Part One

The Moral Terrain of Human Service Leadership

Part I (Chapters 1 through 4) provides the foundation of leadership for individuals as ethical leaders and the moral terrain they tread. This section helps us think about the connection between ethics and leadership within the context of human services, where the impact of leadership is focused.

Chapter 1 discusses the essence and nature of ethical leadership. Professional leaders have a dual responsibility: the responsibility of service and a public duty to society. Practical ethics is presented as an approach that links theory and practice for professional leaders. A multidimensional framework is developed that conceptualizes leaders as developing ethical practice across individual, organizational, and societal systems.

Chapter 2 provides the contextual background to ethical leadership within human service organizations. Human service organizations have unique characteristics with implications for the ethical practices of leaders. The historical context of social work and business ethics, as well as the intersection between social work and business through privatization, creates an opportunity for a new conceptualization of the essence of ethics for leaders.

Chapter 3 provides an approach for ethical leadership practice that is theory based. An overview of two leadership paradigms—transactional and transformational theories—begins the chapter. Transformational theories have the capacity, through the dimensions of vision and morality, to provide a coherent framework for the integration of ethics into leadership. This leadership paradigm is discussed in relation to moral direction and responsibility, contribution to the public good, value-based practice, the motivation to act, and an action philosophy approach.

Chapter 4 provides a framework for conceptualizing leadership, ethics, and power. The role of power and authority in ethical decisions and dilemmas is explored. Because the use and abuse of power is at the heart of administrative and organizational...
ethics (Levy, 1982), this chapter discusses three dimensions of the manifestation of power that is wielded by leaders. Specific examples of the ethical use of power, and abuses of power are brought forward. The second part of the chapter develops the argument that leaders and constituents must be knowledgeable about expanding their scope of influence in order to impact ethical practices and policies through a conscious use of self. The attitudes and functions of leadership that add to increased influence are integrated with practical strategies.
CHAPTER 1

The Essence of Ethical Leadership

The focus in this chapter is on the following areas:

- The essence of leadership
- Dual responsibilities of professional social work
- Practical ethics
- Dimensions of ethical leadership

Ethical leadership has never been more important to human service organizations. The context of a rapidly changing society, with human service delivery increasingly located in the private sphere, has had a dramatic effect on the funding and provision of human services. Economic and social well-being of individuals, families, and communities—the public “good”—in part rests squarely on the capacities of the human service sector. However, the human service sector has taken a “back seat” to the economic sector, which has dominated the attention of society in recent years. Residual effects of economic dominance are reflected in the increasing consumerism and materialism of society. Cost-efficiency and revenue production are the buzzwords of service delivery. Traditional public and nonprofit services are now marketed as products to sell by agencies that have shareholders as their primary interest. Response to human need is fast becoming the lowest priority of a well-to-do society.

The emphasis on economic dominance affects the ability of the government to assist citizens in critical areas, such as education, employment, and health care, placing the system “seriously out of balance” (Nanus & Dobbs, 1999, p. 29). Ethical leadership in human services is an opportunity to commit to the social sector of society, adding balance to the system by increasing the social goods produced. The social goods produced through the human service sector strengthen individuals, families, organizations, and communities through the services provided in health and mental
health care, education, social welfare, criminal justice, and many other fields of practice. The public good that is generated by a society, then, is inextricably connected to the human service delivery system.

Leadership ethics are a function of relationships with many constituencies. Leaders have responsibility for the good or harm that is produced to those who receive services, or those who are represented, as well as to the community and society (Levy, 1993). In addition, leaders in human services have an ethical obligation to improve the organization's contribution to society by providing the opportunity to move their organizations to a “... higher level of excellence, service, and benefit ...” (Nanus & Dobbs, 1999). Leaders in organizations, then, are the hearts, pumping the “life blood” of values, philosophy, and commitment into the ethics of organizational life.

Leaders have an especially important role in providing heart to their organizations. Leaders in human services are surrounded by the dimensions of ethics in leadership on several levels. First, they must develop a critical self-awareness of their own values and the moral vision that guides their leadership. Leaders have a public responsibility to provide leadership with a moral purpose, leadership that contributes to the public good in society. Second, they must integrate these values and vision into a leadership approach, guided by theory that can accommodate this ethical dimension. Third, they must routinely resolve the ethical dilemmas of administration and management on a daily basis, with an ethical framework of decisionmaking. Fourth, ethical leaders must have the ability to shape their organization’s culture and structure so that the architecture of the organization promotes ethical decisions and behaviors on the part of all employees. These dimensions are especially true for social work leaders who are in the forefront of the leadership in human services. Therefore, ethical leadership must be multidimensional.

