

MORAL JUDGMENT AND MOTIVATION IN COLLEGE STUDENTS' ALCOHOL
RELATED DECISION-MAKING

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ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PROJECT: Moral Judgment and Motivation in College Students' Alcohol

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The purpose of this study was to learn more about the moral development of college students who violated institutional alcohol policies. Alcohol related behavior that was considered a violation of institutional policy was examined using the four-component model of moral behavior (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999). The study was based in qualitative methodology and utilized a phenomenological approach. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students who had previously violated institutional alcohol policy and were in good standing with the institution. The researcher found that participants were strongly committed to acting morally. Participants developed personal moral codes that informed their alcohol related decision-making process which was dominated by considerations of self-interest.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One provides an introduction to the study which examined the moral development of students adjudicated for a violation of their institution's policies. Included are a brief overview of the study, statement of purpose, research question, significance of the study, definition of important terms, and organization of the study.

Introduction to the Study

Kohlberg (1976) found that morality develops in individuals as they progress through six steps, with each step representing a more complex level of reasoning. After testing moral reasoning levels for 30 years, Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau (2000) found that three schemas exist as broad categories or types of moral reasoning. The Personal Interest schema is the lowest-level schema where decision-making is based upon personal interest. The Maintaining Norms schema follows and is based upon an interest in preserving relationships and society. Finally, decision-making in the Postconventional schema is based upon an individual's understanding of broad, universal principles.

According to Kohlberg (1975), moral discussion, involving contact with and dialogue about higher level reasoning, and moral environment, including the ability to see another's perspective and the perceived level of judgment utilized by authority, influence an individual's ability to develop moral reasoning. Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, and Thoma (1999) found that moral reasoning is only one of four components of morality. Moral sensitivity, moral motivation, and moral character also affect an individual's moral behavior.

Since their inception, institutions of higher education in the United States have responded to students' behavior when it violated their standards (Lancaster & Waryold, 2008). The

Association for Student Conduct Administration (2012) wrote that this process should seek to protect the university community and promote the development of student offenders. Similarly, Boots (1987) argued that the utilization of student development theory would reduce the load faced by conduct officers and result in more learning on the part of the student.

The current study was created to further explore moral development theory as it applies to the student conduct process. In particular, by interviewing college students who have violated their institution's policies, this study intends to understand students' behavior in terms of the four components of moral behavior (Rest et al., 2000). Results of this study may allow student conduct professionals to better understand the students with whom they are working.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to learn more about the moral development of college students who violated institutional alcohol policies.

Research Question

This study was designed to explore the following research question: How do student offenders understand their experiences with their institution's conduct system in terms of moral development?

Significance of the Study

The work of Kohlberg (1975, 1976) and Rest et al. (2000) provided a framework for understanding moral development, yet there is a distinct lack of application of developmental theory to student conduct practice (Chassey, 1999; Cooper & Schwartz, 2007). This study was developed to explore the experiences of students who have gone through the student conduct process in relation to their moral reasoning and moral behavior. A better understanding of students' experiences may assist in the design of future practice. Both the student conduct

system and its sanctions may also be improved by better understanding the role that moral development plays in the process.

Background of the Researcher

As many in the profession can say, my initial interest in student affairs comes from undergraduate work experiences in residence life. As a Resident Assistant and Assistant Resident Director, I had the opportunity work with my peers in a unique and challenging way. More importantly, I saw professionals at my institution who were building careers dedicated to working with students.

My first professional position was in a residential training facility for students who struggled through the traditional high school setting. The federally funded program provided academic and vocational training to low-income individuals between the ages of 16 and 24. I supervised students in the residence hall, where a majority of my work was focused on behavioral intervention. I developed an interest in the one-on-one and group conversations that constituted our behavioral intervention methods, and I was gratified when students began to make better choices.

As I transitioned into graduate studies in student affairs, I searched for programs with assistantships that included responding to student behavior. The offer I accepted was paired with an assistantship in the institution's Office of Student Rights and Community Standards, where my role is primarily based in student conduct work. Students who are alleged to have violated institutional policies are invited to meet with a staff member in the office who acts as the hearing officer, either the Director, Assistant Director, or Graduate Assistant. Students are shown the information that supports the charges and are given the opportunity to provide their side of the story. Students are then given the opportunity to accept responsibility or to ask for a hearing. If

a student accepts responsibility or is found responsible as a result of a hearing, they are assigned sanctions which can include an official reprimand, disciplinary probation, community service, alcohol or drug abuse assessment or education, an individualized educational assignment, or even suspension or expulsion. It is the goal of the student affairs profession that the conduct meeting and sanctions positively influence the development of the student.

I am pursuing this line of research because I am interested in adding to the student conduct process. My hope is to improve the tools that conduct professionals have to intentionally influence the development of the students at their institutions. I believe that the first place to start is in understanding the perspective of the student in this process.

Definition of Terms

Student Code – The student code is the set of rules and regulations an institution of higher education requires students to follow. For the purposes of this study it includes the general guidelines that all students are expected to follow as well as residence life policies for students living in on campus housing.

Student Offender – A student offender is a student who has been found responsible for a violation of one or more institutional policies through the institution's student conduct system.

Student Conduct – Student conduct is a process through which institutions of higher education set standards of behavior and hold students accountable to those standards (Association for Student Conduct Administration, 2012).

Organization of Study

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter One is an introduction to the major themes of the study. Chapter Two is a review of literature related to moral development and student conduct. Chapter Three describes the methodology of the study. Chapter Four includes

the findings of the study, and Chapter Five discusses the results and provides recommendations for the future. The final section of this study contains a list of references and appendices.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Summary of the Research

This study examined the moral development of college students who have gone through their institution's student conduct process. Specifically, student behavior related to a violation of institutional policy was examined using the four-component model of moral behavior. The following chapter is divided in three sections, and it is intended to provide the reader with background on the use of moral development theory in student conduct practice. The first section reviews the literature related to cognitive-developmental theories of moral development and their application to the lives of college students. The second section explores the student conduct profession including its historical context, legal framework, and philosophy of practice. The third section reviews the literature related to the moral development of college students.

Moral Development Theory

Moral development theory is a field of study that attempts to describe human nature and behavior in relation to moral decision-making. Morality, as defined by Rich and DeVitis (1994), is not the proper usage of manners or social mores, but "a system of conduct based on moral principles" (p. 5). Theories of moral development rely on socialization and maturation, and increases in moral development are likened to the development of new skills.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

Kohlberg (1976) argued that morality develops in individuals in an invariant, hierarchical sequence, meaning each individual moves one at a time through the same series of steps building upon the previous step. In his research he presented individuals with a moral dilemma and categorized not their response, but the reasoning or judgment that led to their response in an

organized structure that he believed represented the process of human development of morality. Six stages emerged, divided into three distinct levels.

The Preconventional level is the first level of moral reasoning that individuals enter once they have developed the ability to logically reason, and according to Kohlberg (1976) this level encompasses most children under the age of nine and some adolescents. Moral reasoning at this level is based on the consequences of one's actions. In the first stage (Heteronomous Morality), moral reasoning is based on the avoidance of punishment or physical harm to self or others that could come as a result of breaking rules. In the second stage (Individualism, Instrumental Purpose, and Exchange), moral reasoning is based on personal interest and what an individual may get out of a situation.

The second level, Conventional Morality, is characterized by an individual's "conforming to and upholding the rules and expectations of society or authority" (Kohlberg, 1976, p. 33). In the third stage (Mutual Interpersonal Expectations, Relationships, and Interpersonal Conformity) moral reasoning is based on the individual's desire to be seen as a good person within society, while moral reasoning in the fourth stage (Social System and Conscience) is based on a belief in the goodness of the system itself.

The final level, Postconventional or Principled Morality, is based on an understanding of universal principles. Kohlberg believed that an individual reasoning in this level is one who "has differentiated his self from the rules and expectations of others and defines his values in terms of self-chosen principles" (Kohlberg, 1976, p. 33). The fifth stage (Social Contract or Utility and Individual Rights) relies on the social order (i.e., norms, rules, and laws) because the society is generally acting in the best interest of individuals and the society as a whole. Occasionally, the social order needs to be modified slightly based on the universal principles. The sixth and final

stage (Universal Ethical Principles) relies entirely on an individual's internal system of beliefs about right and wrong. An individual's actions at this stage might look similar to someone acting in the first stage of the conventional level because they may often align with the accepted social order, but their moral reasoning is based on an obligation to principles as opposed to an obligation to society.

