings?” He attempted to assess the time it took for

children to move from “point A to point B” correctly. Although he claimed to have “never heard of” this model, he appeared to utilize its elements to solve the problem in scenario three.

Although many leaders had “never heard of” the mixed-scanning heuristic, some administrators did use portions of this model to solve various interview scenarios. Again, the aforementioned disconnect appeared. For example, one assistant principal of curriculum indicated that she had “never heard of” the mixed-scanning model. However, in attempting to solve the tardy policy problem, this leader slowly deliberated the solutions, attempting to rationally evaluate the few decision options available. While utilizing a trial and error procedure, she “... might need to make adjustments. But all information would show up through following the paths of the decisions, where the problem lies.”

The literature of the field (see chapter 2) echoed this disconnect between theory and practice (Bennis, 1989; Brown, Boyle, & Boyle, 1999; Petress, 2002; Samier, 2002). Many administrators are aware of the various decision-making models, but they are either unclear when to use them (Owens, 2001), or they feel these models are restrictive, hampering the decision-making process rather than helping the situation (Barnard, 1938; Hoy & Miskel, 1991). The extant literature also highlights a lack of administrative knowledge of the models (Evers & Lakomski, 1991; Rallis & MacMullen, 2000; Willower, 1994). They either never learned the information at the graduate level (Brown, Boyle, & Boyle, 1999; Daft, 2001), or had forgotten the material because of their lack of daily application (Henry, 2001; Huber, 2004). Regardless of the reason, this disconnect appeared between the administrators’ perceived familiarity with the decision-making models and the utilization of these heuristics within the theoretical interview scenarios.

Decision Situations: Control Issues

Within the data collected from this study, another theme emerged concerning the nature of the interview scenario itself. The “real world” scenarios constructed for this dissertation were

informed by the extant literature of the field and Hoy and Tarter's (2004) four archetypes of decision-making situations. Using this material, the researcher wrote each of the four scenarios, attempting to touch upon various dilemmas and areas of concern that practicing administrator may face daily. It is interesting to note that administrators tended to use elements of the classical or traditional decision-making models when the situation included lots of background information and policies or guidelines to follow. For example, the division of the State of Florida's A+ bonus money is rather "cut and dry," as one principal claimed. There are guidelines and policies that must be followed, handed down from the state and local district level. One assistant principal of curriculum stated, "There isn't much wiggle room." At least five leaders out of the nine included within this sample appeared to utilize portions of the classical or traditional heuristics to solve scenario one.

Scenario two also described a situation bounded by rules and regulations. Here, an inappropriate relationship between a teacher and student is exposed; now the high school administrator must "do something" quickly. Within this scenario are rules that must be followed in order to appropriately address the problem. For example, each administrator acknowledged the importance of notifying district level personnel of the situation, particularly the Professional Standards Office. As one leader explained, "Oh well, the deed is done. There is really no problem in solving it. It's just dealing with it.... Contact Professional Standards." These principals continued on to weigh the options available and consider the consequences of their choices.

Beginning with scenario three, however, the decision-making practices described by the study's participants began to change. Decision-making models and the leaders who use them frequently face inadequate information and a limited allocation of time in which to make decisions within the school environment (March, 1994; Owens, 2001; Shapiro, Benjamin, & Hunt, 1995). Also, administrators often experience a lack of control over a given situation; they

realize certain variables are “out of their reach,” and they must function the best they can with the circumstances presented (Quick & Normore, 2004; Nucci, 2001).

Leaders seemed to utilize elements of the satisficing strategy or the incremental model to address the issues contained in both scenarios three and four. These “real world” scenarios were constructed by the researcher differently, using the extant literature of the field and Hoy and Tarter’s (2004) four archetypes of decision situations. In these two situations, the information is imperfect and the range of options for action less restrictive. However, perhaps because of this perceived “openness,” the administrators tended to take smaller steps, assessing the consequence of one action before moving forward. For example, an assistant principal of curriculum found the ineffectual tardy policy rather “difficult to deal with.” He explained, “There is no perfect system; there’s no foolproof system for tardies...” He described his decision-making procedure as “slow,” making small decisions toward a larger goal, appearing to employ portions of the incremental model to address the problem. He acknowledged that he did not have all the information. He hoped everyone was functioning “on the same page.”

As apparent within the previous example, as the “control” or rules and policies guiding decision-making action decreased, so did the rigidity of their decision-making procedures. Instead of utilizing a classical or traditional model of decision-making that relied on gathering information, weighing options, and assessing consequences, leaders began to use portions of decision-making models that acknowledged the limits of rationality and embraced the uncertainty of background information. For example, the final interview scenario detailed teacher dress code problems at a suburban high school. Within this institution, teachers are dressing unprofessionally, and it is the administrators’ job to “do something.” Most leaders questioned admitted that they “really had no policy to stand behind.” There is no formal dress code policy in the county school district utilized for this research project. Many administrators appeared to use elements of the mixed-scanning model to address this issue. For example, one principal saw dress

code problems as not always rational, just a “gut level feeling” a leader has. This principal explained, “Now, you have 200 principals, and you have 200 definitions of that standard. It’s kind of like the old adage from the Supreme Court, ‘We know obscenity when we see it.’” This principal acknowledged that policies and guidelines do not always appear to ease the burden of making decisions and implementing the solutions. He used elements of the mixed-scanning model; its flexibility and versatility allowed this leader to perceive his actions as effective, even when lacking a framework from which to function as a decision-maker.

