

Fall 2006

# Georgia Elementary Principals' Perceptions of their Ethical Philosophy, Formal Leadership Preparation in Ethics, and Actions Related to the Development and Maintenance of an Ethical School

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GEORGIA ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ETHICAL  
PHILOSOPHY, FORMAL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION IN ETHICS,  
AND ACTIONS RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND  
MAINTENANCE OF AN ETHICAL SCHOOL

by

LAURA MARTINEZ HUGHES

(Under the Direction of James Burnham)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study was to determine elementary principals' perceptions of their ethical philosophy, formal leadership preparation in graduate school in the area of ethics, and actions needed for the development and maintenance of an ethical school. The persons most appropriate to provide the answers to the research questions included the population of elementary principals. A random sample of 915 elementary principals in Georgia was identified by listings on the Georgia Department of Education Website or by each county's web page.

A descriptive, quantitative methodology was used, with a qualitative component of open-ended questions in order to bring out detailed feedback from the respondents. Instrumentation for this study was in the form of a survey designed by the researcher and based on the review of literature. The instrument was validated by nine experts in the field of ethics. These experts were employed by or were recently retired from the Professional Standards Commission or published authors in the field of ethical research. The instrument was pilot tested

with eight volunteer principals from Richmond County. The survey was found to be reliable by using Cronbach's alpha at the .79 level. The survey contained 26 Likert style statements, with choices ranging from strongly agree, being given one point, to strongly disagree, being given five points. Five open-ended questions were added in order to gain more specific feedback from respondents. In total, 169 surveys were completed, with a return rate of 18.5%. This return rate limited the ability of the researcher to generalize to the entire population.

Findings from this researcher's study showed that principals understand the importance of their responsibility to model ethical values and behaviors. Many principals felt their ethical leadership preparation in graduate school was not sufficient, even though they agreed that their programs emphasized ethics, approached education as an ethical endeavor, and provided time for ethical case studies. Although principals felt a strong personal commitment to ethics, many did not have a formal ethical training program in place in their school.

**INDEX WORDS:** Ethics, Moral, Ethical Leadership, Ethical School, Ethical Traits, Ethical Philosophy, Principals' Perceptions, Positive Ethical Climate, Elementary Level, Georgia, Dissertation

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2006

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Electronic Version Approved:  
December 2006

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Dr. Judith Jones Kent, for her unconditional love and support throughout my life. She has instilled a love for learning in me, as well as inspired me to follow her lead in reaching the pinnacle of education by earning my doctorate. Her sage advice has served me well.

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my dear aunt, Alice Sweeney Monroe, who is 89 years young. Her steadfast faith in Jesus Christ has been an inspiration to our entire family. She has lived her faith every minute of her life. In giving me advice, she would always say, "Every time you start to write your dissertation, ask God to be with you, and make your words pleasing to him." Her prayers for me in this endeavor have been offered up to God every day since its inception.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the following persons whose support has been unwavering:

To my husband, Michael Rice Hughes, for believing in my ability to tackle the entire doctoral process. This dissertation would not have been possible without him. His motivation was inspirational, and effective in keeping me going.

To my children, Megan Lynn Clark, Logan James Hughes, and Sarah Madison Hughes, for their understanding and flexibility, always reminding me by their presence how important and wonderful children are.

To my family, including my father, Antonio Martinez, Jr., for doing a wonderful job of keeping our family connected; my siblings, Thomas Neilson, Michael Antonio, and Linda Martinez; and Mom and Dad Hughes (a.k.a. James St. John and Mary Kathleen Sweeney Hughes) for keeping abreast of my progress and giving me support.

To Dr. James Burnham, for his patience and guidance as my committee chairperson and mentor. For my entire doctoral journey, he had the faith in my ability to complete the process. I am indebted to him for his untiring support as I wrestled to work my passion into a conceivable dissertation topic.

To Dr. Cordelia Zinskie, for her solid guidance in sound methodology, as well as her thorough ability to provide quality and detailed comments which bettered my dissertation.



To Dr. Mary Jackson, who served on my committee, and for sharing the passion for ethics, as well as a keen understanding for the need of ethical leadership.

To Dr. Walter Polka, who served on my committee, and was my first glimpse into the world of the doctoral program. As he led my cohort through expectations of the program, his excitement and dedication was infectious. He said he would be there to watch us walk across that stage at graduation, and I believed him with all my heart.

To my staff and friends at Dearing Elementary, for being patient with me and showing me moral support and understanding. Your celebration of my accomplishment touched my heart and will always be remembered.

To Suzanne Arrington, for her loyalty and spirit. Her sincerity and friendship have been unexpected gifts from God. None other would read my dissertation with such zest and interest.

To Dr. Mark Petersen, the best superintendent any school system could hope to have. His leadership and advice have been perfectly timed and perfectly delivered. He has been a role model for ethical leadership, and I value his living example.

To my Cohort, XIA, with whom I will always have a bond. Dr. Mychele Rhodes has been a confidant, mentor, and friend, as well as the pioneer of our group. Dr. William Tankersley has been a binding force, as well as trusted advisor.

To my friends, the Dawsons, Daniels, Chomas, and Wanda Marsh, for their priceless life long friendship, caring, and help in any way that was needed.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Moral courage isn't an esoteric branch of philosophy; it's a practical necessity for modern life. Its presence or absence explains some of the world's greatest successes and failures. Over time, the examples will change, yet the willingness to take tough stands for right in the face of danger will remain, as it has always been, the pinnacle of ethical action (Kidder, 2005, p. vii).

#### The Principalship

Over time, the position of principal has evolved into a multifaceted set of responsibilities. One aspect which has not changed is the importance of principals leading by example (Schminke, Ambrose, & Neubaum, 2005; Forster, 1998). Principals set the tone and mold the climate of their schools to their expectations and visions (May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003; Cohen & Cohen, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1996). Principals are entrusted with the education and care of their students, and must pay special attention to the ethical atmosphere of the school (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005), especially in the formative years of elementary students (Lake, 2004; Lickona, 1997, 1991). In order to appreciate the evolution of the role of the principal, the history of the position in the field of education must be explored.

#### *History of the Principalship*

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, administrators were largely supervisors of curriculum, where they “discovered relevant truths.” At that time, administrators were similar



to clergymen (Murphy, 1998). The position of principal originated in the 1920's out of a need to branch off some of the responsibilities of the superintendent (Murphy, 1998; Grogan & Andrews, 2002). From the earliest times, principals were held to a different standard than were others working in a school. The position reflected the values of the local community, and the main focus of the principal was to connect schools and families (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). In the 1930's, as school populations became larger, principals were seen as "passive, reactive managers" (Richardson & Lane, 1996, p. 290) or scientific managers concerned with efficiency (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Siegrist, 1999; Murphy, 1998).

The focus of the principalship turned to the importance of education in a democratic society in the 1940's and the 1950's. At the same time attention turned to the styles of principals, and identifying effective leadership traits became important (Stodgill, 1948). By the 1950's and the 1960's, academic excellence was the major concern, due to the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). Behaviorally based descriptions were the focus of Likert (1958), while Etzioni (1961) examined the influence of the principal's use of power over others in the field.

The 1970's brought about a change in the attention of principals from academics to social issues and problems, such as racial tensions, student drug use, and teen pregnancy. Accountability became dominant in the 1980's, with the release of the 1983 report, "A Nation at Risk," by the National Commission on Excellence. Accountability is still important today with the national requirements

imposed from the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 relating to performance standards and high stakes testing (Grogan & Andrews, 2002).

Beginning in the 1980's, the Effective Schools Movement espoused that "All children can learn" (Taylor, 2002). Attention, in part, turned to the role of the principal as the instructional leader of a school. In "The Correlates of Effective Schools: The First and Second Generation," Lezotte (1991) highlighted the importance of instructional leadership from the principal as a leader of leaders. Grogan and Andrews (2002) noted major increases in student achievement when "These instructional leaders built structures of relationships in schools so that the resulting human energy in the school enhanced student performance" (p. 239). Sergiovanni (1987) advanced the field of research in leadership in the 1980's with his introduction of mindscapes of a principal to focus on how schools work. He went on to focus on the principal in his or her stewardship and servanthood, thus expanding the base of authority to include others in the school (1992).

### *The Principalship Today*

Recently, characteristics of transformational leadership (Johnson, Vernon, Harris, & Jang, 2004; Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Sergiovanni, 1996) have gained great attention and praise. Northouse (2004) described leadership as, "An influence process that assists groups of individuals toward goal attainment" (p. 11). The importance of being able to work with people was highlighted by Botha (2004), who found that principals are leaders and managers, whose job is to get things done by working with and through other people.

Attaining desired goals has become more difficult for principals, since they face greater responsibilities than ever before (Dempster & Berry, 2003; King, 2002; Sergiovanni, 1996). They are under more pressures and are involved in more complex ethical contexts as well (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Dempster, Carter, Freakley, & Parry, 2004). Greenfield (1993) claimed, "Considerations of moral value and obligation are embedded in nearly every administrative action and decision, and in many if not all organizational and educational policies and procedures" (p. 280). Etzioni (1993) highlighted the need for leaders to provide for children's character formation in schools when he said, "Unfortunately, millions of American families have weakened to the point where their capacity to provide moral education is gravely impaired. Thus, by default, schools now play a major role, for better or worse, in character formation and moral education" (p. 258).

### Morality and Ethics

Morality and ethics are tightly intertwined, and the terms are often used interchangeably (Pardini, 2004a; Kanungo, 2001; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1992). Cohen and Cohen (1999) wrote that, "Ethics may be defined as the study of morality" (p. 5). Cranston, Ehrich, and Kimber (2003) alluded to a difference in the terms, but stated their choice not to address the issue. A distinction was made by one researcher, however, on a subtle difference; Kidder (2005) defined the term moral as meaning "good, right, or just" (p. 69), and the term ethical as "taking action that accords with the core values of honesty, fairness, respect, responsibility, and

compassion” (p. 70). It is this action, which Kidder referred to as moral courage, which separated those with good intentions and those who were willing to act on those values in the face of adversity.

### *Types of Ethics*

Ethical theory can be broken down into several categories. Researchers in the field of ethics have identified areas of rule ethics, care ethics, and virtue ethics (Cohen & Cohen, 1999). Rule ethics, advanced by Kant, the eighteenth century German philosopher, focused on the utilitarian idea of right versus wrong. Decisions were determined by measuring the amount of pleasure over the amount of pain which the action would create, or the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Care ethics, advanced by both Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1992), centered on empathy and compassion for others. Decisions were based on feelings and a need for building relationships, rather than on a rule. Virtue ethics was advanced by Aristotle, the Greek philosopher. This field combined reason and emotion (Cranston et al., 2003; Cohen & Cohen, 1999).

### *Central Themes*

Despite the differences in focus of ethical categories, central themes have emerged in the literature. Integrity has been a core central theme in ethical research (Kidder, 2005; Miller, 2004; Cameron, 2003; Mc Gahey, 2003; Campbell, 2001; Becker, 1998). It is defined by Northouse (2004) as,

...the quality of honesty and trustworthiness. Individuals who adhere to a strong set of principles and take responsibility for their actions are exhibiting integrity. Leaders with integrity inspire confidence in others

because they can be trusted to do what they say they are going to do.

They are loyal, dependable, and not deceptive. Basically, integrity makes a leader believable and worthy of our trust (p. 20).

Integrity was closely linked to the characteristic of trust in the literature of others, as well (Chaudhuri, Khan, Lakshmiratan, Py, & Shah, 2003; Chamberlin, 2000). Rakip (2003) researched eight people in public positions who were considered to be highly trustworthy to determine the driving forces behind their decision making. He found personal integrity to be the most significant determinant in moral decisions. Moorehouse (2002) surveyed members from four types of organizations using three rounds of questionnaires and found that integrity was the most important ethical leadership characteristic, and leading by example and developing an atmosphere of trust as the most common traits of a successful leader.

A clear meaning of trust defined in the research would be beneficial. Researchers, however, have not come to consensus on the meaning of trust (Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002/2003; Courtney, 1998). Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) have defined trust as, "An individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (p. 184). Important attributes of trustworthiness have been presented in the literature. Courtney (1998) identified credibility, fairness, openness, and respectfulness as being essential prerequisites.

Many studies in the literature related to trust were presented with a positive moral emphasis as the foundation (Pardini, 2004b; Rakip, 2003; Webley, 2003; Gilbert & Tang, 1998). In a study of Ohio high schools, an organizational climate which was open and healthy was linked to trust in the principal, colleagues, parents, and the community (Hoy et al., 2002/2003). Organizational trust and climate were the focus of Gilbert and Tang (1998) and Korthuis-Smith (2002). Chamberlin (2000), however, linked trustworthiness to immediacy behaviors such as smiling, face to face orientation, removal of physical barriers, vocal variations, and gestures. This study focused on the outward behaviors of individuals and was devoid of any attention to any ethical influence or underlying principles.

#### Ethical and Moral Implications for Educators

The purpose of education is itself a moral endeavor (Butcher, 1997). Sergiovanni (1996) expressed this importance when he said, "Everything that happens in the schoolhouse has moral overtones that are virtually unmatched by other institutions in our society" (p. xii). Professional education, however, has lagged behind medicine, counseling, and law in demanding ethical conduct from its members (Grant, 2004; Campbell, 2000; Lovat, 1998). Many states have no formal code of ethics for educators. Yet as leaders of schools, principals are expected to make the right decisions. Often, they have found themselves in ethical dilemmas which are not clear cases of right and wrong, but situations which force a choice between competing sets of principles (Cranston et al., 2003; Greenfield, 1993).

### *Codes and Standards*

As education moved into an age of accountability, attention was focused in some states on specific codes of behavior and standards for educators. Many state codes were punitive in nature, focusing on behaviors in which educators should not engage. In the state of Georgia, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission has devised a professional Code of Ethics which “serves as a guide to ethical conduct” (p. 1) to which educators are bound. Three of the ten standards, public funds and property, confidential information, and professional conduct, are worded in a positive ethical light. Seven of the remaining ten standards, however, are named for unethical behaviors: criminal acts, abuse of students, alcohol or drugs, misrepresentation or falsification, improper remunerative conduct, abandonment of contract, and failure to make a required report. All of the standards have descriptors which list unethical conduct (The Code of Ethics for Education, 2004).

### *Beyond Codes to Ethical Awareness*

Some researchers felt codes of ethics, when written correctly, could be a positive asset to a school system (Brandl & Maguire, 2002; Mahoney, 1999; Forster, 1998). Other researchers felt that merely having documentation of ethical codes was not enough, and that educators should be reaching for a higher ethical standard (Pardini, 2004b; Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 2004; Webley, 2003; Campbell, 2001; Cohen & Cohen, 1999). The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) claimed a code of ethics should be “idealistic and at the same time practical” (AASA.org) but has not updated their Code of Ethics

since 1981 (AASA's Statement of Ethics for School Administrators, 2005). Rubenstein (2004) claimed, "Today, there is no generally accepted or even widely disseminated theory of ethical leadership" (p.1).

In 1996, the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) adopted "Standards for School Leaders" which they felt all educators should follow. They identified Standard Five as, "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner" (p. 18).

An awareness of ethics must be present in a school to encourage an ethical culture (Starratt, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1996). School personnel must accept the responsibility for their own actions, as well as their actions as a group (Michie & Gooty, 2005; Northouse, 2004; Robbins & Alvy, 2004). Opportunities to reflect and internalize should be provided (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; May et al., 2003; Weaver, Trevino, & Cochran, 1999; Forster, 1998). Zubay and Soltis (2005) claimed that they "became convinced that ethical awareness, ethical reasoning, and ethical behavior needed to become part of the fabric of our school's life" (p. 9).

The principal's leadership is essential to an ethical awareness (Schminke et al., 2005; Fulmer, 2004; Aronson, 2001; Weaver et al., 1999). Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) based the foundation of ethical school leadership on three pillars:

(1) moral character of the leader, (2) ethical values embedded in the leader's vision articulation, and program which followers either embrace or



reject, and (3) the morality of the processes of social ethical choice and action that leaders and followers engage in and collectively pursue (p. 181).

Principals at the elementary level must have an awareness of the importance of the moral developmental stages of children in their schools. Although researchers disagree as to the exact age group most critical to moral development, theorists including Gezell, Piaget, Vygotsky, Kohlberg, and Erikson proposed the preschool and elementary years as a crucial time in the ethical development of children (as cited in Miazga, 2000). When researchers questioned leaders about their perceptions of their own ethical abilities, the leaders corroborated this impressionable time by identifying early influencers and role models as influential in shaping their own behaviors (Lucas, 2000; Trevino, Weaver, Gibson, & Toffler, 1999).

#### *Schools as Moral Communities*

Many researchers have reinforced the position of an ethical focus by claiming that schools should become a moral community, with the principal as the leader (Starratt, 2005; Mc Gahey, 2003; Forster, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1996, 1994, 1992). Extensive research has identified particular traits which make leaders successful (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003; Lord, 2000; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996). From this research, several descriptors have emerged. Common to trait theory were the characteristics of intelligence, self confidence, determination, sociability, and integrity (Northouse, 2004). Similarly, Gilbert and Tang (1998) found organizational trust and commitment to be of importance.

Mc Gahey (2003) conducted a qualitative study of school leaders. In one area of the study she asked the school leaders to rank attributes which they felt were most significant in fostering a moral community. Attributes of being prophetic, challenging, empathetic, intuitive, being willing to suspend judgment, and being willing to communicate followed integrity in importance. She found that integrity ranked as the most important attribute of an ethical leader.

Taking the concept of the moral community one step further, some researchers have claimed that it is the obligation of principals to discuss and study moral and ethical situations in order to raise the awareness and behavior levels of their faculties and staff (Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Tchannen-Moran, 2004; Strike et al., 2004; Campbell, 2001; Duffield & McCuen, 2000).

#### *Lack of Ethical Training for Principals*

With this daunting responsibility of creating moral communities, principals are often unprepared, having little background training and preparation in the field of ethics (Pardini, 2004a; Cranston et al., 2003; Greenfield, 1993). Barnett (2004) sought to discover if leadership training programs were effective in preparing leaders to handle ISLLC Standards. He found that graduates of leadership programs were ill equipped with the training needed to carry out the standards. Dempster and Berry (2003) found that 68% of principals they surveyed had no professional development training in ethical decision making. In a study of 552 principals, Dempster et al. (2004) found principals felt they were in ethical situations more complex than in the past. Yet a majority of these principals tended to rely only on teachers (78%) and on other principals (76%) for

consultation in solving these situations. The researchers suggested formal and informal support through leader induction programs as well as expert input to broaden the knowledge base of principals.

### Statement of the Problem

The principal's actions are vital to a school's success. Principals are leaders entrusted with the education and wellbeing of the children in their care. They have a responsibility to take an active role in modeling ethical behavior, and in nurturing an ethical school environment for their students and personnel. This role is especially important in the formative elementary years of students. Principals, however, often have little formal training in relation to ethical development, standards, and behaviors.

Professional education has lagged behind medicine and law in demanding ethical conduct from its members. Many states have no formal code of ethics for educators. However, Georgia's educators are bound by a Code of Ethics. This Code of Ethics is monitored by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC). The focus of the PSC is generally punitive in nature as it relates to issues that are relative to the Code of Ethics.

Researchers' findings related to ethics generally discussed behaviors which were unethical, rather than focusing on behaviors that were ethical. When ethical behaviors were addressed, descriptors included trustworthiness, integrity, honesty, and treating others fairly. The literature was rich in the area of effective leadership practices by principals, but there was little research on the impact of principals' understandings of ethics and the relationship to their behaviors.