Kohlberg's theory of moral development was the subject of extensive study over the second half of the 20th century in attempts by researchers to clarify inconsistencies, bridge methodological gaps, and incorporate growth in philosophical and psychological theory (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau, 2000). Gilligan (1977) argued that Kohlberg's reliance on justice to define morality lacked the feminine perspective of care and responsibility, recognized by females she interviewed as integral to moral decision-making. She believed that this explained why young men were more likely to be judged in the second stage of conventional morality (stage 4 overall) focused on justice and the social order, while their female peers were scored in the stage below, where maintaining relationships and considering the perspectives of others was favored. Through a review of interviews and analyses by Gilligan and Kohlberg, Broughton (1983) found that the gender dualism that Gilligan proposed discounted the effects of relationship, culture, and society on the moral decision-making of both men and women.

Similarly, Pritchard (1991) argued that one of Kohlberg's dilemmas presented to research participants was in fact based on the ethic of care and not, as Kohlberg claimed, justice. The Heinz dilemma was a hypothetical moral dilemma in which a man is presented with the option of stealing an expensive medicine that would cure his wife's otherwise terminal illness, or allowing his wife to die because he could not afford to purchase the medication. Pritchard argued that

there is no justice orientation that would compel Heinz to steal the medication. Instead, a conviction of love or respect for his wife would likely be the justification for his actions.

Noddings (1984) argued that moral decision-making is not based on an abstract commitment to higher principles and justice, but rather a personal, practical conviction for ethical care. Noddings believed that individuals longed to do good and be good, and that caring for others and maintaining relationships is the basis for moral behavior.

Neo-Kohlbergian Morality Development

Kohlberg's methodological approach of questioning subjects about hypothetical moral dilemmas allowed for significant room for interpretation on behalf of the interviewer. Because of the groundbreaking nature of this research, it was important to allow participants to speak freely about the moral dilemmas in order to understand what types of factors are present in moral reasoning. In an attempt to resolve potential interview and scorer bias and to assess the validity of Kohlberg's stages, Rest, Cooper, Coder, Masanz, and Anderson (1974) developed a tool called the Defining Issues Test (DIT) to assess the moral reasoning of participants by presenting moral dilemmas similar to Kohlberg's and asking participants to make a decision as to how they would act and then to rate which of six factors most influenced that decision, with one factor relating to each of Kohlberg's (1976) six stages. The DIT has been tested extensively to affirm its validity (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999). Rest et al. (1999) and Rest et al. (2000) looked back at 25 years of research on the DIT and formulated a Neo-Kohlbergian approach to moral reasoning. They relied on Kohlberg's understanding of morality development as a cognitive process that is personally constructed based on an individual's experience, but differed from his understanding in important ways.

The authors argued that the stages present in Kohlberg's (1976) theory should be conceptualized as schemas that are more concrete and easily identified. Instead of Kohlberg's six stages, Rest et al. (2000) identified three schemas as independent structures of moral reasoning. The first, Personal Interest schema, is derived from Kohlberg's stages two and three, and is characterized by analyzing each individual's stake in the outcome of a moral dilemma and prioritizing personal interest and the interest of individuals with whom the decision-maker has a personal relationship or connection. The second, Maintaining Norms schema, is derived from Kohlberg's stage four, and is characterized by recognition of the need for societal norms that are clear, universal, fair, and enforced through hierarchical relationships. The third, Postconventional schema is derived from Kohlberg's stages five and six. While Kohlberg's (1976) Postconventional level was based on universal principles discovered by an individual in that stage, Rest et al. (2000) argued that individuals within the Postconventional schema based moral reasoning on shared ideals which are open to scrutiny, meaning that individuals accept that moral decisions should be based on important shared values as opposed to the direction of authority or the established system upon which reasoning within the Maintaining Norms schema relies. They also argued that individuals could rely upon the reasoning of multiple schemas at one time and that the process of moral development is a matter of "shifting distributions" (p. 384) as opposed to fully leaving one schema and fully entering the next.

A long-standing criticism of Kohlberg's theory is his claim to universality. Rest et al. (2000) incorporated into the Neo-Kohlbergian approach a new philosophical theory of morality called "Common Morality," which suggested that social groups construct morality based on "the community's experiences, particular institutional arrangements, deliberations, and the aspirations voiced" (p. 385) at a particular point in time. The utility of this theory is that the

Postconventional schema is not required to be based upon a defined list of specific values, but rather the usage of a values-based reasoning process. The authors noted the weakness of Kohlberg's interview model compared to the multiple-choice model of the DIT in allowing participants to reveal cognitive abilities they might not be able to articulate, explaining why the DIT recognizes more Postconventional thinkers than Kohlberg's model.

Finally, Rest et al. (2000) argued that moral reasoning is only one of at least four components of an individual's overall moral maturity that affects moral behavior. Moral sensitivity is the first, defined as the ability to recognize a moral dilemma or a complex situation with multiple potential outcomes. The sensitivity process can include the role taking of various actors, and the consideration of potential cause and effect outcomes of the situation. Moral judgment, the second component, is the ability to judge what course of action is most appropriate. The third component is moral motivation, an emotional commitment to moral action that is often tied to an individual's identity. The fourth is moral character or moral action, described by Liddell and Cooper (2012) as the "definitive component" (p. 13) that combines moral sensitivity, reasoning, and motivation, with the character necessary to act morally. Rest et al. (2000) described this as overcoming all obstacles in order to act morally.

Student Conduct

Though performed by various individuals throughout its history, the student conduct function has been part of American higher education since its inception. Based on their priorities and objectives, institutions set rules for their students and respond when students do not uphold them (Caruso & Travelstead, 1987; Dannells, 1997; Lancaster & Waryold, 2008). Multiple periods of change challenged institutions to refine and defend their approach to student behavior along the way (Dannells, 1977).

Institutions of higher education in colonial America were largely copied from the English model (Carpenter, 2004). Sectarian institutions provided the financial and intellectual elite a liberal arts education that leaned heavily on orthodox theology. Students at these institutions were typically on a path toward political or church leadership, and the training was as much spiritual and social as it was intellectual. Rules in these early institutions were designed to promote moral and spiritual growth, and were carried out by college presidents and boards of trustees. Enforcement was strict and punishments were harsh, including public embarrassment, corporal punishment, and expulsion (Dannells, 1977).

By the middle of the nineteenth century the number and types of American institutions had expanded, and individual institutions were growing (Dannells, 1977). As presidents' duties increased, they delegated the responsibility for discipline to others. Students became more involved in the disciplinary process, and the process became more democratic. In the early twentieth century, deans of men and women emerged as the individuals responsible for the discipline of students. These administrators were charged with caring for the whole student, which included many of today's student affairs functions (McClellan, Stringer, and Associates, 2009).

Legal Considerations

Until the middle of the twentieth century, institutions of higher education operated under a legal doctrine known as *in loco parentis*. Under this doctrine institutions were free from legal scrutiny, and they were allowed to act in place of the parent to discipline students, who were still considered children. A series of court cases beginning in the 1960s removed the legal insularity that institutions enjoyed and replaced it with certain rights that public institutions had to provide to students (Lake, 2013). In 1960, six African American males were expelled from Alabama

State College for leading several protests and demonstrations against segregation in Montgomery County, Alabama. The U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals held that the students' Fifth Amendment due process rights had been violated when they were expelled without (1) notice of the charges against them, and (2) an opportunity for a hearing to present their case (Dixon, 1961). In a similar case in secondary public education, the U.S. Supreme Court (*Goss v. Lopez*, 1975) upheld these requirements, stating that students should receive notice of the charges against them, including the alleged factual basis for the charge and a hearing at which they can contest the charge.

Lowery (2008) has written extensively about legal issues in student conduct work. He found that a series of rulings have established a number of other requirements of public institutions, including the right of students to hear evidence against them in the hearing, to be able to provide written statements and sometimes testimony from witnesses in their favor, and to be notified in writing of the decision after the hearing. Courts have also set standards for length of time between notice and the hearing varying from two to ten days, and they have required that institutions adopt rules that are not so vague as to be undecipherable. Courts have rejected arguments that would require institutions to allow accused students to be represented by an attorney or to allow cross-examination of witnesses.