The extant literature on decision-making also mirrors this emergent theme. In many situations, guidelines and policies help to dictate decision-making action; sometimes the information surrounding a problem is relatively complete, and the time to make decisions remains sufficient (Duke, Showers, & Imber, 1980; Murnighan, 1981). Usually, in these situations, a classical or traditional decision-making model is optimal (Barnard, 1938; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Simon, 1964). If administrators claim to have guidelines, policies, frameworks to guide their decision-making procedures, the more likely they will be to utilize a classical or traditional model of decision-making (Daft, 1989; Gardner, 1990; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000; March, 1994; Owens, 2001).

However, just as often, decision situations are not conducive to a classical decision-making model (Augier & Frank, 2002; Augier & March, 2001). Often, decision-makers have limited time for action, finding environments where reality is compromised; not all information surrounding a decision is clear or even known (Hammond, 1990; Henry, 2001). In such environments, a mixed-scanning or incremental model can work well (Blau & Scott, 1962; Eden, 1997; Huber, 2004). These models acknowledge that not all decisions are rational, limited by the uncertainty of a situation, an administrator’s knowledge, and/or unconscious biases (Lustick, 1980). The less control (i.e., rules, procedures, knowledge) an administrator retains, the more

likely he or she will be to use a model other than the classical or traditional decision-making heuristic (Bendor, 1995; Lindblom, 1979, March, 1994).

Decision-Makers: Shared Leadership

Perhaps the most prevalent theme that emerged from the interview and survey data revolved around the administrators' use of shared leadership. The extant literature defines shared decision-making as involving both democracy and cooperation in aim and method to insure decision-making success (Huber, 2004). Throughout both the survey responses and the interview transcripts, leaders described utilizing their fellow administrators, teachers, students, and parents to create a "community of learners, working together to reach our goals." One principal described this philosophy as follows:

We run a school. My goal is to run a school of leaders.... I have to give people the opportunity to make decisions. If I don't give them an opportunity to make decisions, then they don't have the chance to know the risk that comes with it.

Within all interview scenarios, these principals, assistant principals of curriculum, and assistant principals for student affairs utilized other educational stakeholders to solve the problems presented. For example, in scenario four, the leaders interviewed were asked to deal with the employee dress code problem. One principal expressed his thoughts about involving others in this solution: "I can't do it by myself. The dress code, the tardy policy, it is all a school initiative. It's not the principal's initiative; it is the school's initiative." An assistant principal of curriculum also echoed this sentiment. When dividing the State of Florida's A+ money among her faculty and staff, she stated, "I really would empower the people that are part of the school that worked hard in the classroom with those kids.... We need to let them be in the decision-making body and work that through the whole faculty." Evidently, based upon the data collected, shared decision-making appeared to be an important factor for these leaders' decision-making endeavors.

With scenario two, some administrators were hesitant to involve the teachers, department heads, and staff members in the decision-making process. Many felt the issue was “too serious” or “too sensitive” for shared decision-making to be viable and/or effective. When asked whether he would utilize any other member of the school community to solve scenario two, involving the inappropriate relationship between a student and a teacher, one principal replied, “What I don’t want to do is I don’t want to unnecessarily involve anyone more than I have to.”

Although the high school leaders sampled hesitated to involve others in scenario two, they still wanted input and support from their administrative staffs. As one assistant principal for students affairs explained, “I would make my other administrators aware of the situation.... I would meet with my administrators the following day.” Another principal added, “With the young lady, I think it is more prudent to have a female in the office with me. I would do that only because I then have another person who had heard the first person testimony.” Again, although not directly making the decision, most leaders did feel the need to share the information with others, helping him or her to find the best solution concerning the situation.

The concept of shared decision-making figures prominently within the extant literature of the field (Klein, 1998; Vroom & Yetton, 1974). This sort of leadership allows all members of the educational community to have input in the running of the school (Huber, 2004). At the most fundamental level, without staff involvement and participation, many decision-making functions fail (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Ortiz & Ogawa, 2000). Teachers are “in the trenches,” and their information can aid in facilitating successful reform attempts (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). All these leaders acknowledged the importance of shared decision-making. All leaders needed support to make decisions that benefit the organization generally and the student specifically.

Implications for Future Research

Throughout the extant decision-making literature, scholars have called for more research concerning what actually happens when leaders at a school site attempt to make decisions

(Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1963; Daft, 1989). Currently, research focuses on normative decision-making (Holbrook, 1999; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Johns, 1995). More descriptive or empirical studies are needed. In the following section, the researcher will describe areas for future research, touching upon the components of both pedagogy and practice.

As mentioned previously (see chapter 3), this dissertation consists of only one, small voice in an ever-expanding narrative of educational decision-making research. This study cannot begin to effect change within the educational sphere. However, in conjunction with other empirical studies, change and growth may occur. This case study contains purposeful limitations in its methodology framework. The investigator did not observe actual decision-making within a practitioner setting. Instead, the researcher utilized a schedule of questions to ascertain leaders' perceived decision-making actions when responding to theoretical interview scenarios. So, future research could perhaps include observations of practitioners actually making daily decisions. Researchers could investigate how administrators make decisions and in which situations they would use community stakeholders. In addition, because of the qualitative methodology of this study and its use of a small number of participants, generalizability is limited. Expanding the number of respondents by including various areas of the nation (i.e., districts, states, and parishes) could increase universality. In addition, the boundaries of this study could also be expanded to include different grade levels (i.e., elementary and middle) as well as assessing decision-making methodologies within private educational institutions. Regardless of the research project's limitations, this dissertation can help to begin dialogue that may lead to future research regarding practitioner decision-making.