Social Work and Ethical Leadership

The capacity of human service leaders to identify and pursue the public good through moral vision and ethical organizational practices should be social work’s paramount concern for the 21st century. Capacity is more than knowledge, skills, and abilities. The motivation, courage, and willingness to address moral and ethical concerns must also be a part of every person’s commitment to leadership.

Social workers have a major role in the leadership of human service organizations. The results of their leadership in social service institutions “... play a significant role in social change ... the poor and disempowered ... experience society first hand through the institutions designed to serve or subjugate them, depending on one’s perspective” (Fisher & Karger, 1997, p. 151). Service or subjugation may be largely dependent on a leader’s awareness of the ethical challenges embedded in the daily operations of service delivery and the willingness to confront them. And they must confront them every day. Rhodes (1986, p. 10) argues that “Almost every decision that a social worker makes, even a technical one, is a decision about ethics.” At the institutional and service level, then, the ethics of leadership are instrumental.
Social Work Leadership

However, leadership has not received adequate attention in social work (Brilliant, 1986), and the ethics of leadership are not well developed. Sarri (1992, p. 40), in her essay about the conservative nature of the profession, argues that, due to social work’s identification as a “woman’s profession,” the profession reflects women’s status in general in society: “that of low power and subordination.” Further, social work has been like a “house divided.” There is ambivalence in the profession about the degree that social work should emphasize leadership and reform versus accommodation of political and economic interests. Finally, the bureaucratic structure of social welfare and human service organizations promotes “conformity and compliance” rather than “action and reform” (p. 41).

Leadership has not received the attention necessary to meet the contemporary challenges of social service. There are many examples of the fallout that results from social work’s loss of a leading role in the shaping of human service reforms. Welfare reform has been commandeered by the political will and ideology of politicians competing for votes from a citizenry that does not understand the complexities of domestic violence, mental illness, and centuries of discrimination and racism. Managed health and mental health care have had some success at reducing costs, but only temporarily. Currently, costs are escalating again, and access to quality care, particularly for those who are most oppressed due to poverty, mental illness, and so forth is greatly reduced. In the meantime, for-profit managed care companies have benefited from the revenue for “managing care” that previously would have gone toward providing care. Something is wrong with this picture.

The Council on Social Work Education (1998) has identified leadership development as a core concern. Recommended areas for further attention include work on conceptualization of social work leadership, specific content on leadership in the curriculum, and focused leadership training of undergraduate and graduate students (Brilliant, 1986; Rank & Hutchison, 2000). The lack of emphasis on leadership has led to “. . . social work losing ground in the leadership of its own organizations” (Moran, Frans, & Gibson, 1995, p. 104).

A recent study of social work leaders’ perceptions of leadership is relevant. Interviews with a random sample of 75 deans and directors from Council of Social Work Education (CSWE)-accredited programs and 75 executive directors and presidents of local chapters of National Association of Social Workers (NASW) resulted in five common elements that these leaders defined as critical to the concept of leadership (Rank & Hutchison, 2000). The elements included proaction, values and ethics, empowerment, vision, and communication. These elements are imperative to social work leadership because of the profession’s mission, values, and knowledge base. The challenge for social work is to integrate these elements with a definition and theory of leadership that can provide guidance for ethical and moral issues.

The thesis for ethical leadership that is promoted through this book is congruent with the elements identified by the deans and directors. Transformational leadership (discussed in Chapter 3) incorporates values and ethics as one of the core elements of the paradigm. Further, the focus of leading is on connecting relationships,
building community, and empowering constituents; thus, communication is the major activity of leaders. Finally, the nature of leadership in human services has to be visionary, with an emphasis on moving forward, that is, influencing others to develop and improve the resources and services available in a society with a widening gap between the wealthy and the poor. Visionary leadership rests on the moral courage of leaders to step forward and lead the human services sector toward actions that contribute to the public good. Robert Kennedy said,

Few are willing to brave the disapproval of their fellows, the censure of their colleagues, the wrath of their society. Moral courage is a rarer commodity than bravery in battle or great intelligence. Yet it is the one essential, vital quality for those who seek to change a world that yields most painfully to change.

Never has moral courage been more necessary for professional leaders.

This book integrates the previous elements into a framework for ethical leadership. The essence of leadership in human services is conceptualized as ethics. Ethics are the core, the heart of leading and include private duties of service and public duties to the common good. Therefore, personal, professional, and practical ethics are integrated into a multidimensional perspective of ethical leadership in human service organizations. The concepts and principles of transformational leadership are integrated with ethical resources (ethical theories, principles, and philosophy) to provide a framework for leaders in human service organizations. This chapter is an introduction to the essence of ethical leadership. These themes are emphasized and developed further in subsequent chapters of the book. However, if social work leaders think about themselves as the heart, what can be understood as the essence of their moral mission?