State institutions are seen as government actors, their actions limited by the U.S. and state constitutions (Kaplin & Lee, 2007). Contract law has governed the world of private institutions, although that relationship is growing weaker as courts recognize the unique relationship between student and institution that is dissimilar to any other contractual relationship. Many private institutions have voluntarily afforded students due process rights similar to those at state institutions. The biggest legal concern for private institutions is to follow the rules they have

previously established. Most successful legal challenges to disciplinary action at private institutions come from a failure to follow the established procedure.

Since the 1960s, federal legislation has equally affected the practice of student conduct at public and private institutions (Lowery, 2008). The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) gave students the right to view and challenge the content of their educational records, including disciplinary records, and it restricted educational records from release except under specific circumstances outlined by the law or at the consent of the student.

Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, well-known for its effect on college athletics, prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender at institutions that received any type of federal funding (Lowery, 2008). In relation to the practice of student conduct, it required institutions to respond appropriately to accusations of student-to-student sexual misconduct and harassment, considered discrimination by a number of court rulings. Subsequent court rulings and directives from the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) required institutions to notify students of disciplinary procedures, whether certain services were offered and how to obtain them, and required disclosure of the results of disciplinary action against the accused student to the victim (Kaplin & Lee, 2007).

The Jeanne Clery Act, passed in 1990, required institutions that received federal funds to distribute an Annual Security Report that disclosed the types and counts of crimes that occurred on campus during the previous year, as well as the institution's conduct policies and procedures in the event that a violent crime took place on campus (Lowery, 2008). The law was largely a response to the gruesome rape and murder of a Lehigh University student for whom the law was named.

Philosophy of Practice

In the only study of its kind, Young and Elfrink (1991) surveyed 68 student affairs professionals and found that nearly all of them agreed that the seven values of altruism, equality, aesthetics, freedom, human dignity, justice, and truth held by the nursing profession were also key to student affairs practice. Young (1993) studied historical documents related to student affairs and identified human dignity, equality, and community as ultimate values of the student affairs profession. Human dignity was supported by the values of freedom, altruism, and truth; and community was supported by the value of justice. He found no historical basis for aesthetics as a value of the student affairs profession.

Because student conduct is a functional area within student affairs, it is logical to assume that the field would subscribe to a similar set of values. However, the work of student conduct professionals is distinct from student affairs as a whole because the purpose of student conduct work is to set expectations for student behavior and address students who fail to meet those expectations (Association for Student Conduct Administration [ASCA], 2012). Two common themes have emerged to explain why institutions of higher education chose to address student behavior: (1) an interest in developing student behavior as a means to create more well-rounded citizens, and (2) an interest in creating a safe educational environment for the campus community as a whole (Dannells, 1997; Dannells & Lowery, 2004; Kaplin & Lee, 2007; & Waryold & Lancaster, 2008).

In 1937, the American Council on Education (ACE) published the seminal student affairs document, *The Student Personnel Point of View* (SPPV), which sought to lay the philosophical and practical basis for the profession (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Through a study of contemporary practice the SPPV placed the basis of the student affairs profession in what it identified as the historical roots of American higher education: the holistic development of

students. The document specifically identified moral, spiritual, social, physical, emotional, psychological, and vocational development of students as goals of the profession. The SPPV identified student conduct as one of the basic functions of student affairs work, “to the end that the individual will be strengthened, and the welfare of the group preserved” (p. 4).

The 1949 revised version of the SPPV (ACE) placed the emphasis for student conduct on the need for students to develop individuality and responsibility. It suggested that when students act outside of institutional rules or legal boundaries, administrators should refrain from acting in the “spirit of punishment” (p. 7) and should instead work to develop self-responsibility in the offender. It again emphasized the holistic development of students as a primary concern for student affairs professionals.

Legal requirements of institutions, as discussed above, forced institutions to create codes of conduct that protected other students from harm and attempted to mitigate the effects of harm once it occurred (Kaplin & Lee, 2007). Lake (2013) argued that many institutions backed away from student conduct work in 1970s and 1980s as a response to *Dixon* (1961), the fall of *in loco parentis*, and a movement toward increased student rights. The “bystander era” (Lake 2013, p. 49), as he called it, was characterized by institutions’ position of neutrality toward the dangers of student life. This disregard for risky behavior, with alcohol and other drug abuse at the top of the list, led to even more regulation by federal and state authorities. Lake suggested that institutions needed to make a choice: either allow external forces to further define and regulate the student/university relationship, or work within the current legal framework and respond in an educational and developmental manner to the issues facing students and institutions.

Dannells and Lowery (2004) suggested that beginning in the 1990s institutions recovered from the shock of “excessive proceduralism” (p. 194) brought on by *Dixon* (1961), and have

returned to the educational goals of student conduct work. The bylaws of the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA, 2012), a professional association for student conduct administrators founded in 1988, reinforced the dual interests of development of the individual and protection of the community. The preamble stated:

The development and enforcement of standards of conduct and resolution of conflict for students is an educational endeavor which fosters students' personal and social development. . . . The enforcement of such standards must protect the rights, health and safety of members of that community. (p. 1)

Student Offenders

There is little evidence to understand why students violate the standards that their institutions have set, but reviews of student offenders versus their non-offender peers have found that first-year students and men tend to violate standards more (Dannels, 1997). A study of freshmen men at a private western institution found that offenders were more likely to be White and come from wealthier families than their non-offender counterparts. They also reported drinking more days per month and engaging in binge drinking more often than non-offenders (LaBrie, Tawalbeh, & Earleywine, 2006).

Non-offenders were more likely to have a parent(s) with a college degree, and they were more likely to have a favorable impression of the institution (Van Kuren & Creamer, 1989). Cooper and Schwartz (2007) found that age, rank, gender, academic ability, and Greek status had a minor effect on an individual's likelihood to violate their institution's standards. They found that the moral judgment level of students most influenced rule-breaking behavior, with non-offenders relying more heavily on higher-level reasoning.

Sanctions

When students have been engaged in the conduct process and found responsible for a violation of the institution's standards, the institution will respond with appropriate sanctions. Dannells and Lowery (2004) found that there are three types of responses to student misconduct. Punitive sanctions simply punish the student for wrongdoing (such as an official warning or reprimand). Developmental sanctions seek to educate students so that they are equipped to make better decisions in the future (such as reflective essays, counseling, and community service), and environmental sanctions seek to mitigate the effect of external sources contributing to a student's misconduct (such as changing residence hall assignments). Choosing the appropriate sanction is determined by considering the institution's mission, the nature and history of students' behavior, the responses outlined in the institution's code of conduct, and the creativity of the student conduct professional. Institutional responses may shift between categories, especially in the eyes of a student who may not recognize the educational benefit of sanctions and perceive all responses as punitive. The authors noted that each student and each conduct situation is different, and student conduct professionals should have the flexibility to assign sanctions appropriate to the situation.

Kompalla and McCarthy (2001) noted the difference between active and passive sanctions, and suggested that active sanctions, which require students to take some kind of action (such as community service or a reflection essay), should have a higher educational value than passive sanctions (such as a warning or probation status). However, their study found that recidivism rates were similar for students who were assigned active versus passive sanctions. They also found that recidivism was low for the same offense, but that repeat offenders were more likely to violate a different policy the second time.

Moral Development of College Students

As discussed in the philosophy of practice section above, the intentional development of college students has long been a goal of the student affairs profession (ACE, 1937) and student conduct work (Dannells, 1997; Dannells & Lowery, 2004; Kaplin & Lee, 2007; Waryold & Lancaster, 2008). Boots (1987) believed that applying developmental theory to conduct practice would decrease the load faced by conduct administrators by preventing destructive behavior and presumably decreasing recidivism. Gibbs and Liberman's (1987) 20-year longitudinal study of male subjects showed most college age students were in either Rest et al.'s (1999) Personal Interest Schema (Kohlberg's stages two and three) or Maintaining Norms schema (Kohlberg's stage four). They also found that no individuals from a working or middle class socioeconomic status moved into the Maintaining Norms schema without at least some college education, and no individuals moved into the Postconventional schema (Kohlberg's stages five and six) without completing college. These results seem to suggest that attending college promotes moral development, but does not account for what experiences may have positively influenced that development.