As mentioned in the "Emerging Themes" section of this chapter, there appears to be a disconnect between administrators' familiarity with a given decision-making model and its perceived usefulness within "real world" scenarios. Perhaps leaders are familiar with a model, but they may not utilize it when solving problems in an educational environment. On the other hand,

administrators may not express familiarity with a decision-making heuristic, but they may utilize elements of it when describing their perceived actions concerning the interview scenarios. More research is needed to understand the true relationship between decision-making models and their use in the workplace. Currently, little is known concerning how administrators actually solve problems in the school environment (Kirby, Paradise, & Protti, 1992; Taylor, 1984). By no means can understanding this perceived disconnect between theoretical knowledge and perceived action answer this dissertation's research problem. However, an understanding of this disconnect can form the basis for future research studies. Scholars could construct projects that specifically address an administrator's familiarity with a decision-making model and how this knowledge impacts its use in the workplace. Understanding the theory/practice dichotomy can illuminate the issue more clearly by highlighting future information that guides scholars and practitioners toward understanding the issue.

Situational control also appeared as an emerging theme within this dissertation's data. Here, as within the relevant literature (see chapter 2), leaders tended to utilize a classical or traditional decision-making procedure when frameworks or guidelines/policies were present and relatively complete information was available. On the other hand, leaders were more likely to use a mixed-scanning model when information was incomplete, time was limited, and policies/rules concerning the situation were few or non-existent.

Of course, this finding has implications for practice. In many situations, a classical or traditional decision-making methodology is unrealistic and/or unreasonable. Many times leaders have little or no control over a situation within their institution. In these circumstances, other, more flexible models (i.e., satisficing, incremental, mixed-scanning) can be utilized. However, in order to know which model to utilize, practitioners should focus greater attention on understanding the situation surrounding a decision completely (Quick & Normore, 2004). The

more a leader focuses on the type of problem that has occurred at a school site, the more likely he or she is to be flexible, tailoring the decision-making process to the problem at hand.

This study's findings may also have implications for educational leadership training. Just as practitioners should focus on the nature of a decision situation, perhaps scholars should also center their instruction around identifying decision situations (how, when, where, and to what extent are various decision-making models employed). University scholars could instruct their students using role-playing formats and instructional simulations. Through this method, students could understand perhaps the nature of decision-making situations and how to approach them effectively. Future research in this area could center on defining more clearly real situations. Additional studies may attempt to provide guidelines for choosing the decision-making model that "fits" a problem situation. Scholars could begin to place example scenarios on a "control continuum," describing situations that may require traditional methods of action and others that may benefit from a more flexible heuristic.

Shared leadership, a final theme, resonated throughout the extant literature and the findings from this case study. Of course, shared leadership is already affecting practice (see chapter 2). As the literature states, more and more individuals are utilizing this decision-making format to include all stakeholders in the decision-making process in order to reap the greatest rewards (Blase & Blase, 1999; Eden, 1998; Geijsel, Slegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003). This trend is predicted to continue (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996); leaders are now acknowledging the value of empowering staff and student, engendering greater "buy-in" from all educational community members (Johnson & Scollay, 2001; Ortiz & Ogawa, 2000; Vandenberghe, 1995).

This trend has also been noted within the academy. Classes in shared decision-making at the graduate and post-graduate level are appearing in university curricula across the nation (Leithwood, 1988). Pedagogy has already been impacted and perhaps this trend will continue (Abbott & Ryan, 1999; Haas, Laughlin, Wilson, & Sunal, 2003). Courses in educational

administration should focus perhaps not just on decision-making, but also the “art” of involving other stakeholders in the process. As mentioned previously, through role-play and simulation, future leaders may be more comfortable with this idea and apply it readily when acting as leaders within the educational community (Bickerstaffe, 1994; Evans, 1992; Knowles, 1990).

Future research has already been called for within the field of educational leadership and shared decision-making (Beebe & Mastertson, 2000; Burns, 1978; Fullan & Hargraeves, 1996). Ortiz and Ogawa (2000) define the essence of an effective team as possessing an understanding of competencies/routines and forming a clear identity of the team’s goals and objectives. Perhaps more research should be directed toward defining the decision-making group’s roles and responsibilities, clearly defining how a decision-making body should function. More research should also revolve around discussing when shared decision-making should be used, and when a leader should make decisions alone (Conley, 1990; Fullan & Steigelbauer, 1991; Likert, 1961; Sirotnik, 1988). Regardless, shared leadership is “not going away.” The better scholars and practitioners understand the concept and its benefits, the more educational stakeholders can effectively utilize shared-decision-making to its greatest advantage.

Final Thoughts from a Practitioner-Scholar

While writing this dissertation detailing the practitioners’ responses and their involvement in organizational decision-making, many thoughts and emotions emerged. I have come full circle, beginning with a research problem, then gathering data from actual practitioners in the field, and finally analyzing the results. Now, as a practitioner-scholar, it is my turn to respond.