Ethics as the Essence

The essence of something is powerful indeed. It is the thesis of this book that ethics must be the essence of leadership if leaders are to accomplish the moral mission of human service delivery systems (see Figure 1.1). Many different disciplines enrich this discussion about essence as an important element or entity. In qualitative research, “essence” is described as arriving at the heart of the matter; the researcher finds what is meaningful about day-to-day experience and promotes it through the research process. Ethical leaders bring forward the essence of ethics in organizations through the identification of central moral values and the development of ethical policies and practices essential to the purpose of the organization. The importance of moral behavior and decisions in the face-to-face interactions of the daily work of all members of the organization is accentuated. The essence of ethical leadership strives toward decisions that are ethical not by accident, but by intention.

Essence also means the “individual, real, or ultimate nature of a thing” (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, 1977, p. 391). The essence of human service organizations is the mission, which defines the purpose of the organization or the moral constitution for leaders and constituents. The mission provides the moral force behind the organization’s function.
Essence is defined as something permanent as contrasted with an accidental element of being (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, 1977, p. 391). When ethics are the essence of the organization, they become a permanent fixture of organizational philosophy and practices. The organizational culture and structures are shaped to promote moral and ethical behavior in an intentional way, not as an afterthought or as an accident. Also, consider “of the essence,” which means “of the utmost importance” (p. 391). Ethical leaders will describe the moral and ethical status of the organization as paramount.

In chemistry, essence is portrayed as an entity. For example, essence is a volatile substance, “...a constituent or derivative... possessing the special qualities... in concentrated form” (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, 1977, p. 391). The process of integrating ethics into organizational practices results in new energy for the system. When people create relationships that are based on working with ethical issues, power is created as well. Ethical and moral issues have a unique power in systems: the power to introduce and promote what ought to be done and the power to change the balance of good and evil.

The essence of ethics has a relationship to leadership, to all constituents in and related to the organization, and to the special responsibilities of professional leaders. First, ethics as the essence of leadership is examined.

The Essence of Ethics for Leaders

Leadership is not value neutral; it is not a mechanized set of tasks and techniques. Leadership conveys the essence of what human beings believe to be important and has

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FIGURE 1.1 Ethics as the Essence of Leadership

Ethics as:

**The heart of the matter**
- Day-to-day experience of leadership
- Identification and promotion of crucial values
- Moral behavior and decisions

**The ultimate nature of things**
- Purpose and mission of the organization
- Moral constitution

**The permanent fixture of organizational philosophy and practices**
- Ethical culture, policies, and structures
- Ethics by intention

**The utmost importance**
- Ethics are paramount.

**A volatile substance with special qualities**
- Creates new energy
- Unique power
the capacity to illuminate the best of who we can be and what we can accomplish. Levy (1988) noted in regard to the essence of ethics that expectations about a leader’s ethics are different from other expectations of leadership. Ethics are distinct from other behavioral expectations due to the leader’s ability to affect people and interests through decisions or omissions that can produce good or harm. He said the following:

Emerson to the contrary notwithstanding, I suggest that the true test of civilization is not so much—as he said—“the kind of [person] man the country turns out,” as the justice and fairness with which people in such strategic positions deal with others even when they don’t have to (p. 23, inclusive language added).

The essence of leadership is ethics. A leader’s ability to make a choice about good or harm is an essential argument of this book.

The special qualities of leadership are the visions, values and moral positions that individuals bring to the role that are capable of transforming the nature of work and the good (or harm) that are produced. Leaders must perceive a comprehensive moral and ethical point of their vision, as well as the organization’s purpose. The point requires reflections about several questions:

- What is valued?
- What is important?
- What is the context?
- What is missing?
- What should be considered good or harmful?
- Who may be impacted?
- In what way?
- What is my obligation?
- To whom?
- What is the obligation of the organization?
- What is my professional obligation?
- What can be developed that promotes moral and ethical behavior?

The approach to this book is to provoke, and to promote, thinking (imagining, creating, questioning, and challenging) about these questions of ethical leadership. Incremental decision frameworks that provide a step-by-step approach to making decisions are helpful, but do not provide the breadth necessary to think beyond particular dilemmas. Because ethical leading is a vision, a role, an activity, and a day-to-day enactment of moral values, policies, and practices, a conceptual framework that can guide the leader is useful. This book is a kind of conceptual framework. However, ethics are not just the business and responsibility of leaders. All constituents must attend to, and feel responsible for, the policies and practices of an
The Essence of Ethics Is for Everybody