Kohlberg (1975) argued that moral discussion and moral environment influence an individual's ability to develop moral judgment. Moral discussion included contact with (1) the next stage of judgment, (2) moral dilemmas that contradict current stage judgment, and (3) open discussion regarding moral judgment and the dilemma in question. Moral environment consisted of (1) the opportunity for individuals to consider the viewpoint of others, and (2) the perceived level of judgment used by the institution. This would suggest that institutions interested in developing the moral judgment of their students should incorporate moral discussion and the valuing of diverse viewpoints into curricula, and that student conduct processes should be created to operate at a Postconventional level and promoted as such.

Increases in moral development have been tied to increases in cognitive development, and an interest in learning, presumably shared by many who choose to attend college, could assist in cognitive development and therefore moral development (Rest, 1988). Creating an intellectual environment surrounding student conduct work, and challenging student offenders to reflect on their behavior and experiences may promote moral development as well (Boots, 1987). Character education as a means to moral development has been criticized for its lack of intellectual challenge, suggesting that students may learn to imitate desired character traits without understanding or internalizing them, although exposure may promote future development (Liddell & Cooper, 2012).

Evans (1987) responded to the need for a theoretical framework for promoting moral development in college students. She believed that promoting moral development should be based upon Rest et al.'s (1999) four components of moral behavior (moral sensitivity, moral motivation, moral judgment, and moral character), even though most of the research is based upon moral judgment. Her three-component model suggested that each institutional action to develop moral behavior should be based upon (1) the target of the action (individual, group, or institution), (2) the type of action (planned or responsive, although proactive or responsive might better characterize the choice here), and (3) the programmatic approach to the topic of morality (explicit or implicit). This framework may change behavior proactively, leading to fewer violations of student standards, but it fails to provide specific strategies for moral development in student offenders at the time of adjudication.

Mueller (1958) proposed a comprehensive theory specifically related to student conduct more than five decades ago that relied on the teaching of character traits and ethics without any mention of the developmental goal. More recently, Hoekema (1994) proposed a model of

student conduct systems with three goals for the systems. His goals, (1) to prevent harm to students, (2) to promote open discussion and learning, and (3) to encourage mutual responsibility and moral community, included a moral component but focused on the transmission of ethical principles rather than promotion of moral development. Although these systems highlight the need for moral development, they do little to create workable student conduct systems. Chassey (1999) and Cooper and Schwartz (2007) found that more work needs to be done in order to connect moral development theory to student conduct practice.

Summary

Moral development theory describes how individuals make moral decisions and incorporate moral principles in their everyday lives (Kohlberg, 1976). The four-component model of moral behavior (moral sensitivity, moral motivation, moral judgment, and moral character) (Rest et al. 1999) and the Neo-Kohlbergian approach to moral judgment (translating Kohlberg's stages into three schema) provide an ample framework for guiding the moral development of college students.

Institutions of higher education in the United States have historically valued the moral development of college students (Caruso & Travelstead, 1987), and the current legal relationship between institutions and their students supports the student affairs philosophy of developmentally based student conduct systems (Lake, 2013). Further research is needed to understand how student conduct practice can foster moral development in students.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three describes the methodology used in the study. This section restates the purpose and research question, and outlines the design of the study, the data collection process, and the data analysis process.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to learn more about the moral development of college students who violated institutional alcohol policies.

Research Question

This study was designed to explore the following research question: How do student offenders understand their experiences with their institution's conduct system in terms of moral development?

Design of Study

Research Methodology

This study is grounded in qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is "rich in description of people, places, and conversations" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 2) and is focused on understanding topics deeply and complexly. This methodology was chosen because the researcher was interested in understanding college students' experiences with their institution's conduct process from their perspective.

A phenomenological approach is used to address participants' common experiences (Creswell, 2013). This approach studies a phenomenon, in this case the student conduct process, and it attempts to describe the "universal essence" (p. 76) of that phenomenon. As most

phenomenological studies do, this study relies on in-depth interviews with individuals who have experienced the phenomenon in question.

Setting

Participants were students at a four-year, public institution in the Midwestern United States. The Carnegie Foundation (n.d.) classified the institution as a large, residential research institution with a “high” undergraduate population. Graduate instruction was described as ranging a number of fields in masters, doctoral, and professional programs.

Population

Inclusion criteria for this study were that the population included any student 18 years of age or older who had been charged with and found responsible for a violation of the institution’s alcohol policies, had completed all sanctions assigned to them and were in good disciplinary standing with the institution, were not currently under investigation for another violation of university policy, and had not been party to any incident to which the researcher served as investigator or case worker.

Sample

Participants in this study were selected using criterion and snowball sampling strategies. Criterion sampling limits the participants to those who meet the inclusion criteria (Creswell, 2013). Snowball sampling allows participants to suggest others who meet the inclusion criteria. In this study, participants were asked to share the contact information of the researcher with individuals they knew who might be interested in participating.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through interviewing. Simply stated, interviews are a “purposeful conversation . . . directed by one to get information from the other” (Bogdan &

Biklen, 2007, p. 103). According to the authors, developing rapport is an important step in creating a relationship between the participant and researcher. In this study, the researcher spent time at the beginning of the interviews attempting to make the participant feel comfortable in the space and engaging the participant in informal conversation in order that each may get to know each other better. Creswell (2013) argued that sharing the purpose of the study with the participant at the beginning of the interview also builds rapport, so this was incorporated into the interview as well.

An interview protocol was created to guide the interview process (Appendix A). The protocol included a list of questions divided into three categories based on (1) description of the student's college experience, (2) the behavior that violated the institution's policies, and (3) the student's experience with the conduct process including the hearing and any sanctions. In order to develop trustworthiness, a panel of experts (Davis, 1992) was formed to review the protocol for proper construction and relevance to the research question. Student affairs professionals with experience and expertise in the field of student conduct reviewed the protocol for relevance to the research question, and experts in the field of qualitative research reviewed the protocol to ensure proper instrument construction. Pilot testing (Creswell, 2013) was used to further develop trustworthiness. An individual who met the inclusion criteria was interviewed using the semi-structured interview protocol. Their feedback on the interview was solicited in order to further develop the interview protocol. Data from their interview were not included in the study.

During the interview, participants were encouraged to share as deeply and complexly as they were comfortable. When the researcher was confused or did not understand an aspect of the participant's responses, he would ask for clarification or "probe" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 104), searching for specificity or examples that would shed more light on the topic. The goal of

the interviews was to understand the moral behavior of participants. Before the data were collected, the research project was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ball State University (10/23/2014). Data were collected between October 2014 and January 2015.

Criterion sampling strategy was used to determine which students at the institution could be included in the study (Creswell, 2013). This strategy was met through the use of the institution's online conduct management database, which was used to generate a report of all students who met the inclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria were that the individual be a current student, have an alcohol related incident that resulted in some type of sanction, have completed all sanctions, and currently be in good disciplinary standing with the institution. It was important to avoid the appearance of coercion through the conduct process, which is why only students who had completed their assigned sanctions and were in good standing with the institution were allowed to participate.

Individuals who met the inclusion criteria were identified and contacted by a third party within the institution's conduct office (Appendix C). Individuals who responded with interest in participation were asked to disclose the violation(s) they were charged with, their plea, and whether the outcome included suspension, all factors which could affect how they experienced the conduct system.

Interested participants were contacted by the researcher to schedule an initial interview and were provided with an Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). Before the interview was conducted, participants were advised of their rights as participants in the study and reminded that they could remove themselves from the study for any reason. The researcher informed the participants that he would make an audio recording of the interview. He then transcribed the interviews and destroyed the audio recording.

Data Analysis

The first step in the data analysis process is to prepare the data (Creswell, 2013). This was accomplished through the process of audio recording interviews and then transcribing the audio recording. Bailey (2008) argued that creating transcriptions is the first step in the analysis of data. The researcher chose to include in transcriptions verbal utterances such as “um” and “uh,” non-verbal utterances such as grunts and sighs, pauses, emphases, and tones of voice, because they inform and contextualize the words on the page.

After developing transcripts, the researcher read through the transcripts several times and then began the process of coding the information. The researcher began with prefigured coding (Creswell, 2013), which separates responses based on an existing model, in this case the four-component model of moral behavior (Rest et al., 1999). To avoid the limiting of analysis to prefigured codes, emergent coding (Creswell, 2013) was also used to reflect the understanding of the participants.