I was surprised and enlightened by some of the findings from this study. I thought that many administrators would not be familiar with the various decision-making models (e.g., incremental model, political model of decision-making, mixed-scanning model) outlined in the Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Secondary Administrators (see Appendix A).

However, many indicated familiarity with elements of these models when describing their perceived actions regarding the scenarios presented during the interview phase of the study. Along this line of thinking, I also assumed that many administrators, considering the rapid pace of daily decision-making and a lack of information concerning various problem situations that arise during a work day, would often use a garbage can model to solve problems. I was wrong in this assertion. Very rarely did this model resonate with the sample studied. Some understood its components, but no one utilized its elements when describing his or her actions concerning the study's scenarios. Finally, I was also pleasantly surprised concerning the reactions to shared decision-making that arose. It was perceived as widely used and widely praised by the participants throughout the interview scenario responses and the written answers to the administrative survey. Not only did they see themselves using shared decision-making in the workplace, they also highlighted its importance in all facets of decision-making. In almost every case, administrators wanted to share their decision-making process with someone else, whether it be a committee of faculty members or their immediate administrative staff. Shared decision-making seems to be flourishing in the practitioner field, as evidenced by the participant responses gathered for this study.

I also want to share my responses concerning practitioner decision-making. I am a new leader, having completed my first year as an administrator and concluding my second. I am just now beginning to understand my role as an assistant principal in the ever-volatile environment of a secondary school. I spent five years as a high school English teacher. During the last two, I was the English Department Chair of an affluent secondary school in a suburban area of central Florida. When the opportunity to start my administrative career arrived, I jumped at the chance. With this new job came a change of scene. Instead of an environment where most students begin driving their own cars at the age of 16 and expect to attend a four year university upon the completion of high school, I found myself in a whole new world. At the high school where I am

the assistant principal, over 80% of the students receive free or reduced lunch. Caucasians are the minority; 85% of the students are Hispanic or African-American. If an adolescent is “lucky” enough to receive an associate’s degree, a victory is proclaimed. The students at my school often live in poverty; these adolescents are not quite sure the direction their lives will take once they graduate or drop out of high school. My job is challenging and highly rewarding. I believe I belong there; I am trying to positively impact my students.

Writing this dissertation not only expanded my knowledge in the area of decision-making, but also granted insights into procedures and techniques useful to my job as an assistant principal. As Pettigrew’s (1985) model highlights, there are three definite facets involved in effective decision-making: the methods used in the decision-making process (the “process”), the decision situation (the “content”), and the individual(s) involved in making the decision (the “context”). The combination of these three facets provides a rich fabric from which to construct effective decisions that attempt to benefit all involved.

After reviewing the literature and conducting research, the “process” of decision-making was illuminated and analyzed, adding greatly to my knowledge and effectiveness as a school-based administrator. Often, I had a goal in mind, but the steps to reach this ideal were vague and uncertain. The decision-making models highlighted within this review and in my research helped solidify processes that could aid my daily work. Many scholars (Barnard, 1938; Hallinger, 1992; Hoy & Miskel, 1991; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000; March, 1994; Owens, 2001) find the “traditional” or “classical” model of decision-making unrealistic and unreasonable to follow in the modern world. Its reliance on assessing every option before picking a course of action assumes unlimited resources for data collection and a great amount of time on the part of the decision-making leader or team. To conclude my dissertation, I will touch upon the knowledge I have gained in each area of Pettigrew’s (1985) Conceptual Framework of Organizational Change.

In my school, decision-making occurs fast and frequently. As we do not have the luxury to scan the environment, rationally taking account of all possible solutions and picking the optimal one, classical decision-making is impractical and virtually unused. As Daft (1989) and Gardner (1990) stress, the “process” of classical decision-making remains logical and rational; however, few organizations are capable of devoting the necessary time to this decision-making endeavor. Between preparing for a faculty meeting and investigating an instance of cheating on a midterm chemistry test, school leaders have little time in which to make decisions, much less to investigate the available options. The other models based upon the “classical” or “traditional” decision-making heuristic provide me with multiple options from which to choose. I especially favor the incremental model (Lindblom, 1959, 1964, 1979). The incremental model allows the decision-maker to begin problem solving with a clear, focused goal in mind (Bendor, 1995; Lustick, 1980). Lindblom (1959) calls this decision-making process the “science of muddling through” (p. 86). Decision-making is strongly tied to its organizational environment, and no two decisions are alike. Because of this fact, leaders can “muddle through,” making small decisions, checking the consequences, and continuing on until the problem is solved or an adverse reaction arises from the individuals involved (March, 1994). Often, I cannot make a decision immediately because I have to rely on others or do not have the time to gather all the necessary data. I sometimes do not have an ultimate goal in mind. Instead, I make smaller decisions toward a smaller, immediate goal. I have employed this technique throughout the past two school years, and I will continue to modify my approach as I make more decisions into the future.

Simon’s (1957, 1964) heuristic of satisficing, in my opinion, also seems an appropriate model to utilize in a high school setting. *Satisficing* is an individual’s attempt to solve problems with an answer that meets or exceeds expectations (Simon, 1978). Although Simon stresses that all decisions should be rational, a school’s complicated decision-making environment prohibits a complete survey of all options. Satisficing allows decision-makers to choose the best possible

alternative to a given problem, considering the limited solutions available to the administrator (Bendor, 2003; Camerer, 1994).