Likewise, there was a gap in the literature relating to the possible effects of principals focusing on a moral climate and the impact on faculties and staff.

Therefore, the researcher's purpose was to focus on the perceptions of principals related to their preparation in the field of ethics, their beliefs of ethical philosophy, and their behaviors in terms of the development and maintenance of an ethical elementary school.

### Research Questions

The overarching question for this study was as follows: What are the perceptions of elementary principals in Georgia regarding their role in the development and maintenance of an ethical school? The following sub-questions were also addressed:

1. How prepared is the principal for ethical leadership due to his/her graduate level leadership coursework?
2. What are the ethical beliefs of the principal?
3. What actions does the principal perform to encourage and sustain an ethical climate?
4. What aspects of a positive ethical climate are present in an ethical school?

### Significance of the Study

In the field of education, the major portion of the literature pertaining to ethical behaviors focused on unethical actions and the ramifications of breaking certain ethical codes. Positive attention needs to be focused on leader preparation in the field of ethics and the practice of creating and maintaining an ethical climate. Specifically, a gap existed in the literature relating to principals'

perceptions of their preparation in the field of ethics, their beliefs about ethical philosophy, and their behaviors relating to the development and maintenance of an ethical school, especially in the formative elementary education years.

The researcher's findings may be useful in the field of education. Principals may benefit by reflecting on their own beliefs and behaviors related to the ethical climate of their schools. Central office personnel may benefit by incorporating positive ethical criteria in the selection process of future administrators. Policy makers at the state level may value this study and could use the findings when revising the Code of Ethics for Educators towards a more proactive, positive platform. Collegiate educators may benefit from this study by the incorporation of more stringent studies in the ethics of education in graduate leadership courses.

The researcher is passionate about the topic of ethics. She feels a Code of Ethics that targets unethical behaviors should not be the pinnacle goal in education; the code should be a starting point. High ethical behaviors such as integrity, honesty, and trustworthiness should be studied, expected, celebrated, and rewarded. In the researcher's 24 years of experience in the field of education, she has seen numerous examples of people who were entrusted to nurture, mold, and educate children, but who acted with highly unethical, untrustworthy, self serving behaviors. Principals have an important leadership role. How they interact with their students and personnel is critical to the school's culture and effectiveness. Principals should be a positive ethical example, as well

as a motivator, encouraging trusting behaviors from their students, faculties, and staff.

## Procedure

### *Research Design*

In this study, a descriptive, quantitative methodology was implemented by use of a Likert type survey in order to gain perceptions from the greatest number of participants in a systematic and objective fashion (Creswell, 2003; Nardi, 2003; Glesne, 1999). The survey also included a qualitative aspect of open-ended questions for detailed feedback. This combination of Likert style statements and open-ended questions was used in order to gather breadth and depth of information on this important topic (Patton, 2000). This design was the best way to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2003) relating to the general perceptions of elementary principals concerning their formal training in the field, ethical philosophy, and actions relating to the development and maintenance of their school's ethical climate, and thus, an ethical school.

### *Population*

The persons most able to provide the answers to the research questions included the population of public elementary principals. Research for this study was limited to participants in the state of Georgia. Participants were selected by a random sampling technique (Creswell, 2003; Nardi, 2003) which included 915 elementary principals from the total of 1269 Georgia public elementary schools. Names and email addresses of principals were identified by use of the Georgia State Education Website ([public.doe.k12.ga.us](http://public.doe.k12.ga.us)). Random selection of

participants was aided by use of an online random number generator ([www.randomizer.org/form.htm](http://www.randomizer.org/form.htm)).

### *Data Collection*

Before any data collection took place, the researcher obtained the permission and support of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Georgia Southern University. Once permission was obtained, focus turned to the data collection of the study.

Instrumentation for the study consisted of a survey designed by the researcher to gather feedback of the principals' preparation in the field of ethics, their ethical philosophies, and their actions in the development and maintenance of an ethical school based on the characteristics of positive, ethical climates identified in the literature. Some questions were negatively worded and reverse scored to encourage thoughtful responses. The instrument was examined and validated for content by a panel of nine experts in the field of ethical research. The instrument was pilot tested with eight volunteer principals from the 37 elementary schools in Richmond County, Georgia. The reliability of the instrument was evaluated after pilot feedback was gathered by use of Cronbach's alpha due to the Likert style design of the majority of the survey (Creswell, 2003; Gay & Airasian, 2000). Once complete, the instrument was used to assess the self perceptions of elementary principals in Georgia regarding their ethical philosophy, formal leadership preparation in ethics, and actions related to the development and maintenance of an ethical school.

The researcher used a random sampling technique (Nardi, 2003) to select 915 elementary principals from the total of Georgia public elementary schools (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Random selection was done by use of an online random number generator ([www.randomizer.org/form.htm](http://www.randomizer.org/form.htm)). The researcher chose to use the online survey company, Question Pro ([www.QuestionPro.com](http://www.QuestionPro.com)), to manage the distribution and retrieval of the surveys. This provided a layer of anonymity for the principals, since results were organized by the company and then sent to the researcher. An informed consent letter and the survey were sent via email to the principals' school email accounts. An introductory message explained the relevance of the study and the guidelines for protecting the name and school of each participant.

#### *Data Analysis*

Calculations were performed on the Likert style section and rating of ethical traits section to determine the frequencies, means, and standard deviations for each question (Creswell, 2003; Sprinthall, 2003). The answers to the open-ended questions generated by the participants were examined for common themes relating to ethical philosophy, views on uniqueness of the elementary level, ethical training opportunities, perceptions of specific roles relating to the ethical climate, and visible signs of an ethical school. The data were analyzed, and frequency counts were conducted.

#### *Limitations*

The researcher acknowledged the following limitations in this research study which were beyond her control:



1. Principals may not have been totally forthright or may have a falsely positive or idealistic perception in the survey about their actions relating to the development and maintenance of an ethical climate of their schools.
2. Gathering data through a survey of principals alone may not have identified all characteristics of an ethical school.

#### Delimitations

The researcher acknowledged the following delimitations in the research study which were controlled by the researcher:

1. This study focused only on public elementary schools in Georgia. Results from private and/or religious schools might have yielded a much different outcome, as might have middle and high school levels.
2. Information was gathered only from principals. Feedback gathered from employees in each school might have elicited different information.

#### Definitions

Definitions have been included for clarification purposes (Creswell, 2003). Because of the complex and sensitive nature of the areas of ethics and morality, multiple definitions of some words have been included which point to the nuances and perspectives identified by different sources.

1. Code of Ethics- list of ethical and unethical actions by educators and employees of the state of Georgia which serves as a guide to ethical conduct by which educators are bound.

2. Ethical Climate- “The shared perception of what is ethically correct behavior and how ethical issues should be handled.” (Victor & Cullen, 1987)
3. Ethical Dilemma- “A situation that necessitates a choice between competing sets of principles.” (Cranston et al., 2003)
4. Ethics-
  - A. “The rules or standards governing the conduct of a person or the members of a profession” (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000).
  - B. “The principles of conduct governing an individual or a profession” (Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary of Law, 1996)
  - C. “Motivation based on ideas of right and wrong” (WordNet, 2003)
5. Integrity-
  - A. “The condition of being whole; honest; trustworthy and consistent” (Mc Gahey, 2003)
  - B. “The quality of honesty and trustworthiness, exhibited by individuals who adhere to a strong set of principles and take responsibility for their actions” (Northouse, 2004, p. 20)
4. Morality-
  - A. “The quality of being in accord with standards of right or good conduct” (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000).

B. “Concern with the distinction between good and evil or right and wrong, right or good conduct; motivation based on ideas of right and wrong” (WordNet, 2003).

5. Trust- “An individual’s or group’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open” (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999, p. 184)

### Summary

Throughout history, the role of the principal in schools has fluctuated in direction and focus. One aspect of the position which has not changed is the importance of a firm foundation in morality which is exhibited by ethical behaviors of the principal. These behaviors become the catalyst for a moral and ethical climate of the school.

In analyzing the nuances of an ethical climate, perceptions of the role of principals were examined. The researcher in this study focused on the perceptions of principals relating to their formal leadership preparation in the field of ethics, their ethical philosophy, and their actions in developing and maintaining an ethical climate in their schools.

The descriptive research design in this study resulted in collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. A survey instrument was created by the researcher and targeted a random sample of Georgia public elementary school principals. Participants completed and returned the survey to Question Pro. Data from the Likert style section were analyzed, and responses to the open-ended questions of the survey were coded to identify characteristics and commonalities

which were linked back to the literature and presented in chart and paragraph form.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The review of research and related literature began with the importance of perceptions of leaders. Next, it examined the context and background of ethical theories and identified common values linked to ethical research. With this foundation, the link was drawn to the importance of ethics relating to leadership theories and the ethical practices of principals. Current research studies were examined with a focus on the ethical climates needed in schools.

#### Context/Background

In addressing ethical issues, an understanding of the importance of perceptions and a detailed understanding of the theories behind the field of ethics is beneficial, as well as an awareness of common or universal values which are characteristic of ethical behavior. From this point, a link can be drawn to leadership theory research.

#### *The Importance of Perceptions*

Leadership traits are often an outward sign of the attitudes and perceptions of an individual. Covey (1994) identified the importance of perceptions in his work about paradigms when he wrote, "We must look at the lens through which we see the world, as well as at the world we see, and understand that the lens itself shapes how we interpret the world" (p. 17). Self perceptions are critical in understanding ethical leadership and the creation of a moral climate.

The inner, self perceptions of principals have a great influence on their outward behaviors. Jason (2001) studied principals' self perceptions of influence and the meaning they ascribe to leadership roles. He found that when the principals' vision and actions were perceived by them to influence and improve the school environment, they achieved higher job satisfaction. At times, however, even educators in the same building do not perceive their environment in the same light. For example, Hoy and Tarter (1997) discovered that principals saw their schools in a more positive light than did their teachers.

In a study of California principals' perceptions of effectiveness, Brady (2002) found a positive correlation between the greater number of years a principal was in the position, and an increase in his/her own perception of effectiveness in the role. Overall, the principals felt they were effective and felt satisfied with their performances in the position.

In contrast, Foley (2001) found high school principals' self perceptions to include strengths and weaknesses in relation to their collaborative-based effectiveness. In relation to strengths, principals identified strong interpersonal skills. As a weakness, however, many in the study admitted a lack of understanding relating to knowledge of teaching, teacher training and staff development, and collaborative programming. Many also perceived their conflict resolutions skills as a weakness. When leaders were questioned about their perceptions of their own ethical abilities, researchers found leaders' early influencers and role models as influential in shaping their behaviors (Lucas, 2000; Trevino et al., 1999).

### *Ethical Theory*

Since the time of Plato (427-347 B.C.) and Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), theorists have pondered the field of ethics (as cited in Northouse, 2004). The domains of ethical theories have traditionally fallen into two categories which have focused on an individual's conduct and character. Theories based on conduct covered consequences, or teleological theories, and duty, or deontological theories. Character based theories covered virtues (Northouse, 2004).

Teleology focused on the outcomes of a situation to determine ethical conduct. The outcomes were not without moral commitment, however. According to Helwig, Turiel, and Nucci (1997), Aristotle believed that, "One learned the good by doing the good" (p. 4). According to Husu (2004), Aristotle believed that, "Every person has a telos: A direction that his or her life should take" (p. 125). Husu felt this direction was based on the convictions and intuitions of the individual. This direction could be based on the outcome for the individual or for the greatest good for the greatest number of people (Northouse, 2004). In contrast to this view of teleology, Kidder (2005) claimed that this theory avoided judgment of actions, as long as a positive outcome was achieved.

A second ethical theory was deontology, which was advanced by Kant (as cited in Husu, 2004). It revolved around the concern for rights and obligations of the different parties involved instead of outcomes (Zhu, May, & Avolio, 2004). Moral obligations to do the right thing were common to this theory (Northouse,

2004; Dempster & Berry, 2003). Duty, obligation, and principle were characteristic of deontology (Kidder, 2005; Husu, 2004).

Virtue based ethics focused on the personal characteristics of the individual, which were capable of being cultivated and learned. Virtue ethics have been attributed to Aristotle and his writings in *Nicomachean Ethics* (Encyclopædia Britannica, 1929). Aristotle felt that character could be established by repeatedly performing virtuous acts, and a person's perceptions or intuitions were paramount to this goal (as cited in Cohen & Cohen, 1999; as cited in Null & Milson, 2003). This field was a combination of reason and emotion (Northouse, 2004). According to Cohen and Cohen (1999),

On the one hand, ethics is an affair of reason and rules; on the other, it depends on emotion and experience of particulars. Ethical decision making requires that we act to achieve good results, but it also requires that we act with character and good motive. It involves dedication to principle even in the face of serious risks. Yet it involves knowing when we have gone too far in pressing one principle at the expense of another; it involves knowing when we have attained "the golden mean" between excess and deficiency. It involves balancing competing interests such as truth and honesty against risk of harm to self or to others. It involves drawing a line between self-interest and mere selfish disregard for one's professional responsibilities (p. 25).

Imbedded in the field of virtue ethics was the ethic of care, which has been promoted by Gilligan (1982). The theory revolved around the relationships



between the leader and followers (Kidder, 2005; Dempster & Berry, 2003). Compassion, empathy, and care were prominent characteristics, with strong feministic overtones. The Golden Rule was an example of this theory, encouraging others to put themselves in another's shoes (Kidder, 2005). Regardless of the foundational variety of ethical theories, certain common characteristics have emerged in the literature.

### *Universal Values and Traits*

Although there has not been widespread agreement on a single set of universal values or characteristics, certain descriptors often appeared in the literature (Helwig et al., 1997). Plato identified four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance (as cited in Mendonca, 2001). Aristotle claimed a moral person showed courage, temperance, generosity, self-control, honesty, sociability, modesty, fairness, and justice (as cited in Northouse, 2004). Justice is a characteristic which has been identified in recent literature as well (Michie & Gootie, 2005; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Northouse, 2004; Park & Peterson, 2003; Mendonca, 2001; Lovat, 1998; Campbell, 1997; Helwig et al., 1997).

Recent researchers have identified similar characteristics, with the trait of integrity appearing frequently (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Engelbrecht, van Aswegen, & Theron, 2005; Michie & Gootie, 2005; Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Cameron, 2003; Grisham, 2003; Park & Peterson, 2003; Moorehouse, 2002; Mendonca, 2001; Campbell, 2000; Becker, 1998; Sosik & Dionne, 1997; Yates, 1996). In the study by Engelbrecht et al. (2004), they found that ethical integrity

was an important factor in leadership. They went on to say that leadership skills alone were not sufficient without integrity and ethical behavior.

Some researchers, however, felt that having integrity was not sufficient. Becker (1998) claimed that integrity was misunderstood. He felt researchers were confusing integrity with honesty and conscientiousness. Galford and Drapeau (2003) said, "It takes more than personal integrity to build a trusting, trustworthy organization. It takes skills, smart supporting processes, and unwavering attention on the part of top managers" (p. 89).

Trust was another central theme to the literature (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Michie & Gootie, 2005; Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Engelbrecht et al., 2004; Starratt, 2004; Grisham, 2003; Caldwell, Bischoff, & Karri, 2002; Moorehouse, 2002; Campbell, 2000, 1997; Cohen & Cohen, 1999; Becker, 1998; Maxwell, 1993). Galford and Drapeau (2003) identified three types of trust: strategic, personal, and organizational. Strategic trust related to the feelings employees had that the bosses would make the right strategic decisions. Personal trust was what the employees trusted in their own leaders. Organizational trust was the trust employees had in the company. Jones and George (1998) proposed three states of trust: distrust, conditional trust, and unconditional trust.

Other researchers studied how ethical leadership influenced commitment and decisions of trusted leaders. Zhu et al. (2004) studied how ethical leadership influenced commitment and trust in employees. They devised a theoretical model of authentic ethical leadership which began with the ethical behaviors of the leader impacting his or her psychological empowerment. In turn, followers

trusted in their leader and felt organizational commitment. Rakip (2003) carried out a qualitative study where he interviewed trusted leaders to discover their motivation behind decision making. He found that personal integrity was the final determinant when making decisions. He also linked trusted leaders' moral development to watching the modeling of trusted adults and in turn modeling those morals when they became leaders.

Hoy et al. (2002/2003) examined the relationship of trust among principals, teachers, students, and the school climate in secondary schools. This quantitative study had several significant findings. First, they found that faculty trust was related to a positive school climate. Second, they found that faculty trust in the principal was positively correlated to his/her collegial leadership. Third, they found that the "achievement press" (p. 11), or push for academic excellence, was linked to teacher trust in students.

Other common ethical characteristics identified in the literature included honesty (Michie & Gootie, 2005; Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Northouse, 2004; Grisham, 2003; Mc Gahey, 2003; Park & Peterson, 2003; Moorehouse, 2002; Cohen & Cohen, 1999; Becker, 1998; Campbell, 1997; Helwig, et al., 1997; Sosik & Dionne, 1997), respect (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Northouse, 2004; Zhu et al., 2004; Park & Peterson, 2003; Moir, 2003; Campbell, 2000; Sosik & Dionne, 1997), tolerance (Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Etzioni, 1993), commitment (Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Caldwell et al., 2002; Yates, 1996; Maxwell, 1993), altruism (Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Engelbrecht et al., 2004; Northouse, 2004; Caldwell et al., 2002; Schulman, 2002; Mendonca, 2001; Kanungo & Mendonca,

1996), generosity (Zubay & Soltis, 2005), truth (Caldwell et al., 2002; Mendonca, 2001; Yates, 1998), virtue (Northouse 2004; Cohen & Cohen, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1992), and charity (Zubay & Soltis, 2005).

Park and Peterson (2003) completed extensive research to identify common virtues from the fields of psychology and religion. They identified individual characteristics similar to those mentioned previously. However, they also identified organizational virtues. They noted that organizations had their own unique virtues which became an enduring part of the culture and “contributed to the fulfillment of its members” (p. 38). Their list included virtues from the Roman philosophy of equity, good fortune, justice, patience, providence, and safety. They also listed Confucian virtues such as respecting others, doing what is right, and having rulers who lead by example.

Researchers have identified an abundance of traits which they deemed worthy of an ethical leader. Campbell (2001) claimed that, “A common core of virtues may have to become the ultimate measuring stick for ethical adequacy” (p. 408). Kidder (2005) referred to this as, “A kind of inner moral compass calibrated by a set of core values” (p. viii). Moorehouse (2002) surveyed members of business, education, political, and religious organizations on their perceptions of the most important ethical and leadership traits. Using the Delphi technique of three rounds of questionnaires to gain consensus, his results identified common ethical and leadership characteristics with 90% of the groups in agreement. The top five characteristics of an ethical leader were as follows: integrity, following Biblical principles of behavior, honesty, high moral standard

and firm convictions, and fair/unbiased attitudes. Moorehouse's traits of a successful leader included the following: leads by example, develops an atmosphere of trust, honest/truthful, team builder, and good communicator.

Despite the research on common traits of an ethical leader, questions have been raised in the literature as to whose values should be admired and sought (Null & Milson, 2003; Campbell, 2000, 1997; Etzioni, 1993). Researchers have warned against the relativism and subjectivism of this sensitive topic (Strike et al., 2004; Campbell, 2001; Kohn, 1997). Regardless of this vacillation and the delicateness of the situation, the pursuit of ethical principals should continue. "The specter of ethical subjectivism needs to be dispelled if we as a profession are to have an ethic and be genuinely ethical practitioners" (Soltis, 1986, p. 2).