Leaders have a profound responsibility for the ethics of their organizations and the ethics of their own decisions, but leaders are also like every other person. Employees, board members, consumers, and others also have this responsibility. Often, a person’s reaction to discussions or topics that involve ethics is one of unfamiliarity; people have a sense that ethics are the concern of philosophers and intellectuals, best considered from “the ivory tower of academia.” Ordinary people do not always perceive themselves as ethics experts. Sometimes, when professionals are unsure, the professional code of ethics becomes the resource for instruction about what to do in a difficult situation. However, codes of ethics can only provide guides and values. Ethics in everyday practice is a subject all can delve into successfully and can find useful in improving the moral and ethical dimensions of work. As Hannah Arendt (a noted Jewish philosopher) said, “Thinking about responsibility can no longer be left to ‘specialists’ as though [it], like higher mathematics, were the monopoly of a specialized discipline” (Arendt, 1978, p. 13). In this postmodern era of rapid change, with profound moral implications attached to those changes, leaders and constituents must embrace ethics together. This book is organized to provide any leader (legitimated or natural) and/or constituent with practical, theoretical, and philosophical strategies to develop ethical leadership. The underlying assumptions of the book are that all constituents have the capacity for moral leadership and that all constituents must commit to the moral responsibility for organizational practices. Further, the leader’s moral and ethical role is to nurture and sustain the involvement of all constituents in the moral and ethical climate of the organization. The content of the book accentuates this responsibility, as well as strategies to do so.

The Essence of Ethics for Professional Leaders

Ethics, as the essence of leadership, is imperative for the professions, and professional leaders. Society today is highly influenced by the involvement of professionals. Even with this substantial involvement, perhaps as a result of it, there has been erosion of trust in professionals on the part of the public. Integrating ethics into leadership, as the heart of the matter, has the potential to help re-create the trust that is necessary for professional services.

All of the professions have acquired new power as specialized expertise and technology is required (Jennings, Callahan, & Wolf, 1987). An increase in power carries a related ethical responsibility. Jennings, Callahan, and Wolf argue that “Professional ethics should express the moral bond linking the professions, the individuals they serve, and the society as a whole (p. 3). Leaders in human service organizations are in a unique and critical role in relation to this responsibility. They are directly responsible for the provision of services and the related ethical obligations to clients, other agencies, and interest groups. However, they are also in a position, as Jennings,
Callahan, and Wolf argue, to enact the public duties of the professions: “the obligations and responsibilities owed in service to the public as a whole” (p. 3). Professional leadership must encompass not only the public duties of the profession, but the private duties as well.

The Dual Responsibility of Social Work: Private and Public Duties

The social work profession is in the unique position of having both private and public duties. Jennings (2001) refers to this position as having a “dual responsibility.” Private duties arise from the professional mandate to serve the best interests of the client in private and public settings. Most of the private duties arise through the relationships between providers and consumers of service. The relationships are formed in the process of providing services. Human service organizations, by their nature, are based on relationships with consumers (see Chapter 2 for further discussion). For example, in public settings, case workers who serve clients in social welfare agencies, clinicians who provide therapeutic relationships with consumers in mental health agencies, and school social workers who develop relationships with children and families have private duties. Private duties also occur through relationships in private practice settings and private for-profit organizations. The professional obligations to the best interests of the client are not deterred or weakened by the nature of the setting. Administrators and managers in leadership positions also have private duties to clients through the ethical responsibility for advocacy for resources to meet client needs (NASW, 1996; Reamer, 1998). The advocacy for resources enhances the ability to the organization to provide the best possibility of meeting clients’ needs. Client needs are also affected by the expertise of the provider. Thus, the administrator is also responsible for allocating and structuring the resources necessary for supervision and training of providers who are involved in direct services with clients (NASW, 1996; Reamer, 1998).

The public duties of professionals are related to the roles and responsibilities of contributing to the common good for society. For example, creating and maintaining service delivery systems through administrative and managerial roles; contributing to policy development and analysis in regard to social problems and solutions; strengthening community capacity through organizing, development, and advocacy are contributions to the common good. This dual role contributes to some unique issues related to ethics and leadership. The discussion that follows explores more specifically the dual responsibilities of social work.

Professional Ethics of Service

The moral authority of the social work profession provides the foundation for ethical leadership. The basis for the “grounding” of professional ethics is a professional mandate for an ethic of service. Professionals “profess” or “declare publicly” to serve per-
sons who are seeking a particular good. Because this is a public promise “. . . once made the pledge belongs to the public” (Koehn, 1994, p. 64). The professionals’ declaration to serve transforms their work from a career to a calling. Professionals place the best interests of the client over and above their personal self-interest or the interests of other stakeholders.