I also subscribe to an ethical decision-making framework, one that I have found personally relevant throughout the previous school years. In addition, most administrators in this dissertation study consistently supported the use of this heuristic within the workplace. An ethical decision-making framework, as highlighted within this dissertation, attempts to define what is “right” and “good” (Beckner, 2004; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Miller, 1990). Decisions should reflect what is best for students. A school is a unique environment; the goals and focus of an educational institution do not exactly mirror a business setting. So, to account for these differences, ethically, the administrator must keep in mind the students and their welfare as the ultimate goal of decision-making (Beckner, 2004; Evans, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 1987). At my high school, students come first. Their well-being and learning is our ultimate priority. From teachers and administrators in the halls during class changes to the “principal chats,” where the “boss” himself talks to groups of students about their future plans, our focus rarely wavers; we value students and make decisions based upon their needs. A school’s purpose and decision-making process revolve around the student and his or her needs and/or goals. Simply, the school wants what is best for all children (Wekesser, 1995). The high school in which I work emphasizes this greatly. With the advent of FCAT and other accountability legislation, such as No Child Left Behind, most policies that are put into place and curricular changes that are implemented look to students for their emphasis and focus. When making decisions, as highlighted within the literature by Cooper (1990), Fleishman and Payne (1980), and Kidder (1995), what constitutes the “truth” of a situation is relative within the context of that situation. I have learned to step back and look at the problem situation within its given environment. Problems are not always what they seem to be at first glance; time must be taken to evaluate each situation individually, keeping the welfare of the child at the forefront of any conclusions that are reached. Viewing the world through an

ethical lens requires the leader to embrace and fundamentally understand what he or she “stands for.” Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) forward three questions that leaders can ask themselves when approaching a problem situation.

1. How do I define my role as a leader?
2. What inspires the best in my staff?
3. What are my strengths? (p.167)

These questions help guide me in attempting to find the best solution in any given context. Of course, decision-making situations are ever-evolving and changing. Keeping up with the organization’s changing goals and foci retain much of my energy. However, with students’ welfare as a guiding principle in my decision-making endeavors, I try to make decisions that benefit all members of the high school.

Within my school, there are many decision situations or “contents” that continuously evolve, demanding swift action. This same idea is mirrored both within the literature (Daft, 1989; Hoy & Miskel, 1991; Hoy & Tarter, 2004; March, 1994; Owens, 2001; Shapiro, Benjamin, & Hunt, 1995) and the dissertation’s participant responses. I often find myself struggling to stay ahead of the situation, trying to anticipate what will occur next. Sergiovanni (1999) claims that schools are unique environments, having their own climate and culture. I have experienced this first hand. In order to make effective decisions, school culture and climate must be taken into consideration, or a decision will be ineffectual and perhaps detrimental to the school’s goals. As a relatively new administrator, my decision-making process is still nascent, an amorphous procedure that has changed constantly throughout my first year as an assistant principal. The office of student affairs is the lowest rung on the administrative hierarchy within the county’s high schools; it is the “content” or decision-making situation in which I work. There are three administrators, and we deal with all aspects of student discipline. Situations arise that must be dealt with immediately. There is no time for even a survey of the options. Understanding the

environment or “content” of my situation helps provide me with the guidance I need to make the decisions that will positively affect all individuals involved.

Writing this dissertation has also put the “context” of decision-making or the people involved in the decision-making process into focus. The principal or assistant principal is not the only one involved in making decisions. Working with a team of interested individuals allows a width and breath of ideas to arise that could never have been envisioned by a single individual working alone (Grace, 1995; Klein, Orasanu, Calderwood, & Zsombok, 1993). As the literature suggests (Blase & Blase, 1999; Eden, 1998; Geijsel, Slegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003), others should only be included in the decision-making process if they are interested. I have taken this learning seriously. The most effective use of shared decision-making results when all individuals involved are interested in the decision outcome. Although their research is over 50 years old, Barnard (1938) and Simon’s (1947) Zone of Indifference still resonates with my experiences in the school environment. When a decision resides in an individual’s Zone of Acceptance, they are unfazed and sometimes uncaring of the outcome. On the other hand, however, if a decision does fall outside an individual’s Zone of Acceptance, their participation is integral for decision-making success. From dress code policy to lunchroom procedures, keeping Barnard (1938) and Simon’s (1947) Zone of Acceptance theory in mind enables me to use the “context” of decision-making effectively.

The literature and research collected abound with praise and evidence for the beneficial effects of shared decision-making within an educational organization (Burns, 1978; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Klein, Orasanu, Calderwood, & Zsombok, 1993). I too have found shared decision-making quite effective in my current position. When I took over for the former assistant principal, I inherited one of her duties, the tardy system. It appeared to me ineffectual and overly punitive to the students. Before I went ahead and made changes to the current system, I needed to assess the climate. I wanted to know what the teachers thought of the policy. I sent an e-mail to

all the teachers, asking them to briefly tell me how they felt about the tardy policy; 50 teachers responded! I was thrilled and interested to learn that they also found the tardy policy lacking. Using their e-mails as documentation, I approached my principal to ask for a committee and the responsibility of drafting a new tardy policy for implementation during second semester. He agreed, and I called for volunteers. Happily, 10 people decided to help. Following meetings after school and much wrangling, we finished a proposal for the principal. He approved it, and the tardy policy has continued to be a success. I have truly had a very positive experience with shared decision-making thus far.