#### *Ethics and Leadership Theory*

The role of a leader, by definition, should be carried out in an ethical manner (Greenfield, 1993). Leaders are responsible for setting an ethical example (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Schminke et al., 2005; Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Engelbrecht et al., 2004; Rakip, 2003; Moorehouse, 2002). Fulmer (2004) claimed that, "Balanced leaders are ethical, need to be able to span boundaries, listen to diverse constituencies, and be willing to be altered by these interactions" (p. 310).

Recent attention to ethics research has been noted in the business arena. Butcher (1997) showed the depth of a leader's involvement when he said, "Ethical business leadership requires not only harvesting the fruit we can pluck today, not only investing in the small trees and experimental hybrids

that won't yield a thing in this quarter or the next, but also caring for the soil that allows us to produce such a rich harvest in the first place (p. 6).

The Ethics Resource Center has analyzed business trends for the past 11 years. In their National Business Ethics Survey of 2005 of over 3000 American employees, they found that 65% were in organizations which provided resources for advice on ethical issues. These results were an increase from the 2003 results of only 44%. Weaver et al. (1999) did extensive research with Fortune 500 companies to determine the relationship between the scope of companies' formal ethics programs and top management's commitment as well as environmental factors. Through surveys completed by top managers and the review of archival records from registration lists of board ethics meetings and articles from 25 major United States newspapers, they determined several significant relationships. There was a positive correlation with the scope of the ethics program and management's awareness of the United States Sentencing Commission (U.S.S.C.) guidelines, the media attention to companies' ethical failures, the leader's presence at company ethics board meetings, and top management's commitment to ethics. Inclusion of combined environmental influences and top management commitment was also significant. Weaver et al. (1999) suggested businesses pay less attention to the scope of ethics programs and more attention to ensuring that top managers were committed to ethics so that companies could move beyond mere compliance to a higher level of ethical behavior.

Trevino et al. (1999) went on to study Fortune 1000 companies. Their goal was to identify employee perceptions of the most effective and ineffective types of ethical orientations and practices in business. The researchers surveyed 10,000 randomly selected employees from six large American companies. Their results showed that a program with a stronger values-based focus rather than compliance based focus was more effective, although a combination of the two was also seen to be effective as well. Their results showed that a positive ethical culture included ethical leaders who modeled behaviors which were consistent with their words, employees who were treated fairly and rewarded for ethical behavior, and an open policy for discussion of ethical issues was present, where employees were not afraid to come forward to top management with information on ethical improprieties. A total compliance based program where the focus was to protect top management was the most ineffective.

Whether the focus of literature was in the business world or in education, foundational leadership theories were linked to ethics. A positive link was associated with transformational and authentic leadership, with the literature being mixed on transactional leadership. Researchers found transformational leadership to be a highly ethical form of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; McGahey, 2003; Turner, Barling, Epitropaki, Butcher, & Milner, 2003; Luthand & Avolio, 2002; Aronson, 2001; Kanungo, 2001; Mendonca, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1996; Sosik & Dionne, 1997; Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996). Lucas (2000) interviewed nine educational and elected political leaders who were nominated for their moral leadership. She found a link between transformational behaviors

and early influencers of role models and moral fortitude. Burns (1978) summed up transformational leadership when he stated,

Such leadership occurs when one or more personnel engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality...transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspirations of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both (as cited in Robbins & Alvy, 2004, p. 281).

Turner et al. (2003) sought to take the theory of transformational leadership and relate it to the moral reasoning of leaders. Their quantitative study included leaders from three samples of organizations and their subordinates in Canada and the United Kingdom. Their main purpose was to discover if there was a relationship between different types of leaders' moral development and their subordinates' perceptions of their leadership behaviors. The researchers found that the leaders with the highest moral development exhibited transformational leadership styles.

Engelbrecht et al. (2005) researched the relationship between transformational leaders, ethical climate, and ethical values of an organization. In a quantitative study of medium to large organizations, they found a correlation between altruism and transformational leadership. Transformational leadership was also correlated to ethical climate. Regression between ethical climate on transformational leadership and integrity was also significant.



Closely related to transformational leadership is the emerging field of authentic leadership. Avolio and Gardner (2005) differentiated transformational leadership from authentic leaders. They noted,

The key distinction is that authentic leaders are anchored by their own deep sense of self; they know where they stand on important issues, values and beliefs. With that base they stay their course and convey to others, oftentimes through actions, not just words, what they represent in terms of principles, values, and ethics (pp. 329-330).

May et al. (2003) noted that authentic leaders are not necessarily transformational or charismatic; they are often humble. Their goal is not to make leaders of followers, but that may be the result because of their moral example (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Authentic leadership was also based on honest, transparent, and consistent leadership. These leaders could recognize moral dilemmas and have a capacity to see different perspectives. Their behavior was internally motivated and authentic, by exhibiting moral courage to do the right thing (May et al., 2003). Authentic leaders strove to gain a strong relationship between themselves and their followers, and they led by example (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The focus of authentic leaders was with self, for they must act on what they know is ethical (Michie & Gooty, 2005). They “Walk the talk” (May et al., 2003).

The literature was mixed on the focus of transactional leaders. Some researchers found it to be unethical (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996). According to Mendonca (2001), transactional leaders viewed their employees as “programmed

robots and elicit followers' compliance through control strategies that offend against the dignity of the human person" (p. 268), and were thus, unethical. Aronson (2001) conceded that much of the literature found transactional leadership to be unethical, but he found that transactional leaders could indeed be highly ethical. He felt the determination of an ethical leader was not due to his or her style, but to the leader's moral development and value system. He created a model of ethical leadership which showed the ability for transactional and transformational leaders to function in the "Ethical Leadership Zone" (p. 250).

#### Implications for Principals

Principals today face greater responsibilities than ever before (Dempster & Berry, 2003; King, 2002; Sergiovanni, 1996). They are under more pressures and are involved in more complex ethical contexts as well (Dempster et al., 2004). Greenfield (1993) claimed, "Considerations of moral value and obligation are embedded in nearly every administrative action and decision, and in many if not all organizational and educational policies and procedures" (p. 280). Overwhelmingly, researchers have identified the leader's responsibility of being an ethical role model as paramount (Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Engelbrecht et al., 2004; Rakip, 2003; Dickson, Smith, Grojean, & Ehrhart, 2001; Lucas, 2000; Forster, 1998; De Pauw, 1997). Beyond being a positive ethical role model, principals must create a moral community. Sergiovanni (1996) stated, "The ultimate purpose of school leadership is to transform the school into a moral

community. The restoration of integrity and character in school administration depends on this transformation” (p. 45).

### *Principal Preparation in Field of Ethics*

Despite the importance of having leaders who model ethical behavior, the field of education has not adequately prepared principals for this daunting task, nor has it kept up with the ethical needs of the profession (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Campbell, 2000; Lovat, 1998; Greenfield, 1993). Dempster and Berry (2003) expressed this state when they claimed, “The lack of attention paid to the development of school leaders in their approach to ethics and its application to decision-making suggests that they are left to navigate this minefield blindfolded” (p. 457). Greenfield (1993) identified the importance of ethical training for leaders when he wrote,

A failure to provide the opportunity for school administrators to develop such competence constitutes a failure to serve the children we are obliged to serve as public educators. As a profession, educational administration thus has a moral obligation to train prospective administrators to be able to apply the principles, rules, ideals, and virtues associated with the development of ethical schools (p. 285).

Several other researchers identified this gap in the ethical training of educational leaders (Barnett, 2004; Pardini, 2004a; Cranston et al., 2003). Dempster and Berry (2003) found that 68% of principals they surveyed had no professional development training in ethical decision making. Seventy-nine percent felt the

need for staff development on this topic after they moved into the role of principal.

### *Ethical Characteristics, Roles, and Responsibilities*

Although many principals are unprepared in relation to formal ethical training, they must display ethical strengths and character amongst other effective qualities of school leaders. To the benefit of principals, Strike and Ternasky (1993) expressed their opinion that experience was more important than formal training when they wrote, "Character is the product of years, not credit hours" (p. 107).

Certain characteristics surfaced frequently in the research related to ethical responsibilities and behavior of school leaders. Grisham (2003) surveyed superintendents in Georgia to identify the traits they felt were the most sought after values of principal candidates. She found an overwhelming 107 out of 135 superintendents identified integrity/honesty to be the highest set of values. Trustworthiness/dependability/loyalty followed with 21 out of 135. Buskey (2004) interviewed one principal and five teachers. He found ethical leaders to have a strong commitment to a moral imperative. He identified this as "Moral Magnetism."

In an extensive meta-analysis, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) sought to identify the most effective qualities of school leaders. Their analysis covered 69 studies which were conducted from 1978 to 2001, and included an estimated 14,000 teachers and 1,400,000 students in grades kindergarten through 12. From their results, they identified 21 responsibilities and their

correlations to student achievement. Ninth on the list was the responsibility of having ideals and beliefs, which was operationalized by “The extent to which the principal communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling” (p. 42).

Mc Gahey (2003) conducted a qualitative study of school leaders. In order to identify the perceptions of attributes in an ethical leader, she created “The Leadership Attributes Game.” Participants were asked to rank 14 attributes which they felt were most significant in fostering a moral community. At that point, participants could exchange cards with others and tell a story which illustrated the attribute. She found that the attribute of integrity, defined by “the condition of being whole; honest; trustworthy and consistent,” ranked as the most important attribute of an ethical leader. Attributes of being prophetic, challenging, empathetic, intuitive, being willing to suspend judgment, and being willing to communicate followed integrity in importance. From the results of her findings, she linked the role of the ethical leader to that of a shepherd.

In a study by Dempster et al. (2004), they sought to identify the types of ethical decisions public school principals made, the most prevalent resources principals relied on in making these decisions, and their views of the ethical climates of their schools. Their extensive study focused on the quantitative responses from principals in Queensland, Australia, as well as on qualitative interviews from 25 of those principals. The researchers’ results showed that the most important influences on decision-making values were work experience in education (47% saw this as most important), on the job leadership (38%), and

parents of children in the school (34%). In fourth place were professional colleagues (32%). Training did not make the list until the fifth place, with 24% identifying the importance of professional development. They did note in the disaggregated data that as the years of experience in the principalship became larger, the reliance of professional colleagues decreased and the reliance on professional development increased.

When Dempster et al. (2004) asked principals whom they relied upon when making tough ethical decisions, 73% said other principals. Second on the list were senior department officers (55%), and third were senior administration team members (51%). Again, the years of experience became a deciding factor. In principals with less than 5 years of experience, 76% relied on other principals. Principals with more than five years of experience chose senior administration team members for reliance (54%). The results of Dempster et al. (2004) showed that principals went to a variety of individuals for advice and direction. The researchers felt, however, that there was a strong need for increased support in the way of professional development for these principals, both formal and informal.

### *Importance of the Elementary Years*

Principals at the elementary level have a unique responsibility due to the formative nature of moral development of the children at this age. The years between preschool and fifth grade are perhaps the most critical in character development of children (Lake, 2004; Upright, 2002; Lickona, 1997, 1991). Theorists including Piaget, Gesell, Vyotsky, Erikson, Kohlberg, and Gilligan have

focused on children's moral development (Miazga, 2000). Although Piaget (1965) was most famous for his theories of cognitive levels of children, he also focused on children's moral development in his book entitled *The Moral Judgment of the Child*. He felt that all development emerged from actions, and that a child's interactions with the environment shaped his moral development. He identified four stages, which culminated in codification of rules, which originated at approximately nine years of age. Unlike his cognitive levels of development, he felt that it was not possible to limit a person to the classification of one specific stage, and that people used different forms of moral reasoning in different situations (as cited in Carpendale, 2000). Gesell thought children matured based on their genetic individuality, and their advancement could not be rushed. He felt the environment should adapt to the child (as cited in Miazga, 2000).

Other developmental theorists thought that moral development could be encouraged and advanced. Vygotsky advanced the idea that through direct instruction, children could advance into higher levels. Erikson felt that children must have interactions with others and solve crises to move to higher stages (as cited in Miazga, 2000) and that their identities could be "revised and reconstructed throughout life" (Hart, 2005, p. 198). Kohlberg (1975) established set stages of moral development of children, and claimed that children must progress through each stage in order. He proposed a difference between abilities of thinking and acting, and that individuals could think one level higher than their actions. To encourage moral behavior, individuals must be presented with moral dilemmas to solve.

Although Kohlberg's (1975) moral stages of development were noted frequently in the literature, some researchers disagreed with his perspectives. Carpendale (2000) found fault with Kohlberg's supposition that a person's behavior would be consistent with his or her stage of development. Gilligan (1982) criticized Kohlberg's research, based on the fact that it was carried out only on males.

Studies related to moral development in elementary aged children have highlighted this important age. Koenig, Cicchetti, and Rogosch (2004) studied 82 children who were five years old and from low income families to discover differences in moral development. Of these children, some were physically abused or neglected, and others were not maltreated. Even at this early age, the children from the abused group showed more stealing tendencies, and the neglected group showed more cheating behavior compared to the non maltreated group. The researchers also found a significant difference when groups were disaggregated for gender; abused girls showed less guilt than the neglected girls. Gender did not show a significant difference in a study by Zelazo, Helwig, and Lau (1996). They studied 72 children ranging in ages from three to five. They also included 24 undergraduates. The researchers did find significant results relating to the moral abilities of children. Even at three years old, their results identified an early understanding of harm. Older children could reason and judge outcomes of certain events. Al Otaiba (2004) highlighted the need for inclusion of moral elements into early childhood reading instruction, especially with disadvantaged students.



Hart (2005) and his fellow researchers studied the development of a moral identity in children in several different studies. Each study focused on the relationship between the child's environment and his/her actions as he/she grew older. Hart, Atkins, and Fegley (2003, as cited in Hart, 2005) studied 28 samples of three through six year old children. They identified three types of personalities: resilient, characterized by independence, self-confidence, and verbal fluency; over controlled, characterized by shyness, quietness, and anxiety; and under controlled, characterized by impulsivity, stubbornness, and physical activity. Children in the resilient group had the lowest incidence of behavior issues. Under controlled children had the most delinquent behaviors. When these same children reached 15 to 16 years of age, the researchers measured their amount of volunteer community service. The teens that were most resilient as children were the most involved in community service. The researchers linked this to their development of a moral identity.

Hart, Atkins, and Donnelly (in press, as cited in Hart, 2005) went on to study children's neighborhoods in relation to their amount of volunteering. They found that children who lived in poor neighborhoods with an abundance of other children were much less likely to volunteer than those in more affluent neighborhoods. Lastly, even after controlling for economic and environmental factors, they identified a significant positive correlation between the amount of volunteer service as an adolescent and the experience of being active in a club and/or religious institution as a child.

Despite the varying views of developmental theorists in the literature, studies have shown the importance of the early years of children. Elementary principals must have background knowledge in the important formative years of development in order to help children progress morally.

### *Codes and Standards*

In the present age of accountability and highly publicized corporate corruption, codes of ethics have become more commonplace in many fields. In 1991, the United States Sentencing Commission (U.S.S.C.), in response to mass corporate unethical behaviors, instituted a policy whereby companies who were found guilty of improprieties would be subject to lessened fines if they had a formal ethics program in place. Requirements included having a full time ethics officer, distributing a formal code of ethics to each employee, holding training programs, and instituting a dedicated phone number for reporting unethical behaviors. This compliance based focus has not been the most effective way to promote ethical behavior (Trevino et al., 1999).

The literature was mixed regarding the value of codes. Several researchers felt codes were an important aspect in monitoring ethical behaviors (Brandl & Maguire, 2002; Mahoney, 1999; Forster, 1998). Others felt that codes of conduct alone were not enough to ensure ethical behavior (Pardini, 2004b; Strike et al., 2004; Webley, 2003; Handelsman, Knapp, & Gottlieb, 2002; Campbell, 2001; Cohen & Cohen, 1999; Butcher, 1997). Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) warned that, "Ethical codes set forth by the states and professional associations tend to be limited in their responsiveness in that they are somewhat

removed from the day-to-day personal and professional dilemmas educational leaders face” (p. 21). Ethical codes must be more than “window dressing” (Mendonca, 2001, p. 267). Soltis (1986) claimed that, “One does not become an ethical professional simply by learning an ethical code” (p. 2).

Campbell has written extensively on ethical codes (2001, 2000, 1997). She noted that codes worded in the negative were easier to write and measure, but codes worded positively actually were better. She felt codes with positive and negative aspects were best (2000). She warned against having too prescriptive a code.

If codes of ethics become too specialized in the peculiarities of the professional’s employment requirements or too bureaucratic or legalistic, removed from core virtues, their possible implementation (if one were able to achieve it) may bear little resemblance to the moral professional endeavoring to make ethically correct choices. The potential for the utility of ethical standards, then, depends on their capacity to guide and inspire professionals to “do right” in a moral sense (2001, p. 399).

Education has lagged behind other professions regarding ethical codes and standards (Mendonca, 2001; Lovat, 1998). According to Lovat (1998), the best example of a fully developed code of ethical conduct comes from the biomedical field. The characteristics of autonomy, justice, non-maleficence and beneficence should be adapted and applied to a code of ethics for the field of education.

The medical field was not alone in the establishment of ethical codes. The fields of counseling and psychotherapy had a number of intricate ethical codes. The American Counseling Association (ACA) had the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. The American Psychological Association (APA) had the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) had the NASW Code of Ethics. The National Organization for Human Service Education (NOHSE) had the Ethical Standards of Human Service Professionals. The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) also had a Code of Ethics (as cited in Cohen & Cohen, 1999).

Georgia was one of the few states which have a formal Code of Ethics for its teachers and leaders in education. This code, however, was regulatory in nature, with seven out of ten standards being worded based on unethical behaviors. Rather than relying solely on codes, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) suggested a combination of the regulatory ability of ethical codes in combination with case studies of ethical dilemmas and ethical paradigms. They applauded the advancements from the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) in marrying these two ideas.

The Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) which was comprised of a Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), showed the importance of positively stated standards for educators. In 1996, they adopted "Standards for School Leaders" which they felt all educators should follow. Their premise was founded on the assumption that in this age of the changing role of

the leader, “Standards should be high, upgrading the quality of the profession” (p. 7). According to the council, most states have adopted the standards to raise the level of administrative performance. The council still works with states to implement and use the standards effectively (ISLLC Standards, 2005).

The council identified Standard Five as, “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner” (p. 18). The standard was further broken down into subcategories, including knowledge, dispositions, and performances of the administrator. Among others, they listed the importance of being an ethical role model and using one’s influence wisely.

The ISLLC Standards have been supported in a leadership text (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005), but few studies have centered on the effectiveness of the ISLLC Standards. One study by Risius (2002) examined three school districts in Iowa and Arizona. Information was gathered for on the job criteria and actual work activity of principals. She then compared it to the ISLLC Standards. Her results indicated that the ISLLC Standards were “comprehensive and appropriate,” but only 28-35 % of the 130 domains were incorporated into formal job expectations. She encouraged districts to focus on diversity, ethics, and honesty by including these areas in job descriptions as well as by providing feedback to all stakeholders. Barnett (2004) surveyed principals, superintendents, and supervisors and compared their involvement with activities which were identified in the ISLLC Standards and their perceived effectiveness of their leadership training programs. He found that overall, the standards were

representative of the leaders' activities, but that their perception of their training preparation left them ill-equipped.