Coding, as defined by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), involves searching for patterns that emerge in the descriptions provided by the participants. This included the repeated use of a word or phrase or the similar descriptions or understandings of events or ideas. The researcher created a list of emergent codes and then categorized those codes into broader categories or themes. Based on Creswell’s analytic approach to phenomenology, the researcher then wrote about what the participants experienced in relation to the phenomenon and how the experience occurred in relation to the overall context.

Creswell (2013) recommended that at least two of his eight validation strategies be used in any qualitative study in “an attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings” (p. 249). In this study, the researcher chose to employ three methods. First, the researcher disclosed his biases

through the introduction to the researcher in Chapter One. This explained his interest and perspective in conducting the study, and alerted the audience to areas where his beliefs and experiences may affect the findings. Thick description of participants and their stories was utilized in the building of findings (Chapter Four) in order to allow the audience to decide under what context the findings are transferable. The researcher teamed with the faculty advisor to conduct a peer review, providing an external evaluation of the study and its findings.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the moral development of college students who violated institutional policies. Through in-depth interviews, this phenomenological study analyzed students' experiences related to behavior that violated policies, the student conduct process, and their reflection since the incident.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Chapter four presents the findings of this study which examined the moral development of students adjudicated for a violation of their institution's policies. Included is a summary of the study, sample demographics, and the findings.

Summary of the Study

This study examined the moral development of college students who have gone through their institution's student conduct process. Specifically, alcohol-related behavior that was considered a violation of institutional policy was examined using the four-component model of moral behavior (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999). Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with four undergraduate students who had violated institutional alcohol policy. Participants' answers to questions were analyzed for codes and themes and presented as findings.

Sample Demographics

Four undergraduate students ages 18 or older at a four-year, public research institution in the Midwestern United States participated in this study. Each participant was found responsible for a violation of the institution's alcohol policy. Participants had completed all requirements of the student conduct process and were in good standing with the institution. Two of the subjects were women, and two were men. The participants are as follows.

- Mandy – a senior, Psychology major. Mandy was a first-year student when she was pulled over for failing to stop at an intersection. She had been drinking and had an open bottle of wine in her vehicle. She was cited by a university police officer.

- Donna – a junior, Business major. Donna, as a sophomore, had been drinking, attempted to use a fake identification card at an off-campus festival, and was cited by a state excise police officer.
- Will – a sophomore, Biology major. Will was drinking excessively at an off-campus party during his first semester. He returned to his residence hall room and was vomiting throughout the night. He was documented by a residence hall staff member, and he already had three other alcohol-related incidents in the residence hall.
- John – a junior, Architecture major. John was cited for minor consumption on his way home from a friend's apartment as a first-year student. He had been drinking during and after dinner while working on a class project.

Components of Moral Behavior

After the interviews were conducted, transcriptions were prepared. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggested coding requires searching for patterns that emerge in data provided by the participants. The researcher created a list of prefigured codes based on the four-component model of moral behavior, as well as a list of emergent codes that appeared while reviewing the data. Recurring codes were then used to develop themes.

Based on Creswell's (2013) analytic approach to phenomenology, the researcher used the organization of themes in order to make sense of the data and to write about what the participants experienced. Two themes emerged in relation to the four-component model of moral behavior: self-interest in alcohol-related moral judgments, and a strong commitment to acting morally.

Moral Judgment and Self-Interest

In describing alcohol related decision-making, participants reported an overwhelming preference toward self-interest as the determining factor. Alcohol was available in the residence

halls and at numerous locations off campus. During nicer weather, some streets near campus were lined with parties that students could enter with no invitation from or relationship with the residents. Alcohol use was a convenient option that participants spoke about as an assumed possibility. In weighing convenience as a factor, self-interest in seeking an enjoyable experience framed the decision to drink around the question: why not?

Self-interest suggested that students consider real or assumed peer influence in their alcohol decision-making. Sometimes students chose to consume alcohol because their friends were drinking. Other times, students chose to drink because they viewed it as a component or ritual required for members of their collegiate community. In either case, self-interest manifested as self-preservation or the need to fit in. Similarly, when peer groups began to consume less alcohol, participants changed their alcohol behavior in order to fit in.

When participants described choosing not to drink alcohol, it was often as a result of other commitments. Self-interest required students abstain from alcohol as a result of legal proceedings or institutional requirements. When students were cited by law enforcement and entered the legal system, the terms for the legal outcomes strictly forbade repeat alcohol offenses. Similarly, the institutional response often included a probationary period during which students could face escalated consequences for repeated behavior. Increased coursework or job requirements also impacted participant's choices not to drink. As students progressed into upper level coursework, the academic demands took up more time, and the stakes were higher. Employment, internships, and preparation for future employment became a much stronger factor against prohibited alcohol related behavior.

Convenience. Convenience was often a major factor in the decision-making process. Participants described alcohol use as a matter-of-fact part of college life, and students often

viewed the question about whether to drink as a search for reasons not to. It was considered an obvious choice. Will shared, “I will get texts or calls like, ‘Hey come to my party’ or ‘This is what’s going on’ or ‘This and this’. . . I only bought alcohol for myself maybe twice.” Mandy talked about the ease of finding alcohol off-campus, “I’d walk around a lot. In the later years I’d walk into a house and think, I’ve been here before! I had been to a party there.” Alcohol was so readily available, that participants did not need to search it out.

Peer influence. Peer influences often defined how participants made choices regarding alcohol. Self-interest arose as students consciously decided to drink because it was a way to make friends or it was what their friends were already doing. Some participants suggested that consuming alcohol was such a part of the culture that fitting in meant that they or others were pressured to engage in high-risk alcohol behavior.

Friends. Some participants saw consuming alcohol as a way to make friends. When describing her drinking behavior as a sophomore, Donna stated: “Like you kind of establish, you branch out from the dorms and you find people, that’s when I found my group.” Donna reported that she would regularly drink at her best friend’s apartment, and she met her current boyfriend during one of those occasions because he lived across the hall and often came over to drink as well. Similarly, Will responded to a hypothetical situation about the alcohol use of a first-year student. He stated:

So as I said before, this is a chance that you start your life. So does he want to be more of friendship bound college person where he wants to go and make more friends and be into his peers, or does he want to excel in schooling and academically?

Participants saw drinking as an opportunity to meet new people. Will suggested that using alcohol to make friends could outweigh potential negative repercussions in other areas of students' lives.

Consuming alcohol was also seen as a way to maintain pre-existing friendships. When considering a hypothetical related to alcohol use, Mandy stated:

Well, obviously his friends are gonna, you said his friends are going, so his friends are probably going to influence that. I think it's easier to go to a party if you know people there. If you don't know anyone, then you're not as apt to show up.

Donna described being influenced by her friend group. She spoke about how she had to keep up with their alcohol use:

Them all being older than me, it was a lot more fast-paced than I thought, and a typical night of drinking then was just shot after shot after shot after shot after shot. Just the reckless, new to college. I'm drinking with people I'm comfortable with, and I've made my friend group.

Participants all reported being with friends during the incidents that brought them through the student conduct process. When asked what factors played into his decision to drink the night he was cited for minor consumption, John stated. "Just hanging out with friends. We were working on a project. Just always done it that way."

Environment. Outside of specific friend groups, some participants felt that the college environment influenced them to drink, and their self-interest in fitting in, or having the college experience required that they participate. Mandy shared, "College, everybody, most, I can't say everybody. Most people, I feel drink. At least 50%. There's that heavy influence, regardless if you're 21 or not, cause there's always someone who will buy it for you." Donna pointed

specifically to her experience in Greek Life. She felt more pressure within that community to drink.

When I was in Greek Life there was definitely more pressure to drink more often, to drink more. And I loved my experience . . . so I don't want to down talk Greek Life at all, but the pressure is definitely higher, regardless of what they promote on campus to other people.

Peer influence, whether direct or indirect, led students to drink. In these cases, self-interest outweighed participants' knowledge that what they were doing was against institutional policy as well as state or local law.

Outcomes. Participants reported that weighing potential outcomes was a major part of the decision-making process when consuming alcohol. Participants understood the potential negative outcomes of their alcohol-related behavior including legal repercussions, sanctions through the university, and the negative effect that drinking may have on their employment, relationship, or educational goals. Potential outcomes often forced participants to change their alcohol behavior.