On the other hand, shared input can impede and retard effective decision-making (Conley, 1990; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Likert, 1961; Sirotnik, 1988). I have also seen this to be true. Often, when my principal is unsure or unwilling to make a decision, he will delegate the problem to a committee. He appoints a teacher-leader to head the group and expects weekly updates on the progress they are making. Although many teachers are dedicated to changing the status quo and committed to the task at hand, the weekly “progress reports” are tiresome. I have also noticed there are many hurdles to overcome at my school, such as all staff members having buy-in, endless documentation of change efforts, etc. Unfortunately, because of these factors, few members of the staff believe anything will change. Within my environment, I have witnessed both positive and negative effects of shared decision-making and echo the call in the literature for more research into this topic (Grace, 1995; Huber, 2004; Klein, 1988; Vroom & Yetton, 1974).

Overall, my experiences as a new leader remain positive, especially in the realm of decision-making. I fully understand that much of the literature attempts to explain and provide guidance for leaders when making both small and large decisions. I know that classical decision-making is impractical, but using a rational heuristic, such as the incremental model, serves me well in my daily endeavors. Shared decision-making provides a good avenue for teacher buy-in and engagement, but it is not always used effectively. I have seen both positive and negative

examples of the model in use. When making decisions, I keep one simple precept in mind: I attempt to make decisions for the sole benefit of the students that attend my school each and every day. I want them to become productive individuals, capable of achieving their goals and aspirations. Effective decision-making constructs a better organization for all the members involved. Understanding the environment in which I make decisions, the individuals involved in helping me reach these decisions, and the methods I take to achieve a solution, help me alter the status quo and positively affect the organization and its students, teachers, parents, and community members.

The dissertation process has allowed me to more deeply understand decision-making, its content, process, and context. The more I read and gather ideas from fields ranging from business to information technology, the more I realize how much knowledge is waiting for practitioners to synthesize and utilize in a school setting. Writing this dissertation seemed to be a step in this process. I understand that my practice is informed by the decision-making research, and this research, in turn, helps me to comprehend why I make decisions the way that I do. As the new millennium enters its first decade, decisions must attempt to match the changing requirements of today's educated individual. Practitioners must reach out into the literature and the on-going research within the field to gain this knowledge and bring it back to the schools in order to help affect change and to assure that students reach their goals.

So, I end where I began. As I turn the key in the office door and head toward my car, I know I have completed yet another good day as an administrator. It is true I leave behind a day full of challenges and problems that never seem to end. However, I also depart with a sense of pure satisfaction, knowing I have made many decisions that will positively impact young people's lives.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Demographic Survey/Decision-Making Survey for Secondary Administrators

Note: This form will be given to the research participant during the last 10 minutes of the scheduled interview time. The researcher will wait in the lobby for the principal or assistant principal to complete this survey in his or her office. Once it has been completed, the administrator will hand it to the researcher in a blank envelope provided.

Date: _____

Demographic Information

Name: _____

School of Employment: _____

Job Title: _____

Years of Administrative Experience: _____

Highest Degree Attained: _____ Master's _____ Specialist _____ Doctorate
_____ Other (Please Specify) _____

Age: _____ 25-35 _____ 36-45 _____ 46-55 _____ 56-65 _____ 66 and over

Gender: _____ M _____ F

Ethnicity: _____ White _____ Hispanic or Latino _____ American Indian or Alaska

Native _____ Asian _____ Black or African American _____ Other

Directions: Please complete the rest of this survey to the best of your ability.

Please circle the number that best describes the familiarity you have with the following decision-making models.

1. **Classical or Traditional Decision-Making** – This model assumes that all decisions are rational. Decision-makers seek to maximize the results of a decision to achieve the goals of an organization. There is one solution to every problem. The proscribed steps in this process include problem identification, problem diagnosis, alternative identification, probable effect of consequences, evaluation of alternatives, selection of solution, and implementation of solution.

5 4 3 2 1
Very Familiar Familiar Somewhat Familiar Heard of Never Heard of

If you were “somewhat familiar,” “familiar,” or “very familiar” with a given model, please describe in what situation or circumstance you would use it.

Appendix A (Continued)

In addition, if you were “somewhat familiar,” “familiar,” or “very familiar” with a given model, please indicate who would be involved in this decision-making process (i.e., just yourself, your colleagues, teachers, department heads, parents).

2. **Satisficing Strategy** – This model acknowledges that leaders do not always make rational decisions. Rationality is limited by the uncertainty of the situation, an administrator’s knowledge, and unconscious biases. Individuals are incapable of making completely rational decisions; the aforementioned limitations narrow the range of alternative solutions available to the decision-maker.

5 4 3 2 1
Very Familiar Familiar Somewhat Familiar Heard of Never Heard of

If you were “somewhat familiar,” “familiar,” or “very familiar” with a given model, please describe in what situation or circumstance you would use it.

In addition, if you were “somewhat familiar,” “familiar,” or “very familiar” with a given model, please indicate who would be involved in this decision-making process (i.e., just yourself, your colleagues, teachers, department heads, parents).

3. **Incremental Model**- In some circumstances, decision situations are overly complex, and it is difficult or even impossible to discern the consequences of a decision. Decision-makers make small incremental changes in order to avoid unanticipated negative consequences. The leader constantly monitors the outcomes of each successive decision, carefully assessing the results of each minor change.