### *Ethical Climate*

Equally important to the leader's ethical qualities is the moral environment (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996). Recently, researchers have focused on the qualities of an ethical climate (Engelbrecht et al., 2005; Schminke et al., 2005; Cullen, Victor, & Stephens, 2001; Mendonca, 2001; Trevino et al., 1999; Cullen, Victor, & Bronson, 1993). In response to the ethical climate, Dickson et al. (2001) claimed, "The world of organizational ethics is often quite murky, without clear guidance as to how one is expected to behave when ethical issues emerge" (p. 203). Bennis (1994) contradicted this helpless attitude and focused more on an empowered view of leadership potential when he claimed, "Leading through voice, inspiring through trust and empathy, does more than get people on your side. It can change the climate enough to give people elbow room to do the right things" (p.167).

In 1987, Victor and Cullen created an Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ) which is still widely used today (Dickson et al., 2001). In their design of the questionnaire, Victor and Cullen (as cited in Cullen et al., 2001) surveyed people from four different companies. They asked respondents to identify what their organization was really like. From their responses, they identified a nine cell grid which grouped types of ethical climates. On the x axis, were the ethical criteria of principle, benevolence, and egoism. On the y axis, were the levels of analysis, which included individual, local, and cosmopolitan. The cell grids for

principle included personal morality, rules and standard operating procedures, and laws and professional codes, respectively. On the benevolence row, cells included friendship, team interest, and social responsibility. On the egoism row, self interest, company profit, and efficiency were included.

Dickson et al. (2001), however, have expressed the inappropriateness of the term “ethical climate.” Their work pointed out that the climate of an organization was what people on the inside of the organization perceived, instead of what it looked like from the outside. They also identified the point that using the term “ethical climate” implied the climate was ethical, which might not be the case. They preferred the term “climate regarding ethics” (p.198) as a clearer representation.

As mentioned earlier, the leader’s ability to be an ethical role model was of vital importance to the ethical climate. Mendonca (2001) claimed,

The leader is a role model to the followers in respect of both task performance and ethical behavior. Undeniably, the leader is indeed the soul of the organization, whose beliefs, values, and behaviors influence and shape, for better or worse, the organization’s moral environment, and has all-encompassing serious ramifications both with and outside the organization (p. 269).

Schminke et al. (2005) conducted a study to determine if a leader’s ethical perspectives influenced the ethical climate of an organization, and if so, under which conditions were the influences most pronounced. They surveyed 269 people from 47 firms. By using Rest’s 1986 Defining Issues Test (DIT), they

produced a Utilizer Score for each leader. The ethical climate was broken down into five categories: instrumental, caring, law and code, rules, and independence. They were measured using the 1988 Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ) by Victor and Cullen. Job satisfaction was determined by Brayfield and Rothe's 1951 Job Satisfaction Index (JSI). Their results indicated that a leader's ethical perspective was important in influencing an ethical climate and was moderated by two factors: The consistency of the leader's actions to his/her moral reasoning and the age of the company, where younger companies were more influenced by the leader. They also found that the leader's and employee's moral developments were correlated to employee satisfaction and organizational commitment, and negatively correlated to employee turnover.

Leaders have an obligation to shape the climate (Northouse, 2004; May, et al., 2003; Sergiovanni, 1996). Moir (2004) found that ethical climates could be cultivated by Socratic Dialogue. She claimed the technique of having a trained facilitator leading participants in the use of critical questions allowed them to delve into ethical principles. By having the groups come to consensus, she felt participants would reach a higher ethical plane.

According to Cullen et al. (2001), ethical climates are not static. They found that,

Management can strengthen and change the ethical climate through education and training in ethical decision making; revision or development of a formal corporate code of ethics; changes in monitoring and supervision; and alterations in company policies procedures, manuals,



performance objectives, selection processes, and incentive structures (p. 61).

### *Ethical School*

An ethical climate is essential for any organization. An ethical school is a logical extension of this important idea. After all, "Teaching is considered a moral endeavor" (Hansen, 1998). Sergiovanni (1992) touched on this topic when he wrote about a virtuous school, where the importance of the school as a learning community, commitment to the professional ideal, responsiveness to the work itself, and professional virtue were paramount. Justice and trust were central themes of his idea of a virtuous school, as well. He claimed, "The result is an emphasis on doing things right, at the expense of doing the right things" (p. 4). In 1996, Sergiovanni wrote that schools should not function as a business, but "should be treated as special cases because they serve as transitional places for children" (p. xii). He went on to say, "Students learn virtue by being around virtuous people and by being part of social networks that represent webs of meaning with moral overtones" (p. 125).

The literature was sparse on the specifics of an ethical school (Park & Peterson, 2003). In the foreword to the book entitled *Creating the Ethical School*, by Zubay and Soltis (2005), Nash claimed that, "Despite the diversity of moral points of view present in educational organizations, consensual ethical decision making is desirable, possible, and, indeed, achievable in the nation's schools" (p. xv). Zubay and Soltis felt that creating an ethical school would take the

cooperation of administration, teachers, students, and parents working together to establish collective ethical standards.

At no point, however, did Zubay and Soltis (2005) define an ethical school. Their main premise revolved around the theory that schools could become more ethical by the study and discussion of ethical dilemmas. Their book was a compilation of case studies meant to encourage ethical discourse in schools.

Using the case study approach has been encouraged by other researchers, as well for ethical advancement. They noted that by studying and discussing actual cases, the participant could gain new insight into ethical application of ideals (Northouse, 2004; Upright, 2002; Cohen & Cohen, 1999; Greenfield, 1993; Soltis, 1986). Campbell (1997) cautioned, however, that the use of case studies had its drawbacks, as well. She stated, "It is not possible to anticipate and explore through case study instruction every potential scenario and dilemma relating to school administration and take into consideration all likely contingencies, situational realities, and desirable courses of action" (p. 295). She went on to say that despite her reservations of case studies, "They provide future school leaders with a singularly valuable opportunity to confront the complexities of ethical decision making in realistic, and potentially controversial and confusing value-laden situations" (p. 295).

The Effective Schools Correlates (Association of Effective Schools, 1996) seemed a logical location for characteristics of an ethical school, but an ethical focus was conspicuously absent. Of the seven correlates, the only mention of ethical behavior or focus was listed under Instructional Leadership, where it was

mentioned that, "The principal creates a shared sense of purpose and establishes a set of common core values among the instructional staff" (p. 4).

In an extension of determining characteristics of a good work place, Park and Peterson (2003) noted the unique characteristics of a good school. They felt in order to gain this distinction, educators must focus more on individuals and less on their achievement. They listed the following organizational virtues as paramount: purpose, fairness, safety, humanity, and dignity.

Although there was a gap in the literature specifically addressing the definition of an ethical school, characteristics can be gleaned. Clearly, principals play a vital part in this endeavor (Sergiovanni, 1996). Not only must they be ethical role models, they must coax and encourage their followers to reach higher levels of moral responsibility (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Northouse, 2004; McGahey, 2003; Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996). Besides providing role models in schools, Lickona (1993) felt that creating a caring community would involve practicing moral discipline, creating a democratic classroom, teaching values through the curriculum, encouraging moral reflection, teaching conflict resolution, and nurturing an appreciation for learning and hard work. Lovat (1998) stressed the importance of educators moving past respect for self and others in the immediate vicinity to school members becoming more globally aware. Hart (2005) felt schools should require community service, as well as provide opportunities for membership in clubs and organizations to strengthen students' moral identities.

In relation to the physical organization of schools encouraging an ethical environment, Sergiovanni (1996) proposed the idea of smaller, more community based schools as the answer. Noddings (1992) felt that children should be housed in one school building for more than a few years. "Children need to settle in, to become responsible for their physical surroundings, to take part in maintaining a caring community" (p. 66).

Even though a specific set of characteristics for an ethical school have not been identified to date, the literature has identified a virtuous (Sergiovanni, 1992) and a good (Park & Petersen, 2003) school. Ethical schools are needed in today's society (Zubay & Solstis, 2005), especially in the elementary years (Lake, 2004). The principal is the leader of the school, and has an obligation to lead by example and to maintain and nurture the school's ethical climate (Schminke et al., 2005; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005).

### Summary

The review of research and related literature examined the context and background of ethical theories and identified an extensive list of common values linked to ethical research. With this foundation, leadership theories were described in detail. The importance of ethical practices of principals was identified. Current research studies were examined which related to ethical aspects of schools, as well as to the importance of moral stages of development in the elementary years of education. Codes and standards common to education were addressed, as well as characteristics of an ethical climate and

school. Tables 1 through 3 include a summary of major studies related to ethics and morality.

Table 1

## Studies Related to Principals' Development and Preparation in the Field of Ethics

<b>STUDY</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>DESIGN/ANALYSIS</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Barnett (2004)	Identify leadership training programs and their effectiveness to handle ISLLC Standards of performance	Principals, supervisors, and superintendents (N=112) 2 groups: Morehead State University (MSU) graduates and non-Morehead State Univ. graduates	Quantitative: survey compared involvement with activities relating to ISLLC Standards and perceived effectiveness of leadership training programs to deal with them.	ISLLC Standards without review of practices are ineffective. Leaders MSU and non-MSU are ill equipped with the training needed to carry out the standards.
Dempster & Berry (2003)	Show the complexities of decision making within identified ethical contexts related to leadership training	B. 552 principals from Australian public schools C. 25 principals	A. Quantitative: survey B. Qualitative: critical interviews	There is a critical need for professional development activities to help principals with ethical decision making 68% of principals had no professional development training in ethical decision making. 79% wanted staff development while they were in the principalship

Table 1 (Continued)

<b>STUDY</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>DESIGN/ANALYSIS</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Rakip (2003)	Identify background and driving forces behind decisions of persons of trust	Eight people in public positions of trust	Qualitative: interview	Personal integrity was used as final determinant in moral decisions. Participants learned about morality by observing how significant adults dealt with moral situations. Modeling was the most important.
Turner, Barling, Epitoropaki, Butcher, & Milner (2003)	Determine if leaders with different moral reasoning levels exhibited different levels of transformational behaviors.	132 leaders and 407 subordinates from three organizational samples in Canada and the United Kingdom	Quantitative: survey	Leaders with the highest moral development exhibited transformational leadership styles [F(2,104) = 3.74, p <.05].

Table 1 (Continued)

<b>STUDY</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>DESIGN/ANALYSIS</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Lucas (2000)	Identify factors which influence decisions of moral, transformational leaders	Nine higher education and elected political leaders who were nominated for their moral leadership	Qualitative: interview	Influencing Factors: Early influencers and role models, social movements on personal leadership aspirations and values, involving others in leadership process, having psychological hardiness, intentionally modeling ethical leadership, and keeping moral fortitude.



Table 2

## Studies Related to Principals' Ethical Characteristics, Roles, and Responsibilities

<b>STUDY</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>DESIGN/ANALYSIS</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Buskey (2005)	Test and refine theory of "Moral Magnetism"	One principal and 5 teachers from a Midwestern middle school	Qualitative: interviews	Principals with Moral Magnetism have a strong commitment to a moral imperative. They provide support for their teachers both in the classroom and on a personal level.
Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005)	Identify important leader responsibilities and correlate to student achievement	Approximately 14,000 teachers and 1,400,000 students grades K-12	Meta-analysis of 69 studies carried out between 1978 and 2001	21 traits identified. 9 <sup>th</sup> on list: "Having ideals and beliefs"
Grisham (2003)	Identify most sought after values of principal candidates	135 Georgia Superintendents	Quantitative: survey	79% chose integrity/honesty in first place 15% chose trustworthiness/dependability/loyalty in first place
Mc Gahey (2003)	Identify attributes of ethical leaders	Ten school leaders	Qualitative: game	Attributes identified: integrity, prophetic, empathic, guided by intuition, willingness to suspend judgment, and willingness to communicate

Table 2 (Continued)

<b>STUDY</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>DESIGN/ANALYSIS</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Moorhouse (2003)	Identify desired characteristics of ethical leaders	Members (N=38) from business, education, political, and religious organizations	Delphi technique of 3 rounds of questionnaires to gain consensus.	90% agreement from groups on the following traits: Ethical leaders have integrity, follow biblical principles of behavior, are honest, have high moral standards/firm convictions, and are fair and unbiased. Successful leaders: lead by example, develop an atmos. of trust, are honest/truthful, are team builders, are good communicators.
Risius (2002)	Determine effectiveness of ISLLC standards and link to principals' job descriptions	Principals from 2 Iowa districts and 1 Arizona district	Quantitative: Comparison of matrices for work related activity and job criteria compared to ISLLC Standards.	ISLLC standards were comprehensive and appropriate, but 28-35% of the 130 domains were not addressed in written principals' expectations.

Table 3

## Studies Related to Ethical Programs and Climates

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Schminke, Ambrose, & Neubaum (2005)	Determine effect of leader moral development on organization's ethical climate and employee attitudes	269 people from 47 firms associated with a public and private university	Quantitative: survey  Info. gathered from individual and organizational demographics, moral development levels (based on Defining Issues Test), utilizer score, ethical climate (based on Ethical Climate Questionnaire, and job attitude.	Relationship is moderated by two factors: extent leader uses his cognitive moral development, and age of organization (younger was stronger) Also, leader's moral development and employees' moral development positively correlated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, negatively correlated with turnover.

Table 3 (Continued)

<b>STUDY</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>DESIGN/ANALYSIS</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Engelbrecht, van Aswegen, & Theron (2005)	Determine relationship between transformational leaders and development of an ethical climate	203 employees from medium to large companies in South Africa	Quantitative-Results from Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, Ethical Climate Questionnaire, Conditions of Trust Inventory calculated by Pearson correlation coefficients.	Relationship between altruism (A) and transformational leadership (TL) ( $r=0.63$ ; $p<0.001$ ) A and intellectual stimulation ( $r=0.53$ ; $p<0.001$ ) A and inspirational motivation of transformational leaders ( $r=0.54$ ; $p<0.001$ ) TL and positive ethical climate ( $r=0.48$ ; $p<0.001$ ) Regression of ethical climate on TL and interaction between TL and integrity ( $p<0.05$ ) A positively influences TL and TL has a positive effect on ethical climate

Table 3 (Continued)

<b>STUDY</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>DESIGN/ANALYSIS</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Cullen, Victor, & Stevens (2001)	Measure ethical climate	872 participants from four organizations: manufacturing plant, printing co, savings and loan, and telephone co.	Quantitative: survey	Five climates surfaced: instrumental- self interest, look out for self; caring- friendship, team interest, social responsibility; independent- personal morality; rules and standard operating procedures- company line; laws and codes- keeping things legal, following code.
Trevino, Weaver, Gibson, & Toffler (1999)	Determine perceptions of employees on best focus of ethical programs	Six Fortune 1000 Companies (N= 10,000 random employees)	Quantitative: survey	Integrity or value-based program was most effective. Value based with compliance components effective. Key components: ethical leadership, fair treatment, open dialog about ethics

Table 3 (Continued)

<b>STUDY</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>DESIGN/ANALYSIS</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Weaver, Trevino, Cochran (1999)	Examine how formal ethics programs reflect external pressures and top management's commitment to ethics.	Fortune 500 Companies (N= 254)	Quantitative: survey, archival data from registration lists of board ethics meetings and articles from 25 major U.S. newspapers	<p>Management's awareness to USSC guidelines was positively linked to scope of ethics program (t= 5.54, p&lt;0.01)</p> <p>Media attention to company's ethical failures positively linked to scope (t= 2.34, p&lt; 0.01)</p> <p>Leader's presence at company's board meeting + linked to scope (t= 4.54, p &lt; 0.01)</p> <p>Top management's commitment to ethics + correlated to scope (t= 3.31, p&lt; 0.01)</p> <p>Inclusion of environ. influences top man. commitment signif. (R2 .23, F = 25.84. p &lt; 0.01)</p>

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

Although much has been written in the literature about the importance of ethical behavior, few studies have focused on elementary principals' formal leadership preparation in the field of ethics or their perceptions of their ethical philosophies. Likewise, attention has not been focused on the actions of principals related to the ethical climate of their schools. This chapter identified the study's research questions, research design, population studied, instrumentation used, details on the pilot study, and how the data were analyzed. The overarching question for this study was as follows: What are the perceptions of elementary principals in Georgia regarding their ethical philosophy, formal leadership preparation, and actions related to the development and maintenance of an ethical school? The following sub-questions were also addressed:

1. How prepared is the principal for ethical leadership due to his/her graduate level leadership coursework?
2. What are the ethical beliefs of the principal?
3. What actions does the principal perform to encourage and sustain an ethical climate?
4. What aspects of a positive ethical climate are present in an ethical school?

#### Research Design

In this study, a descriptive, quantitative methodology was used in the form of a survey in order to gain perceptions from the greatest number of participants

in a systematic and objective fashion (Nardi, 2003; Glesne, 1999). The rapid turn around response and economy of design made this methodology ideal for this study. This technique was used with the intent to make generalizations from a small sample to a larger population (Creswell, 2003). A qualitative component was included at the end of the survey with open-ended questions in order to bring out specific information from the principals (Glesne, 1999). Creswell (2003) claimed that quantitative surveys were the best way to measure the attitudes of a group. This design was the best way to answer the research questions relating to elementary principals' perceptions of their formal ethical preparation in their leadership courses, their ethical philosophies, and their actions in relation to developing and maintaining an ethical climate.

#### Population

The persons most appropriate to provide the answers to the research questions included the population of elementary principals. Research for this study was limited to public school participants in the state of Georgia. Participants were selected by a random sampling technique (Creswell, 2003; Nardi, 2003) which included 600 elementary principals from the total population of 1232 Georgia public Pre K, primary, and elementary schools. The total number of participants did not include elementary schools from Richmond County, which were used for the pilot study. The sample size was determined based on the minimum size requirement of 291 by Gay and Airasian (2000) given a population size of 1200 at the 95% confidence level (p. 135). The sample size allowed for the non-participation of some principals. All principals' names, email



addresses, and school addresses were accessible for direct sampling (Creswell, 2003), and were identified by use of the Georgia State Education Website ([public.doe.k12.ga.us](http://public.doe.k12.ga.us)). Random selection was aided by use of the online random number generator, Research Randomizer ([www.randomizer.org/form.htm](http://www.randomizer.org/form.htm)). Due to the low return rate of surveys by the specified deadline, the researcher selected 315 additional elementary principals to receive the survey, which were identified by each county's web site.

### Instrumentation

Instrumentation for this study was in the form of a survey designed by the researcher and based on the review of literature (see Table 4) to evaluate principals' perceptions of their ethical preparation in their leadership programs, their ethical philosophies, and their actions in relation to developing and maintaining an ethical school based on the characteristics of positive, ethical climates identified in the literature. The survey was cross-sectional, since data was collected only at one point in time (Creswell, 2003). Demographic information of sex, race, and years in the principalship was gathered for information purposes only.