Punishments. When considering when to drink Will knew that drinking underage was against the law and institutional policies, but he chose to drink anyway. Will stated:

Ball State cops when they're driving the streets they see all the girls and guys that are stumbling and everywhere else. But they can't sit there and stop every single one of them.

When discussing a hypothetical situation in tailgating, Will was a little more cautious:

I think Amelia should honestly decide if she is going to be out in the open, and if she is going to happen to be intoxicated where she knows there are going to be more police

officers, she knows there is going to be more severity to the punishment if she is out there, cause that can be considered, obviously, underage drinking. It's going to be public intoxication. Is it worth it? I guess in her situation I would not take the risk.

Similarly, Donna reported being more cautious on campus and in areas near campus, because she believed that the university police would report more back to the institution. She was cited at a festival downtown by a state excise police officer, and the report made it back to the institution. She said, "I was never big on house parties, cause I was always afraid because oh, those are [the institution's] police that bust them. I don't want to get caught in that." After Mandy went through the criminal process for a minor in possession charge, the cost of hiring an attorney, paying court fees, and spending time on community service served as a deterrent to getting caught again. Because it was a first time offense, she had the charge removed from her record. She stated, "Also thinking about, if I'm going into social work, like I intend to, there is not any way that I can have any sort of criminal background, even if it's a minor thing." Though the consequences are clear, they tend to become more real to participants after they have experienced them personally.

Negative effect on other priorities. Another factor participants considered was the negative effect that their alcohol use could have on other priorities in their lives. Current and future employment goals, relationship goals, and educational pursuits were considered. In this case, self-interest sometimes caused participants to rethink alcohol behavior to protect these other aspirations.

After Mandy moved off campus and began working to support herself, drinking was relegated to the background. When asked about what a regular night of drinking looks like for her, she stated, "I work too much and I go to school full time and I work almost full time, so I

don't have them anymore.” Donna recognized that her drinking behavior was interfering with her education. She stated:

Then actually seeing the GPA. I mean, I knew my grades had slipped. I knew I'd withdrawn and failed classes and had retaken that following semester. It wasn't until I actually saw the two GPAs next to each other. I was like “ISOM 125: F. Who flunks ISOM 125?” It was like, okay what can I do to pick up this grade? What can I do to pick up this grade? What can I do to get extra credit or apologize to my professors for skipping their class, or asking a bunch of questions when eventually I did show up, that had been covered in a class a hundred times?

Will considered the impact that alcohol use would have on his relationships, and that sometimes changed from night to night. He would ask himself, “Who is going to know? There's obviously people I don't want knowing that, like my brothers and sisters.” As he changed his alcohol behavior toward consuming less, he noted: “My ex-girlfriend . . . the one that I had last year during all the mess, that was a big thing for her. I drank and she didn't like it.” Similarly, Donna was embarrassed to have others see her in trouble, which affected her behavior. She shared, “I'd never been in trouble with the police before, so definitely kind of a scary low point when you've never been in trouble and then all of your peers and friends are watching you get in trouble.” The potential outcomes often led students to change their alcohol behavior. However, it was not new thinking related to morality that caused the change, but a new evaluation as to what was in their best interest.

Moral Motivation

Participants reported a strong commitment to acting morally. They believed that morality was based on a personal code, and that acting morally required following that code. Though it

was harder to understand through their discussion, participants also believed that they followed through in acting on their morals.

Personal codes. When asked what it means to act morally, Will shared, “I think it’s someone who sticks to their values . . . it’s someone who sticks true to their self, and follows their own, I guess you could even say subconscious values.” Mandy answered:

I think morals in the first place are a set of guidelines that each individual places for their life. To live morally means simply that you follow those guidelines that you set for yourself. So I think for me, the morals that I set for myself may not have always matched up with the morals that society has set for me.

John replied similarly, “Doing the right thing, It’s kind of really up to interpretation and varies person-to-person.” Donna noted that there should be consideration for others as well, “I guess to act morally would be following not just the expected guidelines that most people have, but also staying true to yourself and following what you believe, without totally crossing over other people’s boundaries.”

Developing morals. The participants all pointed to their families as major sources of their personal moral beliefs. When asked where his morals came from, Will shared:

Really just the sense of like my parents were very strict. My step-mom very much grew up on, she had to grow up on her own, because her family wasn’t there for her, so she kind of had to start from day one and had to build herself up. My dad, on the other hand, his parents were there but they didn’t really, they said as long as you do well in school, you can do whatever you want. So he had a completely different atmosphere to where if he wanted to screw up he could, but as long as school was fine, that was okay. And my

mom was the one that was sports over everything. So, not that I didn't value their upbringing, but I kind of had to find myself and what I wanted to do.

Because he had multiple influences coming from his family, Will knew that he had to negotiate what was best for him personally. John said that his morals were developed around "what I grown up with." Donna similarly pointed to her parents, but also believed that her friends and her college experience influenced her morals. She shared:

My parents and my friends around me. The way I was raised and then developing my own sense of my self, and what I feel is right and wrong from how they've raised me. Definitely being in a college environment has changed that. I became more open-minded, and maybe a little more strict with my own morals.

Mandy's ideas about morality were more pragmatic. She shared:

Well I think for a lot of people it's religion, but for me personally I don't think that's so much the case. I think a lot of it is intrinsic motivation, just knowing where I want to be in my life and what careers I want to have and what the standards that are set by the people that are in those careers, and I have to look at that in order to go anywhere, pretty much.

It is through their upbringing, including the influence of family and friends, that students developed their personal moral codes. Personal ambition and care for others also influenced how they thought about what is right and wrong.

Commitment to acting morally. In describing their personal codes, participants also expressed a strong commitment to acting on them. John said, "I always strive to do the right thing." When asked if he considered himself to be a moral person, Will shared the question he asks himself, "The thing that I try to deal with is: Did I stick by my morals?"

Mandy described a situation in which she had to offend some family members when her grandmother passed away, as she made sure that she honored her grandmother's wishes. She stated, "And I felt like, although my aunt was upset, I could be okay with myself because I knew that what I was doing was right by what I would want for my grandma." Donna shared, "I guess I would say I am a pretty moral person. I definitely think through things before I do them a lot more. I think I've become less selfish than I was." She placed thinking about the needs of others high on her personal moral code, and worked to reflect on how her behavior would affect others before acting.

Summary

Multiple themes were discussed in Chapter Four. Participants expressed a commitment to acting morally. They developed personal moral codes based on the influence of family and friends, and they reflected on ways they failed to meet that code. Self-interest in moral decision-making was found to be an overwhelming factor in students' moral behavior. They weighed convenience, peer influence, and potential outcomes as important sources of self-interest when choosing whether to consume alcohol.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Five includes a summary of the project, discussion of the findings, implications for practice, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

This study examined the moral development of college students who have gone through their institution's student conduct process. Specifically, alcohol-related behavior that was considered a violation of institutional policy was examined using the four-component model of moral behavior (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999). Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with four undergraduate students who had violated institutional alcohol policy in order to find common themes of moral behavior in their student conduct experiences.

Discussion

The following section contains a discussion of self-interest in alcohol related moral judgments and strong student commitment to acting morally.

Moral Judgment and Self-Interest

Participants' alcohol related decision-making processes were based on the weighing of multiple factors. Participants considered the potential positive and negative outcomes of their alcohol related behavior, and chose the option that best served their own self-interest. They often considered ways to mitigate the potential negative outcomes, with varying success. The assumption regarding alcohol related behavior was that college students would choose to drink unless the potential negative outcomes were too great. The question surrounding alcohol related behavior was: why not?

In the current study, participants considered convenience as the first main factor of self-interest. Alcohol was available, and it seemed to be an easy choice. Participants could walk down the streets near campus and enter any number of parties to find alcohol, and alcohol use seemed to be ubiquitous in the residence halls as well. Peer influence caused students to act in their own self-interest, making alcohol related decisions to make or maintain friends. Peer influence was also environmental. Students were encouraged to drink, because it was part of the college experience. Participants weighed potential outcomes of alcohol related behavior including the possibility of institutional and legal ramifications, and the possibility that their alcohol behavior could negatively affect other priorities including their education and employment.