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If you were “somewhat familiar,” “familiar,” or “very familiar” with a given model, please describe in what situation or circumstance you would use it.

Appendix A (Continued)

In addition, if you were “somewhat familiar,” “familiar,” or “very familiar” with a given model, please indicate who would be involved in this decision-making process (i.e., just yourself, your colleagues, teachers, department heads, parents).

4. **Mixed- Scanning Model-** Incremental decisions are produced within the context of an existing organizational framework and relevant policies. Mixed-scanning unites the rationalism of a satisficing model with the flexibility of the incremental model. Leaders, when applying this model, should utilize trial and error, slowly deliberate possible solutions, procrastinate if required, stagger decisions, fractionalize decisions, and reverse decisions if necessary.

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In addition, if you were “somewhat familiar,” “familiar,” or “very familiar” with a given model, please indicate who would be involved in this decision-making process (i.e., just yourself, your colleagues, teachers, department heads, parents).

5. **Garbage Can Model** – Leaders often must act before they think. This model operates within situations that exhibit extremely high levels of uncertainty. In the garbage can model, the decision process does not begin with a problem and end with a solution, but rather decision are a product of problems, solutions, stakeholders, and choices colliding. When a problem and solution match, a decision results.

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If you were “somewhat familiar,” “familiar,” or “very familiar” with a given model, please describe in what situation or circumstance you would use it.

Appendix A (Continued)

In addition, if you were “somewhat familiar,” “familiar,” or “very familiar” with a given model, please indicate who would be involved in this decision-making process (i.e., just yourself, your colleagues, teachers, department heads, parents).

6. **Political Model of Decision-Making** – Control and power are the key elements of this decision-making model. Personal interests and needs take the place of organizational goals and aims. Politics override legitimate decision-making strategies and procedures.

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If you were “somewhat familiar,” “familiar,” or “very familiar” with a given model, please describe in what situation or circumstance you would use it.

In addition, if you were “somewhat familiar,” “familiar,” or “very familiar” with a given model, please indicate who would be involved in this decision-making process (i.e., just yourself, your colleagues, teachers, department heads, parents).

7. **Ethical Model of Decision-Making** - This decision-making paradigm is broad in scope and encompasses many aspects of organizational change and control. Decisions are made to benefit students’ educational goals and aspirations. In order to reach this goal, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community stakeholders must make decisions in the best interest of the children involved.

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If you were “somewhat familiar,” “familiar,” or “very familiar” with a given model, please describe in what situation or circumstance you would use it.

Appendix A (Continued)

In addition, if you were “somewhat familiar,” “familiar,” or “very familiar” with a given model, please indicate who would be involved in this decision-making process (i.e., just yourself, your colleagues, teachers, department heads, parents).

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Schedule of Questions for Administrative Interviews

Note: The scenarios will be presented individually on separate sheets of paper. After the participant has had time to read each scenario, the researcher will ask two questions (three questions will be asked of the assistant principals). Because of the research methodology utilized for this proposed study (see chapter 3), the interviewer will ask follow-up questions of the participants based upon their responses to the questions.

Scenario #1

Please read the following text and inform the researcher when you are finished and ready to continue.

Principal McConnell has a problem. What started out as a celebration of achievement for students, staff, and parents has turned into a war. Over the past 3 years, Holly Heights High School has been a “D” school, as rated by the State of Florida’s A+ plan. During the previous school year, however, after much hard work on the part of the teachers and innovative literacy programs instituted by the principal, Holly Heights earned a “C” grade for the 2005-2006 school year. After the congratulations died away, the work began. Because Holly Heights raised its grade from a “D” to a “C,” the school was awarded monies to be divided as the administration saw fit, given the restrictions from the state as to how the money is distributed and proportioned to the staff. The award money can go back into the school’s funds to finance existing programs or can be portioned among the faculty and staff. Your good friend, Dr. Treeford, at Oak Lane Middle School was awarded money last year from raising their school grade from a “D” to a “C.” He related to you that significant infighting and hurt feelings resulted, causing the climate of the school to catapult from warm and collegial to cold and “warlike.” The academic focus of Oak Lane Middle had shifted away from the students to the teachers and their fight for their “fair share” of the A+ money. You do not want this to happen at your institution. Given that the amount of money from the state totals over 70,000 dollars, this decision cannot be made lightly. What are you going to do?

The researcher will ask the principal:

1. Now that you have read this scenario, please describe how you would solve this problem in the workplace.
2. Who and to what extent would you involve others (i.e., assistant principals, department heads, teachers, students) in the decision-making process?

The researcher will ask the assistant principal:

1. Now that you have read this scenario, please describe how you would solve this problem in the workplace.
2. Who and to what extent would you involve others (i.e., principal, department heads, other assistant principals, teachers, students) in the decision-making process?
3. How would your principal solve this problem, and whom would he or she involve in the decision-making process?

Appendix B (Continued)

Scenario #2

Please read the following text and inform the researcher when you are finished and ready to continue.