### *Survey Design*

There were a total of 26 Likert style continuous scale statements, with response choices of "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," and "strongly disagree" (Creswell, 2003). Two statements were negatively worded to encourage thoughtful responses from the participants. Statements were divided

Table 4

## Analysis of Questionnaire Items

Item	Concept	Research Question	Research
Part 1			
1	Ethical training in leadership courses	1	Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Handelsman, Knapp, & Gottlieb, 2002; Lucas, 2000; Campbell, 1997; Greenfield, 1993
2	Experience with case studies in leadership classes	1	Northouse, 2004; Upright, 2002; Cohen & Cohen, 1999; Greenfield, 1993; Soltis, 1986
3	Education as a moral endeavor	1	Butcher, 1997
4	Ethics course as requirement (Negatively scored)	1	Barnett, 2004; Pardini, 2004a; Cranston et al, 2003
5	Ethics courses offered in leadership program	1	Pardini, 2004a; Cranston et al, 2003
6	Prepared to meet ethical dilemmas due to training	1	Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Dempster, Carter, Freakley, & Parry, 2004; Pardini, 2004a; Cranston et al, 2003; Dempster & Berry, 2003; Campbell, 2000; Lovat, 1998; Greenfield, 1993
Part 2			
7	Ability of ethical reasoning skills to be taught	2	Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Robbins & Alvy, 2004; May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003; Null & Milson, 2003; Cohen & Cohen, 1999; Greenfield, 1993
8	Limitations of Codes of Ethics	2	Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Campbell, 2001, 2000, 1997; Cohen & Cohen, 1999

Table 4 (Continued)

9	Importance of formative years of ethical development for elementary students	2	Al Otaiba, 2004; Hart, 2005; Koenig, Cicchetti, & Rogosch, 2004; Lake, 2004; Upright, 2002; Lickona, 1997, 1991
10	Importance of leader's commitment to ethics	2	Schminke, Ambrose, & Neubaum, 2005; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Fulmer, 2004; Starratt, 2004; Cameron, 2003; Rakip, 2003; Aronson, 2001; Weaver, Trevino, & Cochran, 1999; Butcher, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1996; Greenfield, 1993; Maxwell, 1993
11	Lack of time for ethical reflection (Negatively scored)	2	Hart, 2005; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Dempster, 2003; May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1996
12	Importance of leader modeling ethical behavior	2	Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Schminke, Ambrose, & Neubaum, 2005; Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Engelbrecht, van Aswegen, & Theron, 2004; Fulmer, 2004; Handelsman, Knapp, & Gottlieb, 2002; May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003; Park & Peterson, 2003; Rakip, 2003; Upright, 2002; Lucas, 2000; Dickson, Smith, Grojean, & Ehrhart, 2001; Weaver, Trevino, & Cochran, 1999; Forster, 1998; Jones & George, 1998; Butcher, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1996; Bennis, 1994
13	Facilitating moral development of followers	2	Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Mc Gahey, 2003; Mendonca, 2001; Duffield & McCuen, 2000; Lovat, 1998; Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996; Burns 1978.
14	Best interest of students is ethical directive	2	Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005
Item	Concept	Research	Research
Part 3		Question	
15	Encourage staff to have concern and care of each other	3	Forster, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1996; Cullen, Victor, & Bronson, 1993; Noddings, 1992; Gilligan, 1982.

Table 4 (Continued)

16	Discussing/studying ethical issues	3, 4	Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Fulmer, 2004; Husu, 2004; Starratt, 2004; Dempster & Berry, 2003; Campbell, 2001; Forster, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1996
17	Expectation of respect	3, 4	Park & Peterson, 2003; Forster, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1996, 1992.
18	School wide ethics training program	4	Forster, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1996
19	Value audit with staff	4	Forster, 1998
20	Time to reflect beyond codes and standards	4	Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003; Weaver, Trevino, & Cochran, 1999; Forster, 1998
21	Hiring teachers with similar values	3	Schminke, Ambrose, & Neubaum, 2005; Duffield & McCuen, 2000; Dickson, Smith, Grojean, & Ehrhart, 2001
22	Seeking peers' advice on ethical dilemmas	3	Husu, 2004; Dempster, 2003; Dempster & Berry, 2003
23	Principal as role model	2, 3, 4	Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Schminke, Ambrose, & Neubaum, 2005; Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Engelbrecht, van Aswegen, & Theron, 2004; Fulmer, 2004; Handelsman, Knapp, & Gottlieb, 2002; May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003; Park & Peterson, 2003; Rakip, 2003; Lucas, 2000; Dickson, Smith, Grojean, & Ehrhart, 2001; Weaver, Trevino, & Cochran, 1999; Forster, 1998; Jones & George, 1998; Butcher, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1996; Bennis, 1994
24	Subordination of personal interests for good of school/altruistic intent	3	Michie & Gooty, 2005; Northouse, 2004; Robbins & Alvy, 2004; Mc Gahey, 2003; Park & Peterson, 2003; Caldwell, Bischoff, & Karri, 2002; Cameron, 2002; Aronson, 2001; Kanungo, 2001; ISLLC, 1996
25	Accepting consequences for actions	3	De Pauw, 1997; ISLLC, 1996

Table 4 (Continued)

26	Being ethical despite diverse values of population	3	Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Robbins & Alvy, 2004; Dempster & Berry, 2003; Caldwell, Bischoff, & Karri, 2002; Aronson, 2001; Lovat, 1998; Lovat, 1998; ISLLC, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1996; Greenfield, 1993
Item	Concept	Research	Research
Part 4		Question	
	Ethical traits	2	Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Engelbrecht, van Aswegen, & Theron, 2005; Hart, 2005; Kidder, 2005; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Michie & Gootie, 2005; Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Engelbrecht, 2004; Fulmer, 2004; Husu, 2004; Moir, 2004; Northouse, 2004; Starratt, 2004; Zhu, May, & Avolio, 2004; Cameron, 2003; Galford & Drapeau, 2003; Grisham, 2003; May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003; Mc Gahey, 2003; Null & Milson, 2003; Moir, 2003; Park & Peterson, 2003; Rakip, 2003; Caldwell, Bischoff, & Karri, 2002; Pratt & Ashforth, 2002; Schulman, 2002; Aronson, 2001; Mendonca, 2001; Campbell, 2000, 1998, 1997; Weaver, Trevino, & Cochran, 1999; Cohen & Cohen, 1999; Becker, 1998; Jones & George, 1998; Lovat, 1998; Helwig, Turiel, & Nucci, 1997; Sosick, 1997; Sosik & Dionne, 1997; Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996; Yates, 1996; Bennis, 1994; Greenfield, 1993; Etzioni, 1993; Maxwell, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1992
Item	Concept	Research	Research
Part 5		Question	
A.	Preparation in leadership program related to ethics	1	Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Dempster & Berry, 2003; Handelsoman, Knapp, & Gottlieb, 2002; Campbell, 2000; Lovat, 1998; Greenfield, 1993
B.	Uniqueness of elementary level	2	Hart, 2005; Al Otaiba, 2004; Koenig, Cicchetti, & Rogosch, 2004; Lake, 2004; Upright, 2002; Lickona, 1997, 1991

Table 4 (Continued)

C.	Seeking advice	3	Dempster, et al. 2004
D.	Ethical actions	3	Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Schminke, Ambrose, Neubaum, 2005; Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Engelbrecht, van Aswegen, & Theron, 2004; May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003; Park & Peterson, 2003; Rakip, 2003; Lucas, 2000; Dickson, Smith, Grojean, & Ehrhart, 2001; Trevino, Weaver, & Gibson, 1999; Weaver, Trevino, & Cochran, 1999; Forster, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1996
E.	Characteristics of an ethical school	4	Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Park & Peterson, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1996, 1992; Lickona 1993; Noddings, 1992

into three main categories, including preparation in the field of ethics (six statements), ethical philosophy (eight statements), and actions related to leadership (12 statements). Sample statements included, “In my leadership classes, I was afforded time to participate in case studies related to ethical dilemmas” (Statement 2), “Encouraging a moral community takes more than having a Code of Ethics in place at school” (Statement 8) and “Ethical questions or situations which arise are discussed in faculty meetings” (Statement 16).

The survey included a section asking participants to rate, by importance, a list of 10 ethical traits which have been identified in the literature. Ethical traits included integrity, honesty, trust, and commitment. There was a qualitative component of five open-ended questions. A sample open-ended question was as follows: “How is the elementary level unique in relation to ethical development of the students?” (Question B). These questions encouraged participants to give specific characteristics and feedback related to their ethical leadership preparation, ethical beliefs, and actions related to the development and maintenance of an ethical school.

#### *Validation of the Survey*

The instrument was emailed to 16 experts in the field of ethics, as identified in the literature, for validation of content. Of the original 16 experts, two said they were unable to respond due to time restraints. Five experts did not respond. Nine experts responded with positive, encouraging feedback related to the survey instrument and topic. The responding experts included six published

authors in the field of ethical research and three persons employed or recently retired from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (see Appendix A).

Based on feedback and insight from the experts, changes were made to the content and design of the survey. Content changes included omitting three questions and rewording five questions for clarity. Changes were made in the ethical traits section, as well; “charity” was replaced with “compassion,” “altruism” was omitted, and “authenticity” was added. A design change to the survey included extending the Likert type scale from four to five choices, to incorporate a neutral position. The design for rating ethical traits was completely modified. Originally, the survey asked participants to rank order the ethical traits. Based on the experts’ feedback, this was changed to a Likert type scale ranging from “Most Important” to “Least Important.” Finally, the design of the survey was modified on line so that each participant would be presented with random ordering of sections and questions within sections.

### Pilot Study

Pilot testing with a similar audience was an important first step in assuring that the instrument was clear and understood by the participants (Creswell, 2003; Nardi, 2003).

#### *Participants of Pilot Study*

The pilot study participants were chosen from an adjacent school district, Richmond County, Georgia. Validated surveys and Informed Consent Forms (see Appendix B) were sent via email to all 37 elementary principals from the district, to assess the self perceptions of elementary principals in Georgia



regarding their ethical philosophy, formal leadership preparation, and actions related to the development and maintenance of an ethical school. Survey data were returned to the researcher from eight principals in the pilot study. Feedback given from the pilot study participants ranged from “The survey is too long,” to “Very well organized.” Most of the feedback, however, was in the form of moral support.

#### *Reliability of Pilot Study*

The reliability of the instrument was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha (Creswell, 2003; Gay & Airasian, 2000) to determine consistency in scores. The researcher’s goal was for the instrument to score higher than .70, since this level was considered acceptable in the literature (Yu, 2006). Results for the Likert style sections yielded an alpha of .79. When sections were calculated separately, alpha scores were as follows: Part I alpha = .87, Part II alpha = .43, and Part III alpha = .71. Based on the low alpha level of Part II, reliability calculations were performed for individual statements in the section. The researchers’ calculations showed that Statement 8 was problematic in its present form. Removal of Statement 8 would raise the reliability score of Part II to an alpha of .59 and a total survey alpha of .80. Upon the advice of the researcher’s methodologist, Statement 8 was reworded for clarity and kept in the survey. Once the survey was shown to be valid and reliable, the researcher converted it into a Web based format through Question Pro ([www.QuestionPro.com](http://www.QuestionPro.com)). Appendix C contains the survey content prior to conversion to a Web based document.

## Data Collection

Before any data collection took place, the researcher obtained the permission and support of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Georgia Southern University. Once permission was obtained, focus turned to the collection of data.

The researcher used a random sampling technique (Nardi, 2003) to select 600 elementary principals from the total of Georgia public elementary schools which were not used in the pilot study. Random selection was done by use of an online random number generator. Selected principals were contacted via their school's email account. An introductory message explained the study and its relevance, as well as provided guidelines for protecting the name and school of each participant. A link was provided to allow access to the researcher's survey through the company Question Pro ([www.QuestionPro.com](http://www.QuestionPro.com)). A date for completion of the survey was listed. A return rate of 60% was desired by the researcher.

## Analysis of the Data

Information was gathered and presented relating to the number of participants who completed the surveys (Creswell, 2003). Demographic information including sex, race, and years of experience in the position of principal was presented for information purposes only.

For the Likert style section of the study, selections were given a point value. Scores for participants selecting "Strongly Agree" were assigned one point, "Agree" were assigned two points, "Neutral" were assigned three points,

“Disagree” were assigned four points, and “Strongly Disagree” were assigned five points. Negatively phrased statements (Numbers 4 and 11) were assigned the opposite scoring, with “Strongly Agree” being assigned five points, “Agree” being assigned four points, “Neutral” being assigned three points, “Disagree” being assigned two points, and “Strongly Disagree” being assigned one point.

Results from the ethical traits section of the survey were also gathered and analyzed. Participants selected from a five scale choice ranging from “Most Important” to “Least Important.” Scores were assigned from one to five points, respectively.

Calculations were performed on the survey data to determine the frequency, mean, standard deviations, and percentages (Creswell, 2003; Sprinthall, 2003) for each statement, as well as the mean of all means for the overall sections of preparation in the field of ethics, ethical philosophy, and actions related to ethical leadership (Sections 1 - 3). Data were analyzed by Question Pro ([www.QuestionPro.com](http://www.QuestionPro.com)). The qualitative, open-ended questions of the study involved the examination of the principals’ answers which were coded and categorized for common characteristic themes of ethical leadership preparation, ethical philosophy, and actions which encourage the ethical climate and an ethical school (Creswell, 2003). Frequency counts were collected and analyzed. The results were added to the survey data in chart and paragraph form.

## Summary

In this chapter, the study plan and methodology were introduced. The researcher's goal was to gain perceptions of principals on their ethical preparation in the field of leadership, their ethical philosophy, and their actions related to the development and maintenance of an ethical school. This information was gathered by quantitative means of a survey created by the researcher, with a qualitative component of open-ended questions designed to illicit specific examples and feedback from the respondents.

## CHAPTER 4

### REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

The researcher's purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of elementary principals in Georgia regarding their ethical philosophies, formal preparation in the field of ethics in their graduate leadership programs, and their actions related to the development and maintenance of an ethical school. A descriptive, quantitative survey was created by the researcher, based on the review of literature. The survey was pilot tested and analyzed for validity and reliability. The final survey was emailed to 600 elementary school principals in Georgia. Because of the low return rate, an additional 315 surveys were emailed to elementary principals in Georgia. The final number of returned surveys was 169, which constituted a return rate of 18.5%.

#### Research Questions

The overarching question for this study was as follows: What are the perceptions of elementary principals in Georgia regarding their ethical philosophy, formal leadership preparation, and actions related to the development and maintenance of an ethical school? The following sub-questions were also addressed:

1. How prepared is the principal for ethical leadership due to his/her graduate level leadership coursework?
2. What are the ethical beliefs of the principal?

3. What actions does the principal perform to encourage and sustain an ethical climate?
4. What aspects of a positive ethical climate are present in an ethical school?

### Research Design

The Principals' Perceptions Relating to Ethics Survey was created by the researcher, based on the review of literature, as the best way to describe the perceptions of elementary principals in Georgia regarding their ethical philosophies, formal preparation in the field of ethics in their graduate leadership programs, and their actions relating to the development and maintenance of an ethical school. The instrument was validated by experts in the field, and field tested with volunteer principals from Richmond County, Georgia.

### Respondents

The most appropriate persons to answer the research questions were the population of 1269 elementary principals in the state of Georgia. School names and principals were identified by use of the Georgia Department of Education Website. The 37 pilot study principals from Richmond County were subtracted from the total population. A random sample of 600 participants from the remaining 1232 principals was identified by use of an online random sample generator ([www.randomizer.org/form.htm](http://www.randomizer.org/form.htm)). Representatives from two counties contacted the researcher and explained that county approval was required prior to survey completion. The researcher replaced the 71 principals from the two counties with an equal number from the original list, identified by random sampling.

The targeted minimum response was 291 completed surveys, based on Gay and Airasian's (2000) minimum requirements for a population size of 1200 at the 95% confidence level (p.135). A total of 76 surveys were returned by the requested date, constituting only a 12% return rate. A reminder notice was sent by email with a one week extension for survey completion. At that time, a total of 115 surveys were returned, constituting a 19% return rate. The researcher identified additional elementary principals by searching each county's web site, in order to find the most accurate listings. She selected 315 additional principals and emailed the survey to them. By the final extension date, a total of 169 surveys were completed, constituting a final return rate of 18.5%. Because of the low return rate, the researcher was limited in her ability to generalize to the entire population of Georgia elementary principals.

#### *Demographics of Participants*

The researcher compiled results from the demographic section of the survey to describe characteristics of respondents. The researcher's results identified 50 of the participants as male (31.1%), and 111 of the participants as female (68.9%, see Table 5).

Years of experience in the principalship ranged from 28.2% for one to three years, 29.5% for four to six years, 13.5% for seven to nine years, and 28.8% for 10 or more years (see Table 6).

Table 5

## Sex of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	50	31.1
Female	111	68.9

Table 6

## Total Years of Experience of Respondents

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percent
1-3 years	46	28.2
4-6 years	48	29.5
7-9 years	22	13.5
10-12 years	10	6.1
13 or more years	37	22.7

N = 163

Results relating to ethnicity were as follows: 138 White (87.1%), 20 African American (12.3%), and one Other. There were no respondents who selected Hispanic, Asian, or Multi categories (see Table 7).



Table 7

## Race/Ethnicity of Respondents

Race/Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
White	142	87.1
African American	20	12.3
Hispanic	0	0
Asian	0	0
Multi	0	0
Other	1	0.6
N = 163		

## Findings

Findings were gathered from participants regarding their perceptions in the areas of their formal leadership preparation in ethics, ethical philosophy, and actions related to the development and maintenance of an ethical school.

*Formal Leadership Preparation in Ethics*

Research Question 1 asked, "What graduate level leadership preparation must be accomplished to prepare the principal for ethical leadership?" Six statements were presented in the Likert section of the survey which related to this research question (see Table 8). Respondents were asked about their own experience with ethical training in graduate school.

Table 8

## Frequencies and Percentages of Perceptions of Preparation in the Field of Ethics

Item	Level of Agreement	Frequency	Percentage
1. There was an emphasis for ethics training in my leadership preparation program. (N = 161)	Strongly Agree	21	13.0
	Agree	70	43.5
	Neutral	22	13.7
	Disagree	45	28.0
	Strongly Disagree	3	1.9
2. In my leadership classes, I was afforded time to participate in case studies related to ethical dilemmas. (N = 162)	Strongly Agree	25	15.4
	Agree	77	47.5
	Neutral	18	11.1
	Disagree	36	22.2
	Strongly Disagree	6	3.7
3. In my leadership classes, education was presented as a moral endeavor. (N = 160)	Strongly Agree	18	11.3
	Agree	79	49.4
	Neutral	42	26.3
	Disagree	21	13.1
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
4. An entire ethics course is not needed in leadership preparation classes. (N = 162)	Strongly Agree	10	6.2
	Agree	37	22.8
	Neutral	15	9.3
	Disagree	57	35.2
	Strongly Disagree	43	26.5
5. Several ethics courses were offered in my leadership program. (N = 162)	Strongly Agree	7	4.3
	Agree	27	16.7
	Neutral	29	17.9
	Disagree	84	51.9
	Strongly Disagree	15	9.3
6. Of the ethical dilemmas I have faced as principal, I was prepared to deal with them based on my leadership graduate work. (N = 163)	Strongly Agree	12	7.4
	Agree	61	37.4
	Neutral	31	19.0
	Disagree	52	31.9
	Strongly Disagree	7	4.3

The researcher's findings in this section did not show wide-spread agreement. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (60.7%) that their graduate classes presented leadership as a moral endeavor (Statement 3). Likewise, the majority of respondents (62.9%) chose that they were afforded time in graduate classes to participate in case studies related to ethical dilemmas (Statement 2). But when asked about availability of course offerings in ethics (Statement 5), 79.1% chose neutral or some form of disagreement. Once responses were reversed for Statement 4, results showed that respondents agreed or strongly agreed (61.7%) that an entire ethics course should be offered in graduate school. Statement 6 focused on how prepared principals were to deal with ethical dilemmas based on their graduate leadership work. The majority of respondents were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed (55.2%), but 44.8% agreed or strongly agreed.