Professionals must be trustworthy in order to have moral authority. The trustworthiness of a professional is based on having the best interests of clients at heart, which translates into real action, not just rhetoric, on the behalf of clients. In order to be trustworthy, the professional must be competent (have the required knowledge, skill, expertise, and so forth) to provide the needed service or take the required action. Further, the service should be rendered according to the principles and guidelines put forward in the professional code of ethics. The ethical mandate, then, for social workers and other professions with private duties (for example, medicine, psychology, or nursing) is to be competent in their occupational duty, serve according to a professional code of ethics, and ensure that service delivered and agency practices are in the best interests of the consumers of service.

**Public Duties of the Professions**

Professions also have a public duty to society. Professionals act as the public custodian, nurturing and interpreting the basic values of society. Values, such as social justice, access to health care, civil liberties, fairness in the distribution of benefits and burdens, economic considerations, and so forth are examples of the moral issues that are promulgated or shaped through professional human services. Professionals translate these values into “. . . concrete institutional forms and modes of social practice” (Jennings, Callahan, & Wolf, 1987). The public duties of a profession are less developed in professional codes of ethics, and the private duties to clients continue to receive more emphasis in professional codes of ethics, education and scholarship about ethics.

The social work code of ethics does include standards in regard to ethical responsibilities to the broader society (NASW, 1996). The code is concerned with “. . . issues related to the general welfare of society, promoting public participation in shaping social policies and institutions, social workers’ involvement in public emergencies, and social workers’ involvement in social and political action” (Reamer, 1998, p. 247). The revised code is explicit about political action in regard to the improvement of social conditions to meet basic human needs and to promote social justice. It also accentuates the importance of maintaining the “fundamental commitment to serving those who are most at risk” (p. 254). To fulfill this obligation, social work leaders must understand the processes of oppression, injustice, and exploitation and challenge those processes within organizations and in the larger community.

*The ethical is political.* Leaders in human services are required to take a political position about their basis for practice again and again. To not take a position is, in fact, a position: agreement with the status quo. Rhodes (1986, p. 14), in a critique of the previous code, notes that social work takes an “odd ethical stand.” She argues that the code does acknowledge that ethical choices are made in the context of a larger polit-
ical framework, but "remains silent" about what political or social or economic foundation should be the basis for practice.

Fisher and Karger (1997) do take a position about social work and the professions’ position in relation to politics. They argue that the government has retreated from progressive social policy and social responsibility and that advancing the public good requires a stronger government because the "... state is the only institution that has the resources necessary to rebuild America’s neglected social and public infrastructure" (p. 177). The public good, according to Fisher and Karger, “is incompatible with large disparities in wealth and power, nor can it coexist with discrimination of any kind. Public life is the arena for addressing and struggling over these inequities and inequalities, and the public sector is an important part of public life” (p. 178). In that vein, the public life can be impacted by leadership and constituents in organizations who “redesign institutions” and “rethink strategies” for changing them. A focus on increased interaction among diverse groups and increased participation of constituents at all levels helps to promote the identification of issues necessary for social change and enhances the capacities of people to engage and participate in political action and public life.

Jennings, Callahan, and Wolf (1987) argue that the rapid rate of change in institutional settings and arrangements, where most professionals practice, brings forward an acute need to clarify the ethical obligations of professionals in relation to public duties. Professionals in leadership positions convey messages about the profession’s public duties through their actions and decisions in the public arena. The attention invested in examining the ethical obligations related to public duty is part of the responsibility of ethical leadership.

The duty to make the invisible visible. Leaders in human service organizations have a duty to “... make the invisible visible, to show the underside of a system that otherwise seems to be functioning adequately” (Jennings, Callahan, & Wolf, 1987, p. 9). This duty to the public interest provides accurate information to policymakers, citizens, and other interested parties about the state of our social welfare and human service system. In the process, values of social justice, self-determination, and altruism are asserted into the public dialogue. This duty can only be enacted through effective relationships and ethical organizational structures. A leader’s ability to create and maintain communication processes with direct service workers; consumers of services; and social, political, and economic representatives in the community becomes the highway for “making the invisible visible” to society. An example of making the invisible visible is a team leader who described his work as ongoing needs assessment. He tracks and documents the unmet service needs of mental health consumers. He reports the results periodically to upper level administrators, consumer advocates, and political figures, including board members for their use in planning, policymaking, and so forth. He provides the upper echelon with real life examples of the experience of consumers—that of deprivation as well as the successes that result from helpful service strategies. This theme—making the invisible visible—is a repeated theme in this book. Bringing forward moral and ethical issues for comment and dialogue, the activity of feedback, is a critical activity at all levels of leadership.
**Clarity of moral vision.** One of the trends in regard to public duties is what Jennings, Callahan, and Wolf (1987) refer to as the “professionalization of leadership” (p. 4). Leadership requires special expertise and technical skills in order to cope with the complex and multidimensional problems of organizations, but note the following:

Professionalism should be more than technical expertise, and leadership ultimately requires more than a technical or instrumental perspective. Many of our society’s most pressing problems are fundamentally moral problems. They raise questions about the ends and values our institutions should serve, and about the justifiable means to achieve those ends. Hence leadership requires clarity of moral vision as well as specialized expertise. In a society marked by the widespread professionalization of leadership, the professions must be attentive to their emerging public roles and responsibilities (p. 4).

Expertise, then, is not enough. Professional leaders have a moral responsibility to contribute to the public good through their expertise and technical knowledge. The public duties of a professional leader are tied to one’s professional mission, the organizational mission, and the public roles and responsibilities. All have ethical implications.

Professional ethics has tended to focus on services to clients, with some attention to public policy and government. An additional perspective, “practical ethics,” interjects the institutional context into ethics and leadership in human service organizations.

**Practical Ethics**

Practical ethics is an approach that has been developing over many years, initially at the Hastings Center and Kennedy Institute at Georgetown University in response to the complex issues in the field of bioethics. Practical ethics is also articulated by scholars from the Program in Ethics and the Professions at Harvard (Thompson, 1999). Practical ethics has three particular characteristics. It seeks to bridge theory and practice, has as its focus the institutional context, and asks political questions. First, practical ethics is a linking discipline. Although moral and political philosophy are essential to understanding professional and applied ethics, the traditional theories and principles are not enough to resolve complex ethical dilemmas. Also, moral reasoning requires additional elements for the practical resolution of ethical conflicts: the development of moral perception and moral character. Moral perception is “. . . the ability to recognize an ethical issue in a complex set of circumstances.” Moral character is “. . . the disposition to live ethically in a coherent way over time” (Thompson, 1999, p. 1). Moral character and moral perception are discussed extensively in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.
Practical ethics draws on a variety of disciplines and forms of knowledge to shape a rich conceptualization of moral life. Practical ethics includes professional codes of ethics, but does so within the parameters of the broader social context of ethical conflicts. From this approach, there is a component of critique: examining the ways that codes of ethics reinforce “parochial and technical conceptions of professional life” (Thompson, 1999, p. 2). The goal of practical ethics is to uncover and promote the primary moral assumptions and values of a profession that are the foundation of its mission.

Second, practical ethics is directed toward the intermediate associations of society, the institutions that mediate between the relationships among individuals and the larger structures of society. This focus can attend to the organizational rules, policies, and practices that have ethical implications, for example, allocation of resources in agencies, rights of employees and clients, and so forth. Practical ethics pays attention to the “moral life” that resides within the structures of society, including the roles within institutions, and the relationship of those roles to the organizations in which they are situated. Subsequently, this approach is congruent with the ideas developed in Part III. People, their roles, and relationships reside within the bureaucratic structures of human services. The structures, culture, and climates of those institutions affect their moral life and moral agency. Ethical leadership, then, must be concerned with shaping ethical cultures and structures within the organization.

Finally, practical ethics has a political nature. There is a focus on the distribution of power and authority and the question “Who should decide?” in relation to particular ethical dilemmas. The use and abuse of power is a critical element in the ethics of leadership (Manning, 1990). The right decision and the right to make the decision confront leaders in relation to the differences and disagreements among constituents (employees, consumers, funders, and community citizens) in ethical conflicts (see Chapter 4). Leaders must evaluate their use of power, as well as the level of participation for other constituents in the organization or served by the organization.

The political nature of practical ethics also addresses the issue of accountability of the professions in relation to the public good. Thompson (1999) argues, “The pressing challenge for the future is to forge, in principle and in practice, a union of the traditional ideal of the autonomous profession (preserving the ethics of service) and the modern demand for accountability (acknowledging an ethics of responsibility)” (p. 4). This union is especially salient for leaders responsible for multiple constituencies and challenged by multidimensional ethical issues. They are professionals, working with other professional and occupational groups within the culture and structure of an organization, who are responsible for a moral vision that translates into concrete contributions to the public good. This responsibility requires an understanding and format for ethical complexity. Leaders, in order to be ethically responsible, must have a framework that captures multiple dimensions.

The Dimensions of Ethical Leadership

It is apparent from the preceding discussion that ethical leadership in human services is multidimensional. Leaders are responsible for integrating various dimensions of
ethics and morality through their leadership. A multidimensional framework provides leaders with a flexible, dynamic approach to recognize and resolve the ethical dilemmas of leadership in human services, develop ethical cultures and ethical systems in organizations, and shape a moral vision and mission that contributes to the public good. Dimensions such as a) the personal and professional morality of the leader(s), b) with a theoretical approach to leadership—*transformational leadership*—that incorporates ethics, values, and morality, c) informed by ethical resources and models, d) practicing in ethical organizations, culture, structures and policies, with e) social responsibility to society are necessary. These five dimensions are discussed and integrated throughout Parts I, II, and III.