“Ms. Barry, I just don’t know if I should tell you. I’m afraid I’ll get it trouble.” Usually Joanna was calm, sweet, and very conscientious in the front office as a student assistant. Today, after dropping all of the photocopied agendas for the after-school faculty meeting on the floor and breaking down in tears, you knew something must be wrong. After a few preliminary questions on your part, Joanna finally, in your office with the door closed, comes out with what has been weighing her spirits down. “My best friend, Jodie, has been sleeping with Mr. Antoine.” Immediately, you ask for her to explain. According to Joanna, Jodie Barker, a senior, has been engaging in sexual activity for at least a month with Mr. Antoine, one of the most popular social studies teachers in the school and the senior class sponsor. You ask her if she has seen anything that would lead her to this conclusion; she states that her best friend, Jodie, tells her everything, but she has not seen anything herself. When you follow up by asking whether or not other students know about this alleged relationship, Joanna answers, “Of course, everyone knows about it. I just don’t think anyone wants to say anything. We don’t want to get Jodie in trouble, and we love Mr. Antoine.” After assuring Joanna she has done the right thing by telling you, you ask her not to talk about this with anyone. Following Joanna’s departure, you close the door to your office and take a few minutes to review the facts in your mind. As you well know, time is of the essence; you know you must do something. What do you do?

The researcher will ask the principal:

1. Now that you have read this scenario, please describe how you would solve this problem in the workplace.
2. Who and to what extent would you involve others (i.e., assistant principals, department heads, teachers, students) in the decision-making process?

The researcher will ask the assistant principal:

1. Now that you have read this scenario, please describe how you would solve this problem in the workplace.
2. Who and to what extent would you involve others (i.e., principal, department heads, other assistant principals, teachers, students) in the decision-making process?
3. How would your principal solve this problem, and whom would he or she involve in the decision-making process?

Appendix B (Continued)

Scenario #3

Please read the following text and inform the researcher when you are finished and ready to continue.

The tardy policy at the school just isn't working. Students are walking around in the halls well after the bell rings, and the teachers are beginning to complain. However, when you tell a student in the halls to hustle to class, he or she just looks at you, smiles, and attempts to walk a little faster down the hall for your benefit. Once, when a student failed to heed your advice to walk faster and laughed openly in your face, you asked him why he thought it was so funny. He replied, "Like the teachers enforce the tardy policy. We know and they know the office isn't going to do anything about it." Once you hear this, it concerns you. Do the teachers really think this, or is it just another obnoxious kid with an attitude problem? You decide to bring the issue up at a faculty meeting the next week. That may have been a mistake. At once, teachers attacked the tardy policy. Some claimed it was too strict; others claimed it was too rigid. However, there was one rallying cry from the entire faculty: the administration did little to enforce the policy on an everyday basis. Once the faculty meeting concluded, a rather sullen group of administrators and teachers headed out to their respective cars for the journey home. You realize something must be done. You have touched upon a sore spot in the culture of the school of which you weren't aware until this point in time. What are you going to do?

The researcher will ask the principal:

1. Now that you have read this scenario, please describe how you would solve this problem in the workplace.
2. Who and to what extent would you involve others (i.e., assistant principals, department heads, teachers, students) in the decision-making process?

The researcher will ask the assistant principal:

1. Now that you have read this scenario, please describe how you would solve this problem in the workplace.
2. Who and to what extent would you involve others (i.e., principal, department heads, other assistant principals, teachers, students) in the decision-making process?
3. How would your principal solve this problem, and whom would he or she involve in the decision-making process?

Appendix B (Continued)

Scenario #4

Please read the following text and inform the researcher when you are finished and ready to continue.

You are the new principal of a high school in an affluent suburban community. The previous leader had a laissez-fair approach to the dress code policy; she believed that the teachers were professionals. They chose their own attire and could do so without the help of the administration. You, however, are concerned by the dress of more than a few of your teachers. Many of the male teachers are wearing jeans almost every day of the week, and you have noticed some of the women from the English department have taken to wearing shorts to work at least three days a week. At this point, no one has actually complained, but you have noticed the disdainful looks you are getting from visiting parents, especially when they are greeted in the office by the young secretary at the front counter who continually wears low-cut blouses. You personally believe that teachers should dress professionally, and that includes the staff in the front office and around the campus. You fear that the faculty's casual approach to dressing implies a casual approach to teaching. Even if that is not the case, professionals should dress like it. You believe it is only a matter of time before the complaints from the community become formal, and you would like to address this issue proactively, before you receive official notice from the county administration. Simply, the casual and sloppy dress of some of the teachers is not indicative of the kind of culture that you are trying to create. What do you do?

The researcher will ask the principal:

1. Now that you have read this scenario, please describe how you would solve this problem in the workplace.
2. Who and to what extent would you involve others (i.e., assistant principals, department heads, teachers, students) in the decision-making process?

The researcher will ask the assistant principal:

1. Now that you have read this scenario, please describe how you would solve this problem in the workplace.
2. Who and to what extent would you involve others (i.e., principal, department heads, other assistant principals, teachers, students) in the decision-making process?
3. How would your principal solve this problem, and whom would he or she involve in the decision-making process?

About the Author

Elizabeth M. Tuten earned her Bachelor of Science degree at the University of South Florida in English Education. She spent the first part of her career as an English and E.S.O.L (English for Speakers of Other Languages) high school teacher. She also served as an honors English teacher and English Department Head while earning her Master's of Education in Educational Leadership K-12 at USF. While working on her doctoral degree, Elizabeth became an assistant principal for student affairs, a position which she currently holds.

While a doctoral student, Elizabeth served as a Burbecker Fellow for two semesters within the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department at the University of South Florida.