Means for this section ranged from 2.41 to 3.45 (see Table 9). When statement means were analyzed, contradictions arose. The researcher found that respondents agreed that the field of education was presented as a moral endeavor ( $M = 2.41$ ), but that an entire ethics course was not needed in leadership preparation ( $M = 2.47$ ). The mean for the statement that several ethics courses were offered in their leadership program was 3.45, falling between disagreement and neutrality. The total section mean was 2.72, implying neutral to mild agreement.

Table 9

## Descriptive Data on Perceptions of Preparation in the Field of Ethics

Question	Item	Number	Mean	SD
3.	In my leadership classes, education was presented as a moral endeavor.	160	2.41	0.86
4.	An entire ethics course is not needed in leadership preparation classes.	162	2.47	1.27
2.	In my leadership classes, I was afforded time to participate in case studies related to ethical dilemmas.	162	2.51	1.11
1.	There was an emphasis for ethics training in my leadership preparation program.	161	2.62	1.08
6.	Of the ethical dilemmas I have faced as principal, I was prepared to deal with them based on my leadership graduate work.	163	2.88	1.07
5.	Several ethics courses were offered in my leadership program.	162	3.45	1.02

Notes: Section M = 2.72

Based on 5 point scale with 1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree  
Score reversed for #4

Research Question 1 was also addressed in Open-ended Question A, about preparedness of principals to face ethical dilemmas due to formal leadership training (see Table 10). Answers from respondents were often coded into more than one category. Direct responses to this question were evenly distributed, with “Not prepared” given by 46 participants (38.3%) and “Well

Table 10

## Coded Responses to Principals' Preparedness in Ethical Leadership Training

Question	Coded Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
A. How prepared are you to handle the ethical dilemmas you face as a principal due to your formal leadership preparation in graduate school? (N = 120)	Not prepared	46	38.3
	Well prepared	45	37.5
	Somewhat prepared	16	13.3
	<u>Prepared due to the following:</u>		
	Work experience	34	28.3
	Personal characteristics/ integrity	17	14.2
	Family/religious upbringing	15	12.5
	Influence of mentor/peer/boss	10	8.3

Note: Percentages are not intended to represent 100%.

prepared" given by 45 participants (37.5%). Respondent 56987 wrote, "I don't think that graduate school is a factor. At times, ethical situations were discussed but never formally and never reflectively." Although unsolicited, several respondents wrote that they were prepared by reasons other than their formal leadership training. Thirty-four respondents included work experience.

Respondent 63135 wrote, "Actually, real life on the job for 29 years in education is the best teacher." Personal characteristics and integrity were mentioned by 17 respondents.

Respondent 71097 wrote, "I personally have a very strong sense of ethics, so I feel prepared to handle ethical dilemmas which arise. I think my formal leadership preparation validated my already strong ethical values." Respondent 47337 said, "Training and character must reinforce each other."

Family and religious upbringing were mentioned by 15 respondents.

Respondent 49665 wrote,

Actually, leadership preparation did little to prepare me for ethical dilemmas. My strong faith-based upbringing did the most in helping me to know the “rights and wrongs” associated with life, in general. Applying these principles has helped me to make decisions appropriate for all involved parties. We use the old saying, “Treat others with kindness and respect and treat others the way you wish to be treated.” This is repeated each day over the morning announcements. This is the model by which I live and expect others to live by. When making decision, I always ask, “What is in the best interest of students?” It’s this question that directs every decision I make because I am their advocate.

Mentors, peers, and supervisors were mentioned by 10 respondents.

Respondent 48238 wrote, “I credit my preparation to my years of teaching experience and the great administrator I worked for; not my one class in graduate school.”

### *Ethical Philosophy*

Research Question 2 asked, “What is the ethical philosophy of the principal?” There was 100% agreement or strong agreement with three statements from Section 2 (see Table 11). Statements included the importance of modeling ethical behavior by the leader (Statement 12), doing what is right as an ethical directive (Statement 14), and the principal’s personal commitment to ethics being an important part of being an effective leader (Statement 10).

Table 11

## Frequencies and Percentages of Perceptions of Ethical Philosophy

Item	Level of Agreement	Frequency	Percentage
7. Ethical reasoning skills can be cultivated and learned. (N = 161)	Strongly Agree	58	36.0
	Agree	91	56.5
	Neutral	11	6.8
	Disagree	1	0.6
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
8. Encouraging a moral community takes more than having a Code of Ethics in place at school. (N = 162)	Strongly Agree	117	72.2
	Agree	43	26.5
	Neutral	2	1.2
	Disagree	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
9. Leadership in an elementary school has unique ramifications due to the formative years of ethical development of the students. (N = 160)	Strongly Agree	89	55.6
	Agree	64	40.0
	Neutral	6	3.8
	Disagree	1	0.6
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
10. The principal's personal commitment to ethics is an important part of being an effective leader. (N = 162)	Strongly Agree	126	77.8
	Agree	36	22.2
	Neutral	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
11. There just isn't enough time in the day to stop and reflect on ethical decisions. (N = 162)	Strongly Agree	6	3.7
	Agree	29	17.9
	Neutral	16	9.9
	Disagree	89	54.9
	Strongly Disagree	22	13.6
12. Modeling of ethical behavior is an important job of a leader. (N = 161)	Strongly Agree	137	85.0
	Agree	24	14.9
	Neutral	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	0	0

Table 11 (Continued)

Item	Level of Agreement	Frequency	Percentage
13. Leaders can facilitate the ethical development of followers. (N = 161)	Strongly Agree	77	47.8
	Agree	77	47.8
	Neutral	6	3.7
	Disagree	1	0.6
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
14. Doing what is in the best interest of students is an important ethical directive. (N = 161)	Strongly Agree	136	84.5
	Agree	25	15.5
	Neutral	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	0	0

Almost as strong in agreement, 98.7% of respondents said they strongly agreed (117 respondents) or agreed (43 respondents) that encouraging a moral community takes more than having a Code of Ethics in place at school. The majority of respondents (95.6%) said leaders can facilitate the ethical development of followers and that ethical reasoning skills can be cultivated and taught (92.5%). The researcher's findings to Statement 11 showed the most disagreement of the section, with 21.6% of respondents claiming, "There just isn't enough time in the day to stop and reflect on ethical decisions."

When means were analyzed for this section, responses were more uniform in agreement, ranging from 1.15 to 1.73 on seven of the eight statements (see Table 12). The strongest agreement of respondents was with the statements about modeling ethical behavior being an important job of a leader



Table 12

## Descriptive Data on Perceptions of Ethical Philosophy

Item	Number	Mean	SD
12. Modeling of ethical behavior is an important job of a leader.	161	1.15	0.36
14. Doing what is in the best interest of students is an important ethical directive.	161	1.16	0.36
10. The principal's personal commitment to ethics is an important part of being an effective leader.	162	1.22	0.42
8. Encouraging a moral community takes more than having a Code of Ethics in place at school.	162	1.29	0.48
9. Leadership in an elementary school has unique ramifications due to the formative years of ethical development of the students.	160	1.49	0.60
13. Leaders can facilitate the ethical development of followers.	161	1.57	0.60
7. Ethical reasoning skills can be cultivated and learned.	161	1.72	0.62
11. There just isn't enough time in the day to stop and reflect on ethical decisions.	162	2.43	1.05

Note: Section M = 1.51

Based on 5 point scale with 1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree  
Scoring reversed for #11

and doing what is right for the best interest of the students as an ethical directive.

The most neutral statement revolved around having enough time in the day to

stop and reflect on ethical decisions ( $M = 2.43$ ). The section mean was 1.51, falling between agreement and strong agreement.

The formative years of elementary students' ethical development was addressed in two sections of the survey. In Statement 9, 95.6% of respondents agreed with this time period as being critical. In Open-ended Question B, 91.5% of respondents gave specific reasons why this was true (see Table 13). Only 10 respondents felt there was no developmental difference at the elementary level. Respondent 49311 wrote, "I don't see it as being any different than the middle level or high school level. The kids deal with the same issues, just different circumstances around those issues. The dilemmas become more complex, but they still revolve around the same basic principles."

Respondents listed several reasons in support of this critical development period. The formative nature of this period was mentioned by 57.6% of respondents. Respondent 88718 wrote, "The elementary years are the foundation of citizenship. It is during these years that children, in partnership with parents and educators, develop their values, and hence their ethical structure." The importance of modeling was mentioned by 26.3% of the respondents.

Respondent 75341 wrote,

The elementary level is such a unique age in relation to ethical development because the students are beginning to form their own morals, character, and ethical values. This age is also still very influential; therefore, modeling ethical behavior is of extreme importance. Students at this level still place their administrators on a pedestal."

Table 13

## Coded Responses to Uniqueness of Elementary Level in Ethical Development

Question	Coded Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
B. How is the elementary level unique in relation to ethical development of the students? (N = 118)	Formative/foundational period	68	57.6
	Modeling of adults most important	31	26.3
	Most impressionable and innocent	21	17.8
	Children are not getting ethical training at home	8	6.8
	Need concrete examples and repetition	4	3.4
	Not different than other levels	10	8.5

Note: Percentages not intended to represent 100%

Tying in the importance of modeling and the impressionability and innocence of elementary age children, Respondent 52229 wrote,

We are role models for everything for the young child. We are parents in the absence of parents. Young children will duplicate what we say and do as far as they are able. No place else in the K-12 experience will children so eagerly accept, believe, and re-enact the behavior of the adults around them. Truly, they are at the most impressionable age of all school age children.

Respondent 48093 said,

Because our students are just beginning to develop an understanding of their environment around them, we feel it is not only a moral obligation, but important to all students' educational development to have appropriate models of our culture beliefs, values, morals, and ethics. It is also equally important with this development for students to have an understanding of other culture beliefs, values, morals, and ethics.

Eight respondents mentioned or implied the lack of ethical training children receive at home. Respondent 49665 wrote, "We are responsible for instilling values that are the foundation of these young, impressionable minds. Without our guidance, some would have NO moral upbringing." Respondent 47805 said, "Many times in elementary school, we are teaching character building that is not taught at home. Seize the moment!"

Finally, representation of the ethical philosophy of principals is not complete without discussion of their perceived importance of ethical traits. Traits with the highest importance ratings by respondents (see Table 14) were integrity (89.0%), honesty (87.0%), respect (85.7%), trust (82.8%), and responsibility (73.9%). Comparatively, there was less agreement on the importance of the traits justice (48.8%), tolerance (48.2%), and virtue (47.8).

Table 14

## Frequencies and Percentages of Importance of Ethical Traits

Ethical Trait	Level of Importance	Frequency	Percentage
Respect (N = 163)	Most Important	138	85.7
		22	13.5
	Somewhat Important	2	1.2
		0	0
	Least Important	1	0.6
Tolerance (N = 162)	Most Important	78	48.2
		68	42.0
	Somewhat Important	13	8.0
		1	0.6
	Least Important	2	1.2
Trust (N = 163)	Most Important	135	82.8
		25	15.3
	Somewhat Important	1	0.6
		1	0.6
	Least Important	1	0.6
Responsibility (N = 161)	Most Important	119	73.9
		41	25.5
	Somewhat Important	0	0
		0	0
	Least Important	1	0.6

Table 14 (Continued)

Ethical Trait	Level of Importance	Frequency	Percentage
Integrity (N = 163)	Most Important	145	89.0
		17	10.4
	Somewhat Important	0	0
	Least Important	0	0
Justice (N = 160)	Most Important	78	48.8
		63	39.4
	Somewhat Important	11	6.9
	Least Important	5	3.1
Compassion (N = 161)	Most Important	94	58.4
		55	34.2
	Somewhat Important	11	6.8
	Least Important	0	0
Virtue (N = 161)	Most Important	94	58.4
		55	34.2
	Somewhat Important	11	6.8
	Least Important	0	0
Commitment (N = 162)	Most Important	104	64.2
		53	32.7
	Somewhat Important	4	2.5
	Least Important	0	0
Honesty (N = 162)	Most Important	141	87.0
		20	12.4
	Somewhat Important	0	0
	Least Important	0	0
Honesty (N = 162)	Most Important	141	87.0
		20	12.4
	Somewhat Important	0	0
	Least Important	0	0

Means in this section ranged from 1.13 to 1.70 for the listed ethical traits, implying agreement with each (see Table 15).

Table 15

Descriptive Data on Importance of Ethical Traits

Ethical Trait	Number	Mean	SD
Integrity	163	1.13	0.43
Honesty	162	1.15	0.45
Respect	163	1.18	0.50
Trust	163	1.21	0.54
Responsibility	161	1.28	0.53
Commitment	162	1.40	0.61
Compassion	161	1.51	0.68
Tolerance	162	1.65	0.76
Virtue	161	1.66	0.78
Justice	160	1.70	0.88

Based on 5 point scale with 1 = Most Important to 5 = Least Important

Matching the frequency results, ethical traits with the strongest means were integrity (M = 1.13), honesty (M = 1.15), respect (M = 1.18), and trust (M = 1.21). Compared with the frequency results, the traits with the weakest means were the

same three traits, but in a slightly different order (tolerance  $M = 1.65$ , virtue  $M = 1.66$ , and justice  $M = 1.70$ ).

### *Actions Which Encourage and Sustain an Ethical Climate*

Research Question 3 asked, "What actions must the principal perform to encourage and sustain an ethical climate?" Principals alluded in the previous section to several actions which encourage and sustain an ethical climate, including modeling of ethical behavior by the principal. The modeling theme was repeated again by respondents in the third section of the survey (see Table 16). Open-ended Question D asked which actions by the principal encouraged an ethical climate. Responses about the importance of modeling were again prevalent (52.8%, see Table 17). Respondent 49068 said, "Model what I expect, serve others and never ask anything of someone that I am not willing and ready to do." Respondent 63135 showed self reflection in his/her response about modeling, "Honesty (no matter how bad it hurts you or someone else you care for), respect, setting an example. Principals are watched every minute of every day by peers, parents, community, and students." Respondents most strongly agreed (88.2%) with Statement 17, which addressed expecting people in the school to treat each other with respect. Strong agreement was also noted in statements about encouraging staff members to care about each other (Statement 15, 76.5%), expecting ethical conduct, regardless of the prevailing values of the diverse community (Statement 26, 70.4%), and accepting the consequences for upholding principles (Statement 25, 69.6%).



Table 16

## Frequencies and Percentages of Perceptions of Actions Related to Leadership

Item	Level of Agreement	Frequency	Percentage
15. I encourage staff members to care about each other and help promote each other's well being. (N = 162)	Strongly Agree	124	76.5
	Agree	36	22.2
	Neutral	2	1.2
	Disagree	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
16. Ethical questions or situations which arise are discussed in faculty meetings. (N = 163)	Strongly Agree	31	19.0
	Agree	84	51.5
	Neutral	28	17.2
	Disagree	19	11.7
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.6
17. I expect people to treat each other with respect in my school. (N = 161)	Strongly Agree	142	88.2
	Agree	18	11.2
	Neutral	0	0
	Disagree	1	0.6
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
18. A formal ethics training program is in place at my school. (N = 162)	Strongly Agree	23	14.2
	Agree	49	30.3
	Neutral	21	13.0
	Disagree	59	36.4
	Strongly Disagree	10	6.2
19. A value audit should be conducted with staff members on an annual basis. (N = 160)	Strongly Agree	18	11.3
	Agree	70	43.8
	Neutral	52	32.5
	Disagree	17	10.6
	Strongly Disagree	3	1.9

Table 16 (Continued)

Item	Level of Agreement	Frequency	Percentage
20. Staff are given time to reflect and internalize the meanings behind regulations and ethical standards. (N = 163)	Strongly Agree	19	11.7
	Agree	90	55.2
	Neutral	28	17.2
	Disagree	24	14.7
	Strongly Disagree	2	1.2
21. When hiring teachers, I try to find people who have similar values to mine. (N = 160)	Strongly Agree	59	36.9
	Agree	75	46.9
	Neutral	23	14.4
	Disagree	2	1.3
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.6
22. When presented with an ethical dilemma, I have peers which I use as a sounding board before determining an appropriate action. (N = 163)	Strongly Agree	68	41.7
	Agree	85	52.2
	Neutral	2	1.2
	Disagree	7	4.3
	Strongly Disagree	1	0.6
23. I model ethical behavior. (N = 161)	Strongly Agree	110	68.3
	Agree	48	29.8
	Neutral	1	0.6
	Disagree	2	1.2
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
24. In general, I subordinate my own interest to the good of the school community. (N = 161)	Strongly Agree	59	36.7
	Agree	85	52.8
	Neutral	12	7.5
	Disagree	5	3.1
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
25. I fully accept the consequences for upholding my principles and actions. (N = 161)	Strongly Agree	112	69.6
	Agree	48	29.8
	Neutral	1	0.6
	Disagree	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
26. I expect ethical conduct regardless of the prevailing values of the diverse school community. (N = 162)	Strongly Agree	114	70.4
	Agree	47	29.0
	Neutral	1	0.6
	Disagree	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	0	0

Table 17

## Coded Responses to Actions Which Encourage an Ethical Climate

Question	Coded Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
D. What actions have you found successful in encouraging a positive ethical climate? (N = 123)	<u>Personal Actions of the Principal</u>		
	Principal as role model/ practicing what I preach	65	52.8
	Swift action related to ethical behavior- Penalties for unethical, praising/rewarding ethical	21	17.1
	Employing the right people	5	4.1
	Using literature to illustrate a point	1	0.8
	<u>Working with Staff and Students</u>		
	Discussing ethical dilemmas as they arise and by articles	26	21.1
	Clear/high expectations for all	20	16.3
	Listening/talking with students and staff	6	4.9
	Principal who leads others to ethical decisions	4	3.3
	Shared leadership	4	3.3
	<u>Programs and Plans</u>		
	Character education program in place	9	7.3
	Code of Ethics in place	7	5.7
	School wide ethical plan/ethical components in mission statement	2	1.6
Continuing education for all staff	1	0.8	

Note: Percentages are not intended to represent 100%.

Respondents were in agreement or strong agreement (70.5%) that they discussed ethical questions and situations in faculty meetings (Statement 16). Open-ended responses in Question D relating to ethical discussions were given by 21.1% of respondents, as well. Respondent 49311 gave the following specific

examples: “Discouraging gossip, encouraging speaking with people directly when you disagree with something or are concerned about something someone has done.” Respondent 54178 wrote about, “Sharing actual stories/news articles of unethical behaviors in our profession.” Respondent 84521 mentioned, “Adults having moral thinkalouds” as a beneficial action. Four respondents mentioned leading others to ethical decisions. Respondent 47796 said, “Discussing options and leading others to making the right choices.”

Additional responses from Question D yielded rich findings about further ethical actions, as well; having clear and high expectations, listening and talking with students, continuing education for all staff, and using literature to illustrate an ethical point were all listed. Swift action when dealing with ethical situations was reported by 17.1% of respondents. Respondents mentioned praising and rewarding ethical behavior when they said, “...rewarding on a weekly basis the students and teachers who demonstrate outstanding character traits” (Respondent 63593) and “...admiring publicly good ethical behavior” (Respondent 71264). Respondents wrote about penalties for unethical behavior, as well. Tying the two concepts together, Respondent 66100 said, “A zero-tolerance for cheating and stealing goes well with praising honesty. We operate a strong character education program. This brings good emphasis to traits we all need to follow.”