The following defined and described dimensions (Figure 1.2) are component parts of a larger whole and function similar to social systems theory, that is, the dimensions are distinct, separate elements and, at the same time, interrelate as part of

![Multidimensional Ethical Framework for Leadership](image)

**FIGURE 1.2 Multidimensional Ethical Framework for Leadership**
the whole. The linkages are through the activities, behaviors, and moral vision of the leader and constituents. They operate through a dynamic process that is always in flux and change. A change in one dimension affects every other dimension. All of the dimensions intersect; thus, each dimension influences and is influenced by every other dimension. The patterns of interaction that develop between and among the various dimensions provide energy to sustain the ethical system.

Leadership is the core of the system. The leadership circle consists of the identified, formal leader(s) in an organization and the natural, informal leaders who develop and step forward in delegated or spontaneous ways. Even though leadership is situated in the center of the dimensions, opportunity exists for all constituents to shape and change the ethical and moral nature of the system through the informal nature of leadership by commenting, offering feedback, supporting or resisting particular practices, and so forth.

The whole—the multidimensional ethical system—is made up of its component parts. If one part does not receive adequate attention, an ethical void exists that affects the other dimensions. For example, leaders can be conscientious and ethical in their own practices, but, if the structures and processes of the organization contribute to an immoral or unethical culture, consumers of services, employees, and the public could be impacted negatively. For example, “Some organizations have a set of beliefs and/or way of doing things that can result in managers resorting to ethically dubious tactics simply to get the job done” (Toffler, 1986, p. 26). The culture of the organization negatively impacts behaviors. The social responsibility of the organization is then jeopardized. However, the thesis of this multidimensional approach is that ethical leadership can make a difference. It begins with the leader, the ethical starting point, the central dimension.

Leadership: The Ethical Starting Point

Leaders are individuals with their own personal morality and ethical starting points. They bring to the role the values and beliefs that make up their personal socialization and moral life. This personal worldview provides a lens for how they perceive moral and ethical issues. A leader’s level of self-awareness in regard to personal morality has a profound influence on the moral and ethical considerations of that leadership role. A person’s place in his/her own moral, life, and career development affects the reasoning process about ethical issues. Moral development and moral sensitivity make a difference in whether a moral or ethical issue is identified. Gender, age, socialization, and experience have an impact on awareness and the necessary skills to resolve ethical dilemmas (Dobrin, 1989; Gilligan, 1982; Manning, 1990). Also, how a person defines the leadership role (for example, manager or administrator) dictates choice of priorities, perception of influence, and use of time and energy in regard to moral issues (Toffler, 1986). Leaders must continually decide what role they will play, based on their own perceptions and the influence from others. However, as Ritchie (1988, p. 172) states in regard to leadership, “. . . we decide, and in that role decision we explicitly or implicitly define our ethical criteria.”
Social work leaders and other professionals also have a professional starting point: the responsibility to incorporate professional values and purpose into their decision processes. The “point of the profession” must be actualized through the mission and activities of the organization (Green, 1987). A leader’s decisions and actions reflect this. Professional values and the professional code of ethics, then, are relevant to the decision process. In addition, as part of ethical leading, a moral vision to guide leadership and organizational behavior is important. Leaders have a public responsibility to provide leadership with a moral purpose, or leadership that contributes to the public good in society. Therefore, a leadership paradigm is necessary that incorporates moral vision.

Transformational Leadership

The second dimension is a theoretical foundation for leadership. Theory informs practice and helps to explain what to do, why to do it, how to do it, and sometimes when to do it. Ethical leadership requires theory that incorporates ethics as a consideration to particular decisions, but, most important, as a fundamental element of the approach. The theory must have the potential to integrate personal and professional values, a moral direction, and the moral transformation of individuals and organizations. The major paradigms of leadership theories include transactional and transformational approaches. The transformational paradigm incorporates vision, ethics and values, and spirituality as critical components of leadership. Transformational theories support the transformation of followers into leaders and leaders into moral agents (Burns, 1978).

An equitable and effective distribution of power to constituents is important. Empowerment, as well as the ability to use power and influence toward enhancing good and removing harm, is important to ethical organizations. The commitment of constituents to the mission and moral vision is directly related to their participation in the decision processes. Empowerment and participation of constituents are core elements of transformational leadership theory. The theory can help to integrate moral and ethical considerations into the process of leadership. However, further moral and ethical resources are needed to cope with and resolve the complex ethical challenges of human service delivery.