Kohlberg (1976) argued that morality develops in individuals in an invariant hierarchy. He proposed three levels with two stages in each level. As individuals develop and mature, their reasoning progresses through the hierarchy. Participants' alcohol related decision-making aligned with Kohlberg's first of three levels of moral judgment, the Preconventional level, defined by reasoning based on the consequences of one's actions. Their decision-making appeared to align with both stages of this level.

In the first stage, Heteronomous Morality, judgment is based on the avoidance of punishment or harm to self or others (Kohlberg, 1976). Participants clearly reasoned at this stage when they considered the potential institutional and legal outcomes of their behavior. In the second stage, Individualism, Instrumental Purpose, and Exchange, reasoning is based on personal interest. Individuals reasoning at this stage make decisions based on what they could get out of the situation. Participants reasoned at this stage when they considered the benefits of their alcohol related behavior, including developing or maintaining friendships, conforming to

expectations, or simply enjoying themselves. The current research rejects Kohlberg's findings that individuals reason in only one stage at a time, as students often relied on both of these stages of reasoning at the same time. Participants' alcohol related decision-making might be better described by Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau's (2000) Personal Interest schema.

Rest et al. (1999) argued that Kohlberg's (1976) stages should be conceptualized as broader schemas. The first of their three schemas, Personal Interest, was derived from Kohlberg's stages two and three. In this schema, individuals reason by analyzing their own priorities in the outcome, as well as the priorities of individuals with whom they have a personal connection. This schema describes how participants in the current study made their alcohol related decisions. They relied on their personal priorities rather than societal norms or universal principles, characteristic of schemas two and three (Rest et al., 2000).

Participants' described their relationships with others, including their intent to avoid causing harm to others, as a factor in alcohol related decision-making. They avoided causing direct physical harm to friends and loved ones, as well as indirect emotional harm, through exposure to the negative effects of the alcohol behavior. In these cases they chose not to drink around younger siblings or expose friends to negative alcohol behavior or risks. They also tried to avoid embarrassing alcohol related situations that family or friends would find out about. This aligned with the findings of Rest et al. (2000), who suggested that the priorities of individuals with whom the actor has a personal connection matter in the Personal Interest schema as well. It also supported the conclusions of Gilligan (1977) and Noddings (1984) that morality is primarily an orientation toward preserving relationships and caring for others, both of which were identified as factors for choosing to abstain from alcohol related behavior.

Moral Motivation

Participants were committed to acting morally. They grew up with instructions from parents and family on the differences between right and wrong. Through interaction with family and peers they developed personal moral codes that guided their behavior. They identified moral behavior as acting within that moral code. Sometimes their moral code did not align with societal or familial expectations, although it was rooted in them.

Participants were strongly committed to their personal codes. They recognized that they did not always meet their own codes, but that they worked hard to come as close as they could. These codes did not require acting within the rule of law or institutional policy when related to alcohol behavior. In such cases, participants' codes required they do what was best for them. Each participant considered themselves to be moral individuals.

Rest et al. (2000) suggested that moral motivation may be an emotional commitment to acting morally. The strength and intensity of participants' commitment to acting morally seemed to support the emotional basis of moral motivation. Bebeau and Monson (2011) argued that moral motivation may also have a link to identity development. This may help explain how participants viewed themselves as moral individuals as opposed to individuals who acted morally. Hardy (2006) described this link between morality and identity hinging upon the emphasis that an individual puts on moral concepts such as care and justice in their personal sense of identity.

Implications for Practice

This study examined the moral development of college students who had been adjudicated for violations of their institution's policies. The findings and discussion of this study focused on the moral judgment and moral motivation of the students interviewed. Understanding the process toward moral behavior of these students can affect the work of student affairs

educators in general, and those responsible for student conduct and alcohol education and prevention in particular.

Students make alcohol related decisions by weighing risks and rewards. Their decision-making process is based on a moral code that does not prohibit alcohol behavior that is illegal or against institutional policy. Instead, they rely on their own self-interest to determine the best course of action. They consider benefits, mostly social and enjoyment related, and risks, including legal and institutional action and the potential negative outcomes on other priorities in their lives.

Student affairs educators concerned with students' alcohol related behavior can appeal to these factors as points of education for students. Students seemed to understand that there were institutional and legal outcomes for alcohol related behavior, but those consequences were not clear to them. Building on this factor in their decision-making process, student affairs educators should work to clearly communicate those potential consequences to students. Students may be persuaded to make better alcohol related decisions if they understand the concrete ways that their institution will respond to that behavior. It may also be helpful to communicate to students the fines, fees, and time that accompany a liquor law violation in the local court system. Sharing this type of information could be seen as an attempt to scare or coerce students into making the better choices, but in reality, students need this information to better weigh this factor in their decision-making process.

In education and prevention efforts, student affairs educators should also create programming that emphasizes the potential negative outcomes on other priorities in students' lives. Educators could look toward research of the negative effects of high-risk alcohol behavior and help students make the connection to their own priorities and goals, including their

education, future employment, and relationships. According to Rest et al. (2000) framing the question to consume alcohol illegally as a moral decision may assist those lacking in the moral sensitivity component of the four-component model of moral behavior. Similarly, appealing to students' priorities in relationships and the potential harm that their decisions could have on other individuals would utilize Gilligan (1977) and Noddings (1984) concept of morality as a caring process.

Finally, students demonstrated a strong commitment to acting morally. Their moral motivation did not prevent them from engaging in illegal and prohibited alcohol behavior because their level of reasoning did not consider the overall social implications related to their moral behavior. Kohlberg (1976) and Rest et al. (2000) agreed that moving to higher stages of moral reasoning required contact with those higher stages. For this reason, student affairs educators should develop programming which engages the Maintaining Norms schema of Rest et al. (2000), similar to Kohlberg's (1976) fourth stage, Social System and Conscience. Programming should attempt to communicate the need for societal rules and expectations that are clear, universal, and fair. Rest et al. (2000) argued that individuals operate within multiple schemas at once and move through schemas depending on usefulness and the specific situation. Student affairs educators should focus on helping students connect lower level reasoning in alcohol behavior to higher level reasoning they already rely on in other situations, for instance traffic laws, or rules regarding theft.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

Limitations represent the potential weaknesses of a study (Ioannidis, 2007). First, only limited demographic data, including class status and academic major, were collected in this

study. A number of demographic factors could influence a student's development of moral behavior. Second, this study was conducted at one institution, and different institutional contexts could affect behavior as well.

Delimitations

Delimitations explain the context of the study and ways in which the study might not be generalizable (Wolcott, 2001). In this study, the small sample size represents the first delimitation. Such a small sample size allows for in-depth examination of the participants' experiences, but restricts the data such that the findings cannot be generalized to a larger group. Second, this study focused on students who were found responsible for a violation of alcohol policy. Moral behavior related to other types of policy violations was not considered. In addition, moral behavior of students who had not violated institutional policy was not considered, either.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research is recommended for this topic because student affairs educators are interested in understanding and changing the behavior of students. First, the current research could be improved by increasing the sample size. More generalizable findings could be developed if the sample size was greatly increased.

Changes over time could be examined through a longitudinal study. Exploring students' moral behavior at multiple times throughout their college career could help to create a better understanding of how moral behavior and its components develop. This might shed light on the factors or experiences which lead to higher level moral reasoning and the factors that contribute to moral character.

A large-scale quantitative study on perceptions and attitudes toward alcohol related decision-making could provide clearer insight into the factors considered in moral behavior as well. This research should stretch across multiple institutions and should consider demographic data. Such a study would provide more insight into the generalizability of the factors leading to moral behavior. This research could also examine the relative strength of each factor in the decision-making process.

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APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Office of Research Integrity
 Institutional Review Board (IRB)
 2000 University Avenue
 Muncie, IN 47306-0155
 Phone: 765-285-5070

DATE: October 23, 2014

TO: Christopher Berry

FROM: Ball State University IRB

RE: IRB protocol# 652155-2

TITLE: Moral Development of Adjudicated College Students

SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED

DECISION DATE: October 23, 2014

EXPIRATION DATE: October 22, 2015

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited: This protocol had been determined by the board to meet the definition of minimal risk.

The Institutional Review Board has approved your Revision for the above protocol, effective October 23, 2014 through October 22, 2015. All research under this protocol must be conducted in accordance with the approved submission and in accordance with the principles of the Belmont Report.