Five respondents mentioned the action of having the right people for jobs within the school. Two respondents used the term “judicious hiring,” where others were more forthright. Respondent 88718 wrote about, “...hiring people who

demonstrate an ethical base”. Respondent 72265 said, “Ensure that the faculty and staff are all on the same page (positive climate) and ensure those that are not should not be a part of the faculty and staff.”

Although two respondents mentioned having a school wide ethical plan or ethical components in their mission statements, the majority of respondents were less in agreement with statements which pinpointed actual programs offered in the schools. Conducting a value audit with staff members had 55.1% agreement or strong agreement, and 32.5% were neutral (Statement 19). When presented with Statement 18 about having a formal ethics training program in place, 55.6% of respondents were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.

Overall, respondents were in agreement with statements presented in reference to actions of ethical leaders. The means within this section ranged from 1.13 to 2.90 (see Table 18). Statements with the highest means related to expecting people to treat each other with respect ( $M = 1.13$ ), encouraging staff members to care about each other and promoting each other's well being ( $M = 1.25$ ), and expecting ethical conduct, regardless of the prevailing values of the diverse school community ( $M = 1.30$ ). There was least agreement with the statements about giving staff time to reflect and internalize meanings behind regulations and ethical standards ( $M = 2.39$ ), conducting a value audit with staff on an annual basis ( $M = 2.48$ ), and having a formal ethics training program in place ( $M = 2.90$ ). The total mean of all the means in this section was 1.80.

Respondents were surveyed to determine if they had peers which could be used as a sounding board for ethical dilemmas before determining an

Table 18

## Descriptive Data on Actions Related to Leadership

Item	Number	Mean	SD
17. I expect people to treat each other with respect in my school.	161	1.13	0.39
15. I encourage staff members to care about each other and help promote each other's well being.	162	1.25	0.46
26. I expect ethical conduct regardless of the prevailing values of the diverse school community.	162	1.30	0.47
25. I fully accept the consequences for upholding my principles and actions.	161	1.31	0.48
23. I model ethical behavior.	161	1.35	0.56
22. When presented with an ethical dilemma, I have peers which I use as a sounding board before determining an appropriate course of action.	163	1.70	0.76
24. In general, I subordinate my own interest to the good of the school community.	161	1.77	0.72
21. When hiring teachers, I try to find people who have similar values to mine.	160	1.82	0.77
16. Ethical questions or situations which arise are discussed in faculty meetings.	163	2.23	0.91
20. Staff are given time to reflect and internalize the meanings behind regulations and ethical standards.	163	2.39	0.92
19. A value audit should be conducted with staff members on an annual basis.	160	2.48	0.90
18. A formal ethics training program is in place at my school.	162	2.90	1.22

Note: Section M = 1.80

Based on 5 point scale from 1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree

appropriate course of action. In Statement 22, respondents agreed or strongly agreed (93.9%). When asked in Open-ended Question C, with whom they sought advice, several individuals surfaced (see Table 19). By far, the most prevalent answer was fellow principals, peers, and mentors (73.2%). Superiors (49.6%) and staff (44.7%) were also listed. In contrast, Respondent 63135 said, “Not BOE or Superintendents; they are too far removed from reality.”

Table 19

## Coded Responses to Principals’ Advisors

Question	Coded Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
C. When you face an ethical dilemma, with whom do you seek advice? (N = 123)	Fellow principal/peers/mentor	90	73.2
	Superiors	61	49.6
	Staff- AP, counselor, teachers	55	44.7
	Family- Spouse, parent	16	13.0
	God/prayer/church	13	10.6
	Inner values/voice	6	4.9
	Lawyer/legal council	4	3.3
	Human Resource Dept.	3	2.4

Note: Percentages are not intended to represent 100%.

Family members (13.0%) and God/prayer/church (10.6%) were listed as well. Six respondents mentioned reflecting on their own values or their inner voice.

Respondent 49665 wrote,

First and foremost, my inner voice tells me. It is very easy to ask what is right or wrong. Like I said previously, is this in the best interest of children?

If yes, I do it. If not, I do not! It is really quite simple. Or better yet, would my students be happy or sad to read about this action pertaining to me or a decision I have made on the front page of the paper? If no, I do not do it!

Four respondents listed their lawyer or legal council.

### *Aspects of a Positive Ethical Climate in an Ethical School*

Research Question 4 dealt with which aspects of a positive ethical climate needed to be present in order to have an ethical school. In open-ended Question E, respondents were asked for characteristics of an ethical school. Findings from this open-ended question were similar to the responses about actions of an ethical leader. Four themes emerged from the analysis of responses: Visible ethical traits from everyone in the school, ethical actions by school leadership and staff, availability of ethical program offerings, and a positive and ethical school climate (see Table 20).

Almost every respondent (97.4%) mentioned visible, ethical traits like the ones listed previously. Respondent 47298 wrote, "Respect and tolerance for every individual, honesty, and integrity, central to daily behaviors of all employees and students. Virtue, justice, trust, and commitment are habits, not just spoken words." Respondent 72436 crafted the following answer:

When teachers and students understand and can model leadership (influencing others), strength (a healthy lifestyle), community (the ability to get along with others), integrity (being complete or whole), and wisdom (applying what we know to our lives) then we will exhibit the qualities of an ethical school.



Table 20

## Coded Responses to Qualities of an Ethical School

Question	Coded Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
E. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an ethical school? (N = 117)	<u>Visible Ethical Traits</u>	114	97.4
	<u>Leadership and Staff</u>		
	Putting children first	21	17.9
	High expectations	11	9.4
	Teamwork/collaboration	3	2.6
	Training for staff in ethics	3	2.6
	Strong, ethical leader	2	1.7
	Time for reflection	2	1.7
	Code of Ethics disc/followed	2	1.7
	<u>Ethical Programs</u>		
	Teaches ethical traits/ character education program	6	5.1
	Equality in educational opportunities/enrichment	5	4.3
	Moral purpose/mission/pledge	4	3.4
	Rituals and ceremonies to reinforce core values	2	1.7
	<u>School Climate/Atmosphere</u>		
	Family atmosphere	5	4.3
	People want to be there	3	2.6
	Valued and honored parents	2	1.7
	Active parent involvement	2	1.7
	Few discipline problems	1	0.9
Happy children	1	0.9	
Safe/absence of threats	1	0.9	
School pride	1	0.9	

Another well represented theme was the behavior of leadership and staff of the school. Making decisions based on the best interest of students and

putting children first were mentioned by 17.9% of respondents. Respondent 71264 highlighted this concept by writing, "One that makes decisions that are first and foremost best for the kids, making sure everyone understands that this is why we do what we do." High expectations (9.4%), strong ethical leader (1.7%), and time for reflection (1.7%) were also listed. Training for the adults in ethics was mentioned (2.6%), with one respondent saying training should involve everyone. Discussing Codes of Ethics was mentioned by 1.7%.

The theme of ethical program offerings was also included by respondents. Equality in educational opportunities and enrichment programs were mentioned by 4.3%. Additional examples to this category were teaching ethical traits, character education, having a moral purpose, mission, or pledge, and participating in rituals and ceremonies to reinforce core values. Respondent 47337 said,

Everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Our daily pledge is, "Today I will do more than I have to do. I will treat others as I want to be treated. I will try to become a better person." This is recited daily with morning announcements.

The last recurring theme in the responses related to qualities of an ethical school involved a positive and ethical climate. Respondent 71042 stated in simple clarity, "An ethical school is where 'right' prevails a predominant amount of the time. When 'right' does not prevail, the students notice the 'wrong' and report and self correct." Relationships with families were also mentioned. Listed qualities were creating a family atmosphere (4.3%) having people that want to be

there (2.6%), valuing and honoring parents, and active parent involvement (1.7% each). Participant 52667 claimed to have 120 parent volunteers in his/her building every day.

Perhaps the most encompassing and proactive response to the qualities of an ethical school was given by Respondent 85725,

An ethical school treats all students with love, but expects them to achieve academically and socially. An ethical school deals with situations immediately, and does not ignore them. An ethical school discusses tough issues, makes tough decisions, and stands tough when it faces the reaction to its decisions.

### Summary

In this chapter, research questions were addressed, as well as the research design for this study, which included a descriptive, quantitative survey created by the researcher entitled, *The Principals' Perceptions Relating to Ethics*. The survey was based on the review of literature, as the best way to describe the perceptions of elementary principals in Georgia regarding their ethical philosophies, formal preparation in the field of ethics in their graduate leadership programs, and their actions relating to the development and maintenance of an ethical school.

The researcher selected a total of 915 principals by random selection from the total of the population. The final surveys completed were 169, which was a return rate of 18.5%. This was below the desired rate, limiting the researcher's ability to generalize to the entire population. Demographic information on

respondents included 111 females and 50 males. The majority of the sample's ethnicity was white. The years of experience in the principalship were evenly distributed.

Findings from the survey were reported on the responses related to principals' perceptions of their ethical philosophy, leadership preparation in ethics, and actions related to the development and maintenance of an ethical school. Research Question 1 addressed the perception of principals regarding their graduate leadership preparation. Findings from respondents presented a contradiction of responses. Responses to all statements were distributed over several agreement levels, rather than grouped by a similar opinion. A majority of respondents were in agreement that an entire ethics class should be offered at the graduate level. Respondents felt their graduate classes presented leadership as a moral endeavor and that they were afforded time in those classes to participate in case studies related to ethical dilemmas. When asked to respond to a statement about how prepared they were to deal with ethical dilemmas based on their graduate leadership work, the majority of respondents were neutral or in disagreement.

Respondents were given an opportunity to give specific feedback to their preparedness to handle ethical dilemmas due to their graduate level training. Again, the responses showed a dichotomy, with an almost identical number of respondents mentioning that they were "Well prepared" and "Not prepared." Although unsolicited, several respondents wrote that they were prepared by reasons other than their formal leadership training, including work experience,

personal characteristics and integrity, family and religious upbringing, and influences of mentors, peers, or supervisors.

Research Question 2 asked for the ethical philosophy of principals. Responses to this section were more uniform throughout. Several statements had 100% agreement, including the importance of modeling by the adults in the school, doing what is right as an ethical directive, and the principal's personal commitment to ethics being an important part of being an effective leader. Following closely behind in agreement, were the statements about encouraging a moral community taking more than having a Code of Ethics in place, the idea that leaders can facilitate the ethical development of followers, and that ethical reasoning can be cultivated and taught.

Respondents agreed with the uniqueness and criticality of elementary level in ethical development. When asked to list reasons why this was a critical time of ethical development, respondents mentioned the formative and foundational aspects, the importance of modeling from adults, and the innocence and vulnerability of children at this age. Some respondents mentioned the lack of ethical training of children from their parents, and adults in schools filling that void. Respondents were asked the level of importance of 10 ethical traits identified in the literature. Again, there was strong agreement in this section. Integrity, honesty, and respect topped the list. Compared to the other traits, virtue and justice were not listed with as much importance.

Research Question 3 addressed actions which encouraged an ethical climate. The most common response was the principal as a role model. Other

answers included discussion of ethical dilemmas in small and large groups, swift action related to ethical behavior, both by rewarding positive actions and punishing negative ones, and having clear and high expectations. Original ideas were mentioned by some respondents, including using literature to illustrate a point, continuing training in ethics for all staff, employing the right people, and leading others to ethical decisions. Principals identified people to whom they could go for advice. Fellow principals or peers, superiors, staff, and family were mentioned. Some respondents mentioned relying on an inner voice for direction. Others wrote about seeking legal council. Strongest agreement was reported with the concepts of the principal expecting respect and ethical conduct from each person in the school, regardless of the prevailing values of the diverse school community. Agreement was not as uniform with responses to having a formal ethics training program in place and conducting a value audit with staff members.

Research Question 4 asked for the qualities of an ethical school. As expected, answers to this question mirrored many of the previous section's answers. Likewise, an overwhelming majority used the original ethical traits for qualities of an ethical school. Ethical actions by leadership and staff were mentioned, including putting children first and having high expectations. Availability of ethical program offerings such as teaching of ethical traits and character education, having a moral purpose or mission, and rituals to reinforce core values fell into this category. Examples of a positive ethical school climate were given, and included a family atmosphere, equality in educational

opportunities, and school pride. Honoring parents and parent involvement were given as characteristics of an ethical school, as well.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of education is itself a moral endeavor (Butcher, 1997). Sergiovanni (1996) expressed this importance when he said, "Everything that happens in the schoolhouse has moral overtones that are virtually unmatched by other institutions in our society" (p. xii). Circumstances often arise in education that lead to predictable ethical dilemmas, and having an ethical leader is paramount to success in the handling of these dilemmas (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). The review of literature in relation to characteristics of effective educational leaders has been rich (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003; Lord, 2000; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996). There was little research in the literature, however, about ethical leadership and the perceptions of elementary principals in the areas of ethics and/or whether or not these same leaders promote the development and maintenance of an ethical climate in their respective schools.

The researcher summarized in this chapter, the research design, questions, instrumentation, and population. The researcher's findings of the study were analyzed and discussed. Conclusions and implications were addressed, as well as recommendations for further study. Planned dissemination of information was presented, as well as concluding thoughts from the researcher.

#### Summary

The researcher's purpose was to determine the perceptions of elementary principals in Georgia in the field of ethics. The overarching question for this study



was as follows: What are the perceptions of elementary principals in Georgia regarding their formal leadership preparation, ethical philosophy, and actions related to the development and maintenance of an ethical school? The following sub-questions were also addressed:

1. How prepared is the principal for ethical leadership due to his/her graduate level leadership coursework?
2. What are the ethical beliefs of the principal?
3. What actions does the principal perform to encourage and sustain an ethical climate?
4. What aspects of a positive ethical climate are present in an ethical school?

A descriptive, quantitative methodology was used in survey form in order to gain perceptions from the greatest number of participants in a systematic and objective fashion (Nardi, 2003; Glesne, 1999). Open-ended questions was included in order to promote more specific and detailed information. The survey was validated by a panel of nine experts in the field of ethical research. Modifications were incorporated into the survey. It was then piloted with a group of eight volunteer elementary principals from Richmond County, Georgia. A test for consistency of answers from the pilot group was calculated using Cronbach's alpha at the .79 level, which met the acceptable level of .70 (Yu, 2006).

Six hundred respondents were randomly chosen from the total population of elementary principals in Georgia to receive the survey by email, with a target return of 291 in order to generalize to the entire population (Gay & Airasian,

2000). By the survey deadline, only 76 principals had completed the survey. After a reminder and deadline extension, a total of 115 surveys were completed. The researcher identified additional elementary principals, and emailed an additional 315 surveys, for a total of 915. Completed surveys increased to 169, constituting an 18.5% return rate. This return rate limited the researcher's ability to generalize to the total population. The majority of respondents were female (N = 111, 66%). The majority of respondents listed their ethnicity as white (N = 142, 84%), with African American being chosen by 20 respondents (12%). The experience level of respondents was distributed relatively evenly, with 28.2% having one to three years in the principalship, 29.5% with four to six years, 13.5% with seven to nine years, and 28.8% with 10 or more years of experience.

#### Analysis of Research Findings

Although the researcher was limited in her ability to generalize to the total population of elementary principals, important findings were identified by the sample in relation to their leadership preparation in ethics, ethical philosophy, and actions related to the development and maintenance of an ethical school.

##### *Preparation in the Field of Ethics*

Analysis of findings from this study identified an interesting contradiction of responses in relation to perceptions of preparation in the field of ethics because of formal leadership training. Respondents felt an emphasis on ethics was present in their programs, and that they were able to participate in case studies related to ethical dilemmas. The majority of respondents were in agreement that an entire ethics class should be offered at the graduate level, as well. Despite the

support of their ethical training in these areas, findings from the Likert section relating to the personal level of preparation due to their ethical training showed the majority of respondents felt neutral or disagreed. In the examination of the open-ended data, findings reinforced the Likert data, with half of respondents stating that they were only somewhat or not prepared. Only a third of respondents were in agreement with being prepared to handle ethical dilemmas as they arose due to their formal ethical training. Instead, respondents listed alternate reasons for being prepared to handle ethical dilemmas rather than their formal leadership training. Examples listed included work experience, relying on personal characteristics and integrity, and their family and or religious upbringing. Others mentioned persons from which they learned.

### *Ethical Philosophy*

Responses to the section on personal beliefs of principals related to their ethical philosophy showed more uniform responses. Respondents were in 100% agreement or strong agreement with statements including the importance of modeling ethical behavior by the leader, making decisions based on the best interest of students as an important ethical directive, and the principal's personal commitment to ethics being an important aspect of an effective leader.

In response to statements about ethical development, respondents agreed that ethical reasoning skills could be cultivated and learned, and that the elementary school years were a critical time in the students' overall ethical development. When asked to elaborate on reasons for this critical time, respondents listed these years as being formative or foundational, the

importance of adult modeling, and the innocence of children at this age. Eight respondents mentioned the lack of ethical training from home for some children. Ten respondents felt all levels of education were important to ethical development, and the elementary level was not unique.

Respondents were asked to list the importance of 10 ethical. They felt all 10 of the ethical traits were important. Integrity, honesty, and respect were rated as the most important. Virtue and justice showed choices being distributed more evenly between being most important and somewhat important.

#### *Actions Related to the Development and Maintenance of an Ethical School*

Respondents felt secure in their own actions towards the development and maintenance of an ethical school. They strongly agreed that modeling ethical behavior is an important job of a leader and felt their actions do model ethical behavior. Responses to an open-ended question indicated the principal as role model and practicing what they preach as the most often listed characteristic action in encouraging a positive ethical climate. Respondents strongly agreed that they expect people to treat each other with respect in their schools. They also agreed that they encourage staff members to care about each other and help promote each other's well being, expect ethical conduct, and fully accept consequences for upholding their principles and actions.

In relation to ethics programs in place in their schools, respondents were less confident. When asked if they had a formal ethics training program, more respondents were neutral or disagreed. When asked about conducting a value audit with staff on an annual basis, only half of respondents agreed. A third of the

respondents were neutral. When asked to respond to a statement about allowing time for discussion of ethical issues in faculty meeting, most were in agreement.

Open-ended responses to actions respondents found successful in encouraging a positive climate yielded interesting results. In addition to the principal acting as role model which was noted previously, discussing ethical dilemmas and acting in a swift manner when situations arose were mentioned. Nine respondents listed character education programs. Listening and talking with students and staff were mentioned, as well. Others listed leading others to ethical decisions, and one brought up using literature to illustrate an ethical point.

#### *Qualities of an Ethical School*

Respondents were asked to list qualities of an ethical school. As expected, many items listed were reiterations from the previous section, since actions could be translated into visible signs of proof. The ethical traits which were listed by the researcher in the philosophy were mentioned in the qualities of an ethical school by almost all of respondents. Actions of leadership and staff were mentioned, such as putting children first, having high expectations, and training for staff. Offering ethical programs and activities for children were seen as ethical qualities. Activities included teaching ethical traits and character education, having a moral purpose, mission, or pledge, equality in educational opportunities and enrichment activities, and rituals and ceremonies to reinforce core values and celebrate ethical actions. Attention to the school climate and atmosphere was mentioned as well. Five respondents mentioned having a family atmosphere. One respondent said "People who want to be there." Two

respondents listed valuing parents, and having active parent participation. A safe, threat free school fell into this category as well.

### Discussion of Research Findings

The researcher's findings had similarities and differences when compared to the information from the review of literature. These similarities and differences have been listed below, incorporating the areas of development and preparation in the field of ethics, ethical philosophy, and actions related to ethical leadership.