Ethical Resources and Traditions for Decisionmaking

The third dimension is the use of ethical resources. Leaders in human services are challenged by the ethical dilemmas of administration and management on a daily basis. An ethical reasoning process for decisionmaking has to be useful for the routine and the extraordinary. The development of a reasoning process includes an understanding of the ethical resources available and how to apply them to actual decisions. Ethical theories, philosophies, and principles are resources that add depth to understanding the nature of a dilemma and the possible alternatives for a solution.
Leadership is comprised of working with the complexities of human behavior and interconnected organizational systems. The complexity and ambiguity of human service dilemmas require an understanding of the contextual issues that affect the reasoning process. The ability to use ethical resources, not as prescriptions or rules, but to shed light on the nature of the ethical issue, enhances the quality of the decision. Further, learning to understand the point of the matter, which is not always apparent on the surface, contributes to the reasoning process. Finally, developing awareness about what constitutes an ethical issue is critical to making decisions that are ethical by intention. Ethical decisions for leaders take place in organizations, which leads to the fourth dimension.

**Building Ethical Organizations**

This dimension is concerned with the ability and motivation of leaders to shape their organization’s culture and structure, such that the architecture of the organization promotes ethical decisions and behaviors on the part of all employees. Leaders can transform the ethical nature of the workplace through communication processes, group norms and values, organizational culture, and the structural aspects of organization.

The culture of an organization promotes a sense of how to be and what is expected of employees, consumers of services, and others, or “the way we do things around here” (Deal, 1987). The culture sends the message to all employees about the shared values and ethical agreements of the agency. Some of the primary components and proponents of organizational culture include the mission, explicit policy, implicit policy, and the ethical climate (Manning, 1990).

The design or structure of an organization provides both internal and external opportunities and constraints for ethical decisions and behaviors. It is important for leaders to be knowledgeable about the development of structures and cultures that enhance ethical actions and an ethical organization. The nature of bureaucracy is such that isolation, fragmentation, and narrow distribution of information and authority are inherent. It is not uncommon for leaders and constituents to experience a separation from their own morality under the pressure of achieving the organizational ideal (Jackall, 1988; Ladd, 1970; Rhodes, 1986). Creating structures that promote individual responsibility, participation of all constituents, opportunities for ethical communication and action, and formal feedback loops for self-regulation of ethical issues are part of leadership. Ethical organizations, in turn, contribute to the good of society.

**Social Responsibility of Human Service Organizations**

The final dimension for ethical leadership in human services is promoting the social responsibility of the organization, the contribution to the common good of the community in which it is located. Leaders have responsibilities to many constituencies or stakeholders, including consumers of service, employees, board members, fiscal enti-
ties, community citizens, political and social groups, other agencies, and the human service sector of society. The organization has a responsibility beyond fulfilling its mission. Human service organizations have a great capacity to help build community through strengthening the connections of individuals, groups, and environmental systems. The organization has a primary culture shaping responsibility as well. The values that are enacted through the process of delivering services convey a message to society about the nature of social problems and resources connected to the agency’s mission. Ethical leadership includes an attention to this responsibility to the public good.

A multidimensional approach to ethics in leadership goes beyond analyzing particular dilemmas or developing an ethical framework for decisions. This approach attempts to capture the essence of ethics in leadership, or leadership that has an ethical influence across all systems, where ethics are considered an integral part of every decision. Every individual in an organization, through ethical leadership, has both a responsibility and a contribution to make toward ethical leading. This is the essence of leadership; this is the “heart of the matter.”

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the elements of ethical leadership. Ethics as the essence of leadership opened the chapter. Professional leaders have an ethical responsibility toward service as well as public responsibilities to society. The integration of practical ethics was presented as a conceptualization that provides a useful, relevant perspective to the ethics of leadership in organizations. A multidimensional framework for ethical leadership was presented as a needed comprehensive approach to ethical leadership. This framework embodies all of the topics included in the book; the dimensions described in this first chapter are developed more specifically throughout. Leadership, for purposes of this book, is specifically related to leadership of human service organizations. The next chapter introduces the reader to the terrain of human service organizations.

Questions and Applications

1. Conceptualize the “essence” of ethics in regard to your leadership:
   - How do ethics integrate into your day-to-day experience?
   - As a leader, what ethical premises would you want to represent as permanent fixtures of your leadership?
   - How would you use ethics as an “essence” to revitalize your organization?

2. Think about the private and public duties discussed in this chapter. Identify one or two examples of the duty to serve and delineate the barriers that negatively impact service to clients in your organization.

3. Think of an example of an “invisible” condition of your organization’s service system that should be made public in order to improve social service delivery and/or social
policy. What relationships are currently developed or needed that would strengthen
the opportunities to make this condition visible?

4. Think critically about the multidimensional approach to ethical leadership.
   ■ What areas are your strengths?
   ■ What areas need additional knowledge, skills, or understanding?
   ■ What is missing from the framework that would enhance the moral and ethical func-
     tions of leadership?