Review Type:

	Category 1: Clinical studies of drugs and medical devices
	Category 2: Collection of blood samples by Finger stick, Heel stick, Ear stick, or Venipuncture
	Category 3: Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by noninvasive means
	Category 4: Collection of data through Non-Invasive Procedures Routinely Employed in Clinical Practice, excluding procedures involving Material (Data, Documents, Records, or Specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for non-research purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis)
	Category 5: Research involving materials that have been collected or will be collected solely for non-research purposes.
	Category 6: Collection of Data from Voice, Video, Digital, or Image Recordings Made for Research Purposes

X	Category 7: Research on Individual or Group Characteristics or Behavior or Research Employing Survey, Interview Oral History, Focus Group, Program Evaluation, Human Factors, Evaluation, or Quality Assurance Methodologies
	Category 8: Continuing review of research previously approved by the convened IRB
	Category 9: Continuing review of research, not conducted under an investigational new drug application or investigational device exemption where categories 2-8 do not apply but the IRB has determined and documented at a convened meeting that the research involves no greater than minimal risk and not additional risks have been identified.

Editorial Notes:

1. Approved

As a reminder, it is the responsibility of the P.I. and/or faculty sponsor to inform the IRB in a timely manner:

- when the project is completed,
- if the project is to be continued beyond the approved end date,
- if the project is to be modified,
- if the project encounters problems, or
- if the project is discontinued.

Any of the above notifications must be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (<http://www.bsu.edu/irb>). Please reference the IRB protocol number given above in any communication to the IRB regarding this project. Be sure to allow sufficient time for review and approval of requests for modification or continuation. If you have questions, please contact John Mulcahy at (765) 285-5106 or jmulcahy@bsu.edu.

In the case of an adverse event and/or unanticipated problem, you will need to submit written documentation of the event to IRBNet under this protocol number and you will need to directly notify the Office of Research Integrity (<http://www.bsu.edu/irb>) within 5 business days. If you have questions, please contact (ORI Staff).

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project or as required under Federal and/or State regulations (ex. HIPAA, FERPA, etc.). Additional requirements may apply.

Bryan Byers, PhD/Chair
Institutional Review Board

Christopher Mangelli, JD, MS, MEd, CIP/Director
Office of Research Integrity

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Thank you for coming in today to meet with me. The purpose of this study is to better understand the moral development of students who have gone through a student conduct process. I want to understand your experiences with the conduct process, and so I encourage you to be honest and straightforward in your answers. Please tell stories and use examples to explain your points.

Before we begin I'd like to remind you of your rights as a research participant. Your identity will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be assigned to you and any other people or places you discuss, and your identity will not be revealed in any final or published material. You may choose not to answer any question, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason and without consequence. You should also know that your disclosures here will not result in new charges in relation to the Code of Student Rights and Community Standards.

Your answers and stories will be used to draw conclusions for the study and may be used in published material. I'd like to record these interviews with a digital recorder to ensure that I am as accurate as possible in my interpretations. I am the only person who will have access to the recordings. I will transcribe the interview. Do I have your permission to record this interview?

Have you read the Informed Consent Form I provided to you? Do you have any questions?

I've prepared a list of questions divided into four sections that I will use to help guide our conversation. Please feel free to share what you feel is important or relevant, even if it isn't a direct response to a question. I am interested in your experience and you know it best! Do you have any questions before we begin?

Part One – *We'll start with some general questions.*

1. I'm curious, what made you agree to talk with me?
2. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
3. Tell me about your experience at Ball State so far.
 - a. Tell me about a highlight of your time here.
 - b. Tell me about a low point of your time here.
4. What does it mean to be a person who acts morally?
5. Do you consider yourself to be a moral person? Why?
6. Tell me about a situation in which you've had to make a moral decision.
 - a. How did you know that this was a moral decision?

Part Two – *Now I want to talk about some hypothetical situations related to alcohol.*

Imagine a college freshman named Ben has just arrived on campus. It is the Friday night before classes start, and others in his residence hall have invited him to a party off campus where he knows there will be alcohol.

7. How should Ben make his decision?
8. What factors would Ben have to consider before making his decision?

Another scenario, it is October of her sophomore year and Amelia has been invited by some older friends to tailgate with them before the homecoming football game. Amelia wants to go, but she knows that her friends, who are 21, will be drinking. She also knows that if she drinks

alcohol she could get in trouble with her school and she could even get a ticket, it has happened to people she knows.

9. How should Amelia decide what to do?

Part Three – *Thanks for your responses so far! Now I want to ask you about your own experiences with alcohol.*

10. What does a normal night of drinking look like for you?

a. Who do you drink with? Where?

11. What does a normal night of drinking look like for most students at Ball State?

12. When thinking about alcohol use, how do you decide what is right and what is wrong?

Part Four – *We're going to move on to some more personal questions as we talk about the incident that brought you in contact with Ball State's conduct process. In these questions, I'm interested in how you were thinking at the time.*

13. Starting from the beginning, tell me about what happened.

14. Tell me about how you made the decision to drink that day/night?

a. What factors played into your decision?

b. Were you aware at the time that this could potentially be a violation of Ball State's Code?

15. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thank you for meeting with me today to talk about your experiences. Your insight will be helpful for me to better understand the moral development of college students who have participated in the conduct process.

APPENDIX C
RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Recruitment email for study titled: “Moral Judgment and Motivation in College Students’ Alcohol Related Decision-Making”

Address Line: A professional staff member in the Office of Student Rights and Community Standards who will send the recruitment email will be listed as recipient in “To:” line. Potential participants’ email will be listed in “BCC:” line in order to avoid disclosing the names and email addresses of potential participants to each other.

Subject Line: “Conduct Process Study Participation”

Email Body:

Greetings,

I am contacting you on behalf of researcher Christopher Berry, who requests your participation in his study titled “Moral Development of Adjudicated College Students.” The purpose of this study is to better understand the moral development of college students who have violated Ball State’s policies.

This study will require one (1) interview lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. Your responses will be maintained as confidential.

Please contact Christopher Berry by email at ccberry@bsu.edu or by phone at (765) 285-5036 if you are interested in participating or have more questions.

This project was reviewed and approved on 10/23/2014 by the Ball State University IRB (protocol #652155-2).

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT

Moral Judgment and Motivation in College Students' Alcohol Related Decision-Making

Principle Investigator: Christopher Berry

Study Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the moral development of college students who violated institutional policies.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

To be eligible to participate in this study you must be at least 18 years of age, been found responsible for a violation of your institution's policies, have completed all sanctions assigned to you, be in good disciplinary standing with the institution, and not have been party to an incident to which the researcher served as investigator or case worker.

Participation Procedures and Duration

For this project, you will be asked to participate in one 45-60 minute interview.

Audio or Video Tapes (if applicable)

For purposes of accuracy, with your permission, the interviews will be audio recorded. Any names used on the digital recording will be changed to pseudonyms when the recordings are transcribed. Once the transcription is completed, the digital recording will be destroyed.

Data Confidentiality

All data will be maintained as confidential. Only the principal investigator, Christopher Berry, and the faculty advisor, Dr. Thalia Mulvilhill will have access to digital recordings and transcriptions of the interview.

Storage of Data

Electronic data will be stored on the investigator's password protected personal laptop and password protected personal flash drive. Paper data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Only members of the research team will have access to the data.

Risks or Discomforts

The only anticipated risk from participating in this study is that you may not feel comfortable answering some of the questions. You may choose not to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable and you may quit the study at any time.

Who to Contact Should You Experience Any Negative Effects from Participating in this Study

Should you experience any feelings of anxiety, there are counseling services available to you as a student through the Ball State University Counseling Center in Lucina Hall, room 320. You can call and make an appointment at (765) 285-1763.

Benefits

There are no perceived benefits for participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study. You can contact the principle investigator, Christopher Berry at ccberry@bsu.edu or (765) 285-5036. You can contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Thalia Mulvihill at tmulvihill@bsu.edu.

IRB Contact Information

For one's rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070 or at irb@bsu.edu.

Study Title Moral Judgment and Motivation in College Students' Alcohol Related Decision-Making

Consent

I, _____, agree to participate in this research project entitled, "Moral Motivation and Character in College Students' Alcohol Related Decision-Making." I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Email

Participant's Phone Number

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Investigator:

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