#### *Development and Preparation in the Field of Ethics*

Respondents in this study were in agreement that their graduate leadership programs presented education as a moral endeavor, emphasized ethics, and provided opportunities for ethical case study participation. These findings were in contradiction to other findings by the same respondents, who reported that they felt neutral or unprepared by their formal leadership graduate classes to deal with ethical situations.

The lack of preparedness from leadership programs to deal with ethical situations coincides with research found by Pardini (2004b) and Cranston et al. (2003). Dempster and Berry (2003) noted a critical need for professional development activities to help principals with ethical decision making. They found principals felt unprepared in ethical professional development training, and noted the need for continued staff development once they were in the principalship. Only one respondent in this study, however, mentioned continued staff development or training of any kind for himself once he was in the position of local school leader.

Barnett (2004) analyzed graduate training programs for effective preparation to imbed the ISLLC Standards into their performance as a school leader. He found that knowledge of the ISLLC Standards without annual review were ineffective in and of themselves and the graduates he studied were ill equipped to carry out these standards. No respondents in this researcher's study mentioned knowledge or importance of the ISLLC Standards. This omission may not infer they were unaware of the standards, or the fact that ISCCCL Standard Five dealt exclusively with the subject of ethics and ethical leadership, but the omission leads one to determine that the ISLLC Standards were not a leading factor in decision making for the respondents in ethical situations.

Although participants in this study felt unprepared for ethical situations based on their formal preparation programs, many expressed preparedness due to a number of different factors. In two separate studies, Rakip (2003) and Lucas (2000) studied the backgrounds of persons of trust and highly moral leaders to determine the driving forces behind their actions. Like the participants in this study, formal ethical training was not a driving force. Rakip's participants listed their personal integrity which was formed by observation of significant adults and models in their lives. Lucas's participants mentioned early influencers and role models as well. Participants in this study listed relying on their personal integrity or inner voice. Similar driving forces, such as their family upbringing, church or religious beliefs, and their own mentors or peers as influencers and role models in relation to ethical and moral understandings were mentioned by respondents.

### *Ethical Philosophy and Characteristics*

Whether educators were prepared by formal training or experience, the ethical philosophy of leaders was found to be important, based on the review of literature. This philosophy was often attributed to leadership characteristics, which have been extensively reported in the literature (Marzano et al., 2005). Personal integrity was frequently mentioned in the literature as an important leadership trait (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Michie & Gootie, 2005; Kidder, 2005; Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Engelbrecht et al., 2004). Grisham (2003) surveyed superintendents in Georgia to determine the most sought after values of principal candidates. Seventy-nine percent of respondents chose integrity and honesty as their first choice. Respondents in the researcher's study mentioned relying on their own ethical characteristics and integrity as the basis for their actions and decision making. In the list of ethical traits, integrity was given the most importance, as was the result of Mc Gahey's (2003) qualitative study of important ethical traits of school leaders. Moorhouse's (2003) Delphi technique sought consensus from business, education, political, and religious representatives. Findings from the Moorhouse study also indicated the most important ethical trait as integrity.

Buskey (2005) tested and refined the theory of "Moral Magnetism." He described this theory by the example of principals having a strong commitment to a moral imperative. Respondents in this study supported this belief, based on 100% agreement or strong agreement with the statement, "The principal's personal commitment to ethics is an important part of being an effective leader."



Buskey also mentioned the importance of leaders providing support for their teachers both in the classroom and on a personal level. This concept was supported in this researcher's findings as well, with 99% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statement, "I encourage staff members to care about each other and help promote each other's well being."

The importance of the elementary years was noted in the literature as the most critical time in character development of children (Lake, 2004; Upright, 2002; Lickona, 1997,1991). The respondents in this study agreed or strongly agreed with this concept in the statement, "Leadership in an elementary school has unique ramifications due to the formative years of ethical development of the students". In an open-ended question, 108 respondents gave reasons why the elementary years were the most critical time in the character development of children. Only 10 respondents disagreed, and stated that the elementary years were no different than other educational levels in the importance of character development. Respondents in this researcher's study mentioned student who were not getting ethical training at home, as did Etzioni (1993).

#### *Actions Related to Leadership*

Having a strong ethical philosophy is pointless without ethical action (Kidder, 2005). The important act of leaders setting an ethical example was reported by several researchers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Schminke et al., 2005; Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Rakip, 2003; Moorehouse, 2002). Respondents from this researcher's study confirmed this belief, with their answers in several sections relating to modeling ethical behavior and "walking the talk." The importance of

modeling surfaced in the responses related to ethical philosophy, where respondents chose “Modeling of ethical behavior is an important job of a leader” with 100% agreement. In response to an open-ended question about the critical development period of elementary students, respondents listed modeling of adults as the second most common reason. In response to actions of an ethical leader, 98.1% were in agreement with the statement, “I model ethical behavior.” In the open-ended response to the same question, the most common answer was the principal as role model.

Transformational leadership has also been linked to a high ethical directive (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Turner et al., 2003; Kanungo, 2001; Mendonca, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1996). Burns (1978) claimed, “Transformational leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (as cited in Robbins & Alvy, 2004, p.281). Two respondents mentioned leading others to ethical decisions which directly corresponds to characteristics of transformational leaders. Additional traits of transformational leadership were reported by respondents and included listening and talking with staff and students, shared leadership, and teamwork and collaboration.

Previous researchers have reported information about use of codes in the field of ethics. These researchers warned of these codes as being “window dressing” and ineffective by themselves (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Mendonca, 2001). Based on the open-ended responses in this researcher’s study, it can be assumed that two respondents felt that the lone action of going over the Georgia Code of Ethics in the beginning of the year was proof that they had an ethical

school, since it was the only answer they gave to show qualities of an ethical school.

Dempster et al. (2004) asked principals from whom they felt they could seek advice when making tough ethical decisions. Seventy-three percent of their respondents said other principals. Second on their list were senior department officers. This researcher's findings mirrored those findings closely, with 73.2% stating they first go to fellow principals when faced with an ethical dilemma and second mentioning superiors.

The literature is clear that leaders should nurture an ethical climate in their schools (Engelbrecht et al., 2005; Schminke et al., 2005; Cullen et al., 2001; Mendonca, 2001). Others refer to this as creating a moral community (Zubay & Soltis, 2005; Sergiovanni, 1996). This researcher's findings support the findings of those researchers. Examples included comments from an open-ended question which included nurturing actions such as keeping the best interests of children in the forefront of decision making, being open and honest, showing respect, discussion of ethical dilemmas with staff and students, having clear expectations, and responding to the ethical actions, such as rewarding positive occurrences.

When discussing the best focus of ethical programs, Trevino et al.(1999) found integrity or value based programs were most effective. They identified key components of ethical leadership, fair treatment of employees, and open dialog about ethics. Those researchers' findings are reinforced by this researcher's

findings, based on the open-ended responses mentioning fairness, discussion of ethical issues as they arise, and talking and listening to others.

Zubay and Soltis (2005) reported the need for cooperation of administration, teachers, students, and parents in order to establish an ethical school. Respondents in this study noted working together with shared leadership, teamwork and collaboration, as well as the feedback from one respondent on the importance of active parent involvement and the need to value and honor parents.

### Conclusions

The following are the researcher's conclusions based on the review of literature and the researcher's findings discovered in the course of this study:

1. Responding principals understand the importance of their responsibility to model ethical values and behaviors.
2. Many principals feel that their ethical leadership preparation in graduate school was not sufficient, even though they agree the programs emphasized ethics, approached education as an ethical endeavor, and provided time for ethical case studies. Instead of relying on their formal training, many have relied on their experiences on the job, personal characteristics, and support from peers.
3. Although principals feel a strong personal commitment to ethics, many principals do not have formal ethical training programs in place for their school community, especially in terms of developing an ethical climate that includes the input from all community stakeholders.

## Implications

Although a representative sample for the population of elementary principals in Georgia was not attained in this study, implications can still be drawn for the field of educational administration. Despite the lack of attention and monitoring of ethical behavior in the field of education as identified in the literature, the respondents in this study felt a strong personal commitment to an ethical directive. Leaders in educational administration can be encouraged by this information, and focus attention on highlighting such personal commitment. Central office personnel should consider the incorporation of some type of ethical criteria in their selection of administrators. A long range goal should be the incorporation of a performance appraisal with special attention devoted to the ethical actions of the principal, as well as their leadership in training staff towards the creation of an ethical school.

Collegiate educators should examine the focus and amount of ethical training being incorporated into leadership classes. The wide range of responses from this researcher's study highlights the uneven distribution of ethical training of the respondents from areas in Georgia. Rigorous ethical training programs must be incorporated at every accredited university in Georgia, to bring the quality of education through leadership to its rightful place as a moral endeavor.

Since principals rely so heavily on other principals for support and advice, principals should speak up and share their beliefs and ideals about acting with integrity and honesty when discussing ethical issues with their peers, even in the face of difficult situations.

## Recommendations

Based on the review of literature and data gathered from respondents in this researcher's study, the following recommendations are presented:

1. Further research should be conducted on this topic in order to gain a true representative sample of the population of elementary principals in Georgia, as well as the expansion of the study to the middle and high school levels.
2. Research in the field of ethics should be expanded to incorporate other stakeholders, such as teachers, staff, and parents who have a vested interest in elementary education.
3. School systems should incorporate ethical standards into their hiring and evaluation processes for elementary principals in Georgia. A performance appraisal for principals should be developed based on ISLLC Standard Five, which states, "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner" (p. 18).
4. School leaders should incorporate continuing education in ethical studies for all employees in the school, including the principal. Focus should be spent on actual situations common to the elementary arena and incorporated into categories found in the Code of Ethics for Georgia Educators.

5. School leaders should examine the ethical climate of their schools and collaborate with staff, students, parents, and community to nurture and strengthen this climate.
6. The Georgia Code of Ethics should be amended to include positive ethical criteria.
7. Administration from graduate leadership institutions should examine their programs in relation to the expansion of ethical training to a rigorous level and be more uniform in delivery to all higher educational facilities in Georgia.

#### Dissemination

The researcher's findings will be distributed to several individuals. First, she will give findings to any participant in the study who has made a request to receive same. Findings will also be shared with the researcher's superintendent and county administrators, as well as principals in Richmond County, who were involved in the pilot study. As requested, findings from this study will be shared with John Grant, Chief Investigator for the Professional Standards Commission, for his use in conference presentations throughout the state of Georgia.

The researcher will submit articles about this study to publications. The following journals will be contacted: *Leadership Quarterly*, *Journal of School Leadership*, *Early Childhood Education Journal*, and *School Leadership and Management*. Contents of this study will also be disseminated to *Dissertation Abstracts International*.

The Association for Moral Education (AME) offers Kuhmerder Dissertation Awards each year in recognition and commendation of doctoral dissertations in the field of moral development ([www.amenetwork.org](http://www.amenetwork.org)). The researcher will submit her abstract and application to this organization for consideration.

### Concluding Thoughts

This researcher is passionate about ethical leadership. Her disappointment at this study's response rate does not diminish this passion. As an elementary principal, she has the opportunity to "walk the talk." She will continue to strive in her actions towards the words of Kidder (2005) in relation to moral courage, when he said, "While people may have fine values and develop great skill at moral reasoning and ethical decision making, such mental activity counts for little if their decisions sit unimplemented on the shelf. What's so often needed is a third step: the moral courage to put those decisions into action" (p. viii).



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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
EXPERTS USED IN VALIDATION OF INSTRUMENT

## APPENDIX A

## EXPERTS USED IN VALIDATION OF INSTRUMENT

*Published Authors in the Field of Ethics*

Paul T. Begley- Professor of Education, Pennsylvania State University

Elizabeth Campbell- Associate Professor, Ontario Institute for Studies in  
Education of the University of Toronto

Wayne Hoy- Fawcett Professor of Educational Administration, Ohio State  
University

Mary Jackson- Associate Professor, Georgia Southern University

Marshall Schminke- Professor of Management, College of Business  
Administration, University of Central Florida

Jason Stefkovich- Department Head, Education Policy Studies, Pennsylvania  
State University

*Representatives from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission*

Vicky Brantley- Founder of the PSC Ethics Division, Retired

John Grant- Chief Investigator

Gary Walker- Director, Ethics Division

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT

## COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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### DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, TECHNOLOGY, AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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#### **INFORMED CONSENT**

1. I am a doctoral student working under the direction of Dr. James Burnham in the Department of Leadership, Technology, and Human Development at Georgia Southern University. I am conducting a research study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.
2. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to identify elementary school principals' perceptions of their ethical philosophy, formal leadership preparation, and actions related to the development and maintenance of an ethical school.
3. Procedures to be followed: Participation in this research will include completion of 28 Likert style questions, ranking of 10 ethical traits, and answering four open-ended questions.
4. Discomforts and Risks: There are no risks associated with participation in this study except for the possible discomfort in dealing with the sensitive ethical issues.
5. Benefits:
  - a. The benefits to the participant include learning more about yourself relating to ethical issues by focusing on the areas of your philosophy, preparation, and actions.
  - b. The benefits to society include an awareness of the need for strong ethical leadership preparation programs and a better understanding of how elementary principals perceive their role in the development and maintenance of an ethical school.
6. Duration/Time: This survey will take about 15 minutes to complete.
7. Statement of Confidentiality: The researcher will make every effort to protect your name and school affiliation. Internet security cannot be guaranteed. The risk of others reading your responses is very small. However, neither the researcher nor Georgia Southern University can guarantee total anonymity.
8. Right to Ask Questions: Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact Laura Hughes or the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. James Burnham, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant or the IRB approval process, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-681-0843.

9. Compensation: There are no costs or compensations associated with participation in the research.
10. Voluntary Participation: You do not have to participate in this research; you may end your participation at any time by not returning the instrument. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.
11. Penalty: There is no penalty for deciding not to participate in the study; if you decide at any time you do not want to participate further you may withdraw without penalty or retribution.

Please keep this consent form for your records.

Title of Project: Georgia Elementary Principals' Perceptions of their Ethical Philosophy, Formal Leadership Preparation, and Actions Related to the Development and Maintenance of an Ethical School.

Investigator: Laura M. Hughes, 500 N. Main Street, Dearing, GA 30808, 706-986-4900, [hughesl@mcduffie.k12.ga.us](mailto:hughesl@mcduffie.k12.ga.us)

Faculty Advisor: Dr. James Burnham, Georgia Southern University, Department of Leadership, Technology, and Human Development, P.O. Box 8131, Statesboro, GA 30460, 912-681-5567, [jburnham@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:jburnham@georgiasouthern.edu)



APPENDIX C  
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

## Principals' Perceptions Relating to Ethics

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey with your opinions relating to ethics. Please complete the survey by September 22, 2006.

### Part I: Preparation in the Field of Ethics

Please use the following scale to rate your perceptions of your graduate leadership course preparation in the field of ethics. Select the level that describes your perceptions.

**SA- Strongly Agree    A= Agree    N= Neutral    D= Disagree    SD= Strongly Disagree**

- |  |    |   |   |   |    |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| 1. There was an emphasis for ethics training in my leadership preparation program.   | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 2. In my leadership classes, I was afforded time to participate in case studies related to ethical dilemmas.                 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 3. In my leadership classes, education was presented as a moral endeavor.  | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 4. An entire ethics course is not needed in leadership preparation classes.  | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 5. Several ethics courses were offered in my leadership program.   | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 6. Of the ethical dilemmas I have faced as principal, I was prepared to deal with them based on my leadership graduate work. | SA | A | N | D | SD |

### Part II: Ethical Philosophy

Please use the following scale to rate your perceptions based on your personal beliefs as they relate to leadership in your school. Select the level that describes your perceptions.

**SA- Strongly Agree    A= Agree    N= Neutral    D= Disagree    SD= Strongly Disagree**

- |  |    |   |   |   |    |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| 7. Ethical reasoning skills can be cultivated and learned. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|

8. Encouraging a moral community takes more than having a Code of Ethics in place at school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
9. Leadership in an elementary school has unique ramifications due to the formative years of ethical development of the students.	SA	A	N	D	SD
10. The principal's personal commitment to ethics is an important part of being an effective leader.	SA	A	N	D	SD
11. There just isn't enough time in the day to stop and reflect on ethical decisions.	SA	A	N	D	SD
12. Modeling of ethical behavior is an important job of a leader.	SA	A	N	D	SD
13. Leaders can facilitate the ethical development of followers.	SA	A	N	D	SD
14. Doing what is in the best interest of students is an important ethical directive.	SA	A	N	D	SD

### Part III: Actions Related to Leadership

Please use the following scale to rate the behaviors you perform yourself or encourage others to do in your school. Select the level that describes your perceptions.

**SA- Strongly Agree**    **A= Agree**    **N= Neutral**    **D= Disagree**    **SD= Strongly Disagree**

15. I encourage staff members to care about each other and help promote each other's well being.	SA	A	N	D	SD
16. Ethical questions or situations which arise are discussed in faculty meetings.	SA	A	N	D	SD
17. Students are encouraged and expected to be treated with respect and show respect.	SA	A	N	D	SD
18. A formal ethics training program is in place at my school.	SA	A	N	D	SD

19. A value audit should be conducted with staff members on an annual basis.	SA	A	N	D	SD
20. Staff are given time to reflect and internalize the meanings behind regulations and ethical standards.	SA	A	N	D	SD
21. When hiring teachers, I try to find people who have similar values to mine.	SA	A	N	D	SD
22. When presented with an ethical dilemma, I have peers which I use as a sounding board before determining an appropriate course of action.	SA	A	N	D	SD
23. I model ethical behavior.	SA	A	N	D	SD
24. In general, I subordinate my own interest to the good of the school community.	SA	A	N	D	SD
25. I fully accept the consequences for upholding my principles and actions.	SA	A	N	D	SD
26. I expect ethical conduct regardless of the prevailing values of the diverse school community.	SA	A	N	D	SD

#### Part IV: Ethical Traits

Please check each of the following ethical traits on a scale from least important to most important. You may duplicate your answers.

Trait	Most Important		Somewhat Important		Least Important
Respect					
Tolerance					
Trust					
Responsibility					
Integrity					
Justice					
Compassion					
Virtue					



## Part VI: Demographic Data

Please check the appropriate responses.

Sex:

Male

Female

Race/Ethnicity:

White

African American

Hispanic

Asian

Multi

Other

Total years of experience as a principal:

1-3

4-6

7-9

10-12

13 or more

If you are interested in pursuing further dialog about this topic or would like a copy of the results, please email me at [hughesl@mcduffie.k12.ga.us](mailto:hughesl@mcduffie.k12.ga.us)

APPENDIX D  
IRB APPROVAL

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs <b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>		
Phone: 912-681-5465		Administrative Annex
		P.O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-681-0719	Ovrsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

**To:** Laura M. Hughes  
4513 Guildford Ct.  
Evans, GA 30809

**CC:** Dr. James Burnham, Faculty Advisor  
P. O. Box 8131

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** August 10, 2006

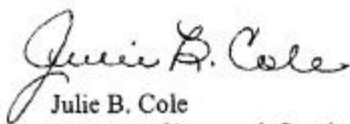
**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H06245**, and titled "**Georgia Elementary Principals' Perceptions of their Ethical Philosophy, Formal Leadership Preparation in Ethics, and Actions Related to the Development and Maintenance of an Ethical School**", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.*

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.** If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Julie B. Cole  
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs