Ascertaining Perceptions among Community College Leaders Regarding Ethical Leadership and Ethical Reasoning

Renay Barkley Herndon

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/td

Recommended Citation

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Scholars Junction. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholars Junction. For more information, please contact scholcomm@msstate.libanswers.com.
Ascertaining perceptions among community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning

By

Renay Barkley Herndon

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of Mississippi State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Community College Leadership in the Department of Leadership and Foundations

Mississippi State, Mississippi

May 2015
Ascertaining perceptions among community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning

By

Renay Barkley Herndon

Approved:

__________________________
Stephanie King.
(Major Professor)

__________________________
Arthur Stumpf
(Minor Professor)

__________________________
James Davis
(Committee Member)

__________________________
Marty Wiseman
(Committee Member)

__________________________
Richard Blackbourn
Dean
College of Education
Ethical leadership and ethical reasoning in higher education have been the focus of many concerns as universities and colleges attempt to prepare and train educational leaders, particularly in light of high-profile scandals involving educational leaders. Scholars are increasingly interested in why unethical behavior continues to be problematic among leaders. Unethical behavior continues to exist, even though diverse strategies have been incorporated in programs that prepare prospective leaders for leadership roles (i.e., leadership programs and graduate programs). This study addressed the perceptions among community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning and what guides ethical decision-making among community college leaders.

A qualitative study was conducted using a questionnaire designed specifically for this study. The researcher collected data by conducting face-to-face interviews with 15 community college leaders in Alabama. The findings of this research demonstrated that community college leaders believe that ethical leadership is more about who the leader is
and what a leader does. Additionally, ethical leadership incorporates fairness, integrity, and concern for others into the leadership style.

Ethical reasoning among community college leaders tends to be three dimensional; it is about the situation, institutional obligations, and other institutional endeavors. Participants believe that community college leaders in Alabama relate ethics and decision-making to duty and institutional obligations. Research results indicated that the answer to leaders behaving more ethically lies in the quality of programs that train leaders (i.e., graduate programs and leadership training programs). Participants suggested that programs have improved. However, a more comprehensive and intensive concentration on ethics and ethical behavior should be incorporated into graduate and leadership training programs. Specifically, there should be more opportunities to learn from real life ethical case studies and more role playing scenarios.
DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family, friends, and colleagues. A special thanks to my daughter and son-in-law, Tracey Michelle and Julius Howard, for their unwavering support and encouragement during this journey. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, Mary Alice Barkley and the late Venzella Barkley; whose words of encouragement echoed in my ears throughout this endeavor.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my church family who has supported me throughout the process. I will always appreciate my pastors who supported me through scriptures and prayers. This dissertation is dedicated, most of all, to my granddaughter, Aimee Renay Howard, for being my cheerleader throughout this journey.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I humbly thank God for the courage, knowledge, and tenacity to complete this dissertation journey, for, without God, I could not have made it. I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my committee chair Professor Stephanie King, Ph.D., who has the attitude and patience of a true professional. Dr. King continuously conveyed knowledge and wisdom in regard to research and scholarship and an excitement in regard to teaching. Without her guidance and persistent help, this dissertation would not have been possible.

I would like to thank my committee members, Professor Dan Stumpf, Ph.D., and Professor James Davis, Ph.D., whose work demonstrated to me that concern for credible, scholarly, and ethical research, should always be the major goals of the researcher.

In addition, a thank you to Professor Marty Wiseman, Ph.D., who introduced me to the excitement for research and whose enthusiasm for research had a lasting influence. I thank Mississippi State University for permission to conduct this study. I also thank Elsevier Limited and Wiley-Blackwell for permission to include adaptations from scholarly works in my dissertation.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.................................................................................................................... ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS............................................................................................... iii

LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................ vii

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................ viii

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................1

  Statement of the Problem...................................................................................2

  Purpose of the Study ..........................................................................................3

  Research Questions ..........................................................................................4

  Definition of Key Terms ...................................................................................4

  Conceptual Framework ......................................................................................7

  Theoretical Framework .....................................................................................11

  Overview of Methodology ...............................................................................15

  Delimitations .....................................................................................................16

  Significance of the Study ...................................................................................16

  Organization of the Dissertation .......................................................................17

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ................................................................................18

  Community Colleges: Historical and Current Perspectives.............................22
      Historical Perspectives ..................................................................................23
      Current Perspectives .....................................................................................26

  Ethics Defined ...................................................................................................27

  Ethical Theories: Guidelines for Ethical Reasoning ........................................28
      Virtue-based Ethics Theory ..........................................................................30
      Kant’s Categorical Imperative Theory ..........................................................31
      Utilitarianism Theory ..................................................................................33

      Theory of Justice ..........................................................................................34
      The Ethics of Care Theory ..........................................................................35

      Ethical Egoism Theory ...............................................................................37

  Ethical and Moral Reasoning Models ..............................................................38

  Leadership Theories ........................................................................................42

  Great Man Theory ............................................................................................44
III. METHODOLOGY .................................................................................60

Overview ..............................................................................................60
Research Design ..................................................................................60
Research Questions ...........................................................................61
Research Site ......................................................................................62
Sampling ................................................................................................62
Population ............................................................................................63
Participants ..........................................................................................63
Instruments and Materials ..................................................................64
Data Collection Procedures .................................................................66
Data Analysis ......................................................................................68
Validity and Reliability .......................................................................71
Summary ..............................................................................................72

IV. RESULTS OF THE STUDY ...................................................................73

Part 1: Demographic Profiles ...............................................................74
Part 2: Research Questions ..................................................................75
Part 3: Category of Responses to Interview Questions .........................87
Part 4: Discussion and Analysis ............................................................96

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, LIMITATION OF STUDY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .................................................102

Summary of the Study .........................................................................102
Conclusions ........................................................................................104
Limitations of the Study .....................................................................105
Recommendations for Further Study ..................................................106
Implications for Further Research .......................................................106

REFERENCES ..........................................................................................108

APPENDIX

A. MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL .........................133
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>PERMISSION LETTER FOR STUDY SITE APPROVAL</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>PERMISSION STATEMENT FROM ORIGINATORS FOR FIGURE 2</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>PERMISSION STATEMENT FROM ORIGINATORS FOR TABLE 1</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>PERMISSION STATEMENT FROM ORIGINATORS OF QUESTIONAIRE</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.</td>
<td>REQUEST E-MAIL FOR STUDY PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.</td>
<td>CONSENT FORM</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.</td>
<td>INTERVIEW GUIDE SHEET</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Four Components of Transformational Leadership</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Classic Leadership Theories Chart Commonly Used Theories in Leadership Research</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Research Questions Perceptions, Theory, and Literature</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Significant Statements Source: Data From Participants’ Interviews</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thematic Categories: Source: Researcher’s Data, for Illustration Purposes</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Participant’s Responses to Interview Question 1: What Do You Perceive As Ethical Leadership?</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Participant’s Responses to Interview Question 2: What Is Your Perception Regarding Ethical Leadership among Administrators in Alabama’s College System?</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Participant’s Responses to Interview Question 3: What Do You Perceive as Ethical Reasoning?</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Participant’s Responses to Interview Question 4: What Is Your Perception Regarding Ethical Reasoning among Administrators in Alabama’s College System?</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Participant’s Responses to Question 5: What Factors Do You Consider Important When Making Ethical Decisions?</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Participant’s Responses to Interview Question 6: In Your Opinion, What Individuals or Organizational Policies Have the Most Influence on the Ethical Culture within Your Institution?</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

1  Conceptual Framework Diagram. Note: A visual illustration of the conceptual framework for this study..........................................................9

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

For several years, articles reporting moral violations and issues regarding unethical behaviors among community college leaders have bombarded local newspapers (Bracey-Wilson, 2010; Butler, 2009; Ciulla, 2003; Dikeman, 2007). The media has consistently broadcasted numerous incidents of corrupt behavior among community college leaders; now because of public exposure, society is questioning the integrity of community college leaders (Butler, 2009; Chaleff, 2003; DeRussy & Langbert, 2005). Additionally, community college leaders are being questioned in reference to their ability to make appropriate moral decisions (Minnis, 2011). Scholars agree that there is a public demand for moral leaders with vision and integrity and currently this demand for ethical leadership is greater than ever (Bennis, 2004; Ciulla, 2003; Hellmich, 2007; Kidder, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Vaughn, 2006). Although public opinion asserts that an increased regulatory mandate by governmental officials is the answer, scholars agree that more urgency should be placed on addressing the duty of moral and ethical behaviors among leaders (Fallan, 2003; Johnson, 2007; Sergiovanni, 1992).

From its inception, higher education has held the responsibility of promoting the advancement of education and upholding the highest academic and ethical principles (Fong, 2002; Pardini, 2004; Poff, 2004; Thomas & Bainbridge, 2001; Vaughn, 2006). The expectation that leaders will be ethical and serve as a moral compass is not a new
concept; an ethical approach to leadership and reasoning has always been an assumption among society (Begley, 2003). According to Sobol, (2002) concerning ethical behavior and ethical decisions, educators have an unusual obligation that surpasses that of others, like corporate leaders.

As students continue to enroll and attend institutions of higher education, there will remain an expectation that upon graduation students will possess the necessary skills to transition from students to productive ethical citizens (DeRussy & Langbert, 2005; Fong, 2002; Poff, 2004). Therefore, educational leaders have a responsibility to demonstrate behaviors that are appropriate for students to emulate and which support the development of an ethical academic environment (DeRussy, 2003). According to Poff (2004), if effective teaching, learning, and moral development are to take place at higher education institutions, providing an ethical teaching and learning environment is essential.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem investigated in this study was perceptions of ethical leadership and ethical reasoning held by practicing community college leaders in a rural community college in Alabama. Current news reports are inundated with incidents of unethical and corrupt behavior among educational leaders; incidents that demonstrate that educational leaders are choosing to place personal interests above the well-being of higher education institutions (Butler, 2009; Kelly, 2009). Blackledge (2006a) investigated and reported numerous incidents involving corruption among Alabama’s community colleges administrators. On October, 8, 2006, Blackledge, (2006b) reported that dozens of legislators paid 2-year colleges for questionable transactions. Ashburn (2007) wrote that
scandal rocks Alabama’s 2-year college system and reported numerous illegal allegations attributed to community college administrators. It is imperative for the sustainability of educational institutions that educational leaders do not disregard the obligation to be moral and ethical leaders. Despite the increased interest in unethical behavior among leaders, it is surprising that so little empirical research has been conducted on the subject.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to collect data and ascertain the diverse and multiple meanings constructed by community college leaders as they encounter and experience ethical challenges. This study was designed to ascertain community college leaders’ beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. Additionally, the study was designed to determine what guides decision-making practices.

During the initial stage of research, ethical leadership was defined as “leadership that will unite followers in shared visions and that will improve organizations and societies at large” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 15). However, throughout the course of this study, the researcher discovered that the definition should include the quality of the relationship among the leader and follower. Ethical or moral reasoning referred to “having an ethical component incorporated into the reasoning or decision-making process” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 20). As the study unfolded, the definitions that emerged, were more comprehensive and complex.
Research Questions

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of community college leaders regarding ethical leadership?
2. What are the perceptions of community college leaders regarding ethical reasoning?
3. What do community college leaders believe should guide ethical reasoning?

Definition of Key Terms

The terms listed in this section are for clarification and to present a clear understanding of the use of terms in the study.

1. Character: Character refers to a “morally neutral term describing the nature of a person in terms of major qualities” (Josephson, 2011, p. 2).
2. Community college leaders: For the purpose of this study community college leaders include deans, associate deans, and directors who have the responsibility of supervising, coordinating, directing, and evaluating institutional affairs (Navarez & Luke, 2010).
3. Community college: Community college refers to “any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or an associate in science as its highest degree. That definition includes the comprehensive two-year college, as well as technical institutes, both public and private” (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 5).
4. Constructivism: Constructivism refers to a worldview in which
“individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work.
Meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the
complexities of views, rather than to narrow the meanings into a view
categories or ideas” (Creswell, 2007, p. 20).

5. Ethics: Ethics refers to “the kinds of values and morals an individual or

6. Ethical: Ethical refers to being in accordance with the rules and standards
for conduct or practice, specifically the standards of the profession
(Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005).

7. Ethical conduct: Ethical conduct refers to behavior that conforms to
accepted norms (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005).

8. Ethical decision-making: Ethical decision-making refers to “making
decisions based on accepted concepts of right and wrong and promoting
institutional effectiveness and reflecting the values and mission of the
institution” (Vaughn, 1992, p. xx).

9. Ethical dilemma: Ethical dilemma refers to issues that force a person to
make decisions regarding what action he or she should take in a situation.
The decision should be one that best upholds his or her ethics (Fallan,
2005).

10. Ethical leader: An ethical leader is a leader who is virtuous and knows his
or her core values and has the courage to live them in all parts of life and
service of the common good (Grace, 2006).
11. **Ethical leadership**: Ethical leadership is defined as “leadership that will unite followers in shared visions, and that will improve organizations and societies at large” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 15).

12. **Ethical perception**: Ethical perception refers to an awareness or insight of ethical principles (Kidder, 2009).

13. **Ethical reasoning**: “Ethical reasoning refers to: decision-making that is driven by our core values, morals, and integrity” (Kidder, 2003, p. 42).

14. **Leadership**: Leadership refers to the act of influencing others toward a goal (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005).

15. **Phenomenology**: Phenomenology refers to the study of the experience from the perspective of the research participant (Moustakas, 1994).

16. **Qualitative research**: Qualitative research refers to “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17).

17. **Transformational leadership**: Transformational leadership refers to leadership that transforms followers, encourages a shared vision, and requires attention to personal and professional values (Northouse, 2009).

18. **Unethical leadership**: Unethical leadership refers to leaders who abuse their power for material or personal gain.

19. **Values**: Values refers to beliefs or principles that someone has that he or she believes are influential in guiding his or her life (Kidder, 2003).
20. *Virtue-based theory*: Virtue-based theory suggests “ethical thinking focuses on a person’s moral character rather than the acts carried out by that person” (Waller, 2008, p. 97).

**Conceptual Framework**

A qualitative phenomenological framework was used to ascertain perceptions among community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. There were no attempts to determine why, or identify cause-and-effect, during the course of this study; the researcher sought only to reveal perceptions regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. Thus, the qualitative method was the most appropriate strategy to use. The researcher believed that applying qualitative approaches to the study of ethical leadership and ethical reasoning was essential. Also, utilizing the qualitative approach provided insight regarding ethical decision-making processes. As stated by Creswell (2013): “Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems; addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 44). To study the problem, researchers engage in an emerging qualitative method of investigation, using various techniques to collect and analyze data to report findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

According to Creswell (2013), phenomenological study expresses the common meaning for several persons of their lived understandings of a concept or phenomenon. Phenomenologists focus on studying what participants have in common as they experience and interpret a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology draws heavily on the writings of Husserl and those who expanded on these perspectives, such as
Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty (Spiegelberg, 1982). Creswell (2009) stated: “In phenomenology; the researcher eliminates past knowledge and experience to understand the phenomenon at a deeper level” (p. 13). To produce rich and descriptive data the researcher approached participants’ lived experiences with a sense of freshness.

The perspective of constructivism was utilized in ascertaining and analyzing participants’ perceptions as related to this study. Constructivism, an epistemological theory of knowledge, is used to explain how one gains the knowledge about what one knows. Constructivists believe “learning is a process of constructing meaning; it is how people make sense of their experiences” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 260). Constructivists assert that individuals construct learning from experiences and interaction with the environment in which events take place (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Constructivism is defined as explanatory because “individuals seek clarification of the world in which they live and work through engagement, experiences and interaction” (Mertens, 2010, p. 25). Based on an individual’s experiences, he or she constructs meanings, and these meanings are diverse and numerous, which directs the researcher to look for multiple and complex views. Consequently, the researcher relies on, as much as possible, participants’ views of the situation.
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Diagram.

Note: A visual illustration of the conceptual framework for this study.

Presented above is a visual representation of the conceptual framework for this study. This conceptual framework was composed of five elements. The five conceptual components were demographic, worldview/theoretical perspectives, study constructs, method, and analysis. The demographic component describes the characteristics of the study participants. Factors that influence participants’ perceptions are covered in the
worldview/theoretical component. Plan for collecting the data is discussed in the method component, and strategies for analyzing the data are in the analysis component.

A qualitative phenomenological study allowed the researcher to conduct a comprehensive, in-depth review regarding perceptions of ethical leadership and ethical reasoning from perspectives of current community college leaders. As previously stated, “ethical leadership begins with the way leaders perceive and conceptualize the world around them” (Johnson, 2003, p. 1). A qualitative design is vibrant and flexible enough to collect detailed information of conditions richly as they exist while allowing for the development of intuitive data to emerge (Creswell, 2009). According to Moustokas (1994), the researcher attempts to determine the meaning of a phenomenon from the perspectives of individuals.

Creswell (2003) noted that in qualitative research, the use of theory is more varied than in quantitative research. Creswell continued:

The inquirer may generate a theory as the final outcome of the study and place it at the end of a project, such as in grounded theory. In other qualitative studies, it comes in the beginning and provides a lens that shapes what is looked at and the questions asked, such as in ethnographies or in advocacy research. (p. 49)

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) stated, “[T]ypically, qualitative research is not explicitly driven by theory, but it is situated within theoretical perspectives” (p. 29). Thus, the approach taken within this study followed the suggestions provided by Glesne and Peshkin (1992) that included the use of theoretical perspectives to create study questions and guidance during the data collection process as well as the use of such
theoretical perspectives during the data analysis phase. Throughout the course of this study, a clearer perspective unfolded; however, a modified framework did not develop.

**Theoretical Framework**

The focus of this study was to ascertain the perceptions among community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. Historically, research identified with ethics and ethical behavior was viewed through moral theories associated with justice and duty (Furman, 2004; Johnson, 2009; Rawls, 1999). The current researcher chose Aristotle’s virtue-based ethics and Burn’s transformational leadership theories as frameworks for this study. Scholars are increasingly viewing ethics and leadership issues from the perspectives of virtue-based ethical theories and inspirational principle-centered leadership theories (Bolman & Deal, 2001; Burns, 2003; DeVore & Martin, 2008; Hellmich, 2007; Johnson, 2009; Northouse, 2009). According to Bolman and Deal (2001), soul and spirit are elements that should be incorporated into contemporary leadership.

For the purpose of this study, the exploration was filtered through the lens of Aristotelian virtue-based ethics and Burns’ transformational leadership theory. The key advocate of the virtue theory was Aristotle (384-322 BCE), who maintained that “the development of virtuous character traits is needed to ensure that we habitually act rightly” (Pojman & Fieser, 2009, p. 11). Aristotle is recognized for his Nicomachean Ethics; that is a distinction between sophia and phronesis. Sophia refers to abstract conceptualization of universal truths, and phronesis refers to acting to improve the quality of life (as cited in Thomson, 1953). According to Aristotle (trans. 1953), ethics requires correct cognition and the ability to size up a situation correctly is a sign of character (as
cited in Thomson, 1953). Aristotle (trans. 1953) did not say that one chooses to be irrational, greedy, or cowardly, but that one is responsible for one’s character (as cited in Thomson, 1953). Virtue-based ethics is concerned with the person one should be as opposed to what one should do (Hursthouse, 2002). Aristotle noted that ethics could be learned and when moral actions are repeatedly practiced a person could become ethical (Hursthouse, 2002). Ethicists who are influenced by virtue-based perspectives emphasize the importance of forming critical moral perceptions, or understanding individuals and situations, as well as nurturing virtues (Begley, 2005; Boss, 2004; Brooks & Normore, 2005; Devore & Martin, 2008). Hursthouse (2002) stated:

An action is right if it is what a virtuous individual would do in the circumstances; a virtuous individual is one who acts virtuously that is, one who has and exercises the virtues; a virtue is a character trait a human being needs to flourish or live well. (p. 17)

According to Swanton (2003), Aristotle suggested that one should not merely study what is good, but must also be good by carrying out virtuous deeds. “Consistent with Aristotle, advocates of the virtue-based theory stress that more attention should be given to the development and training of moral values” (Velasquez, 1992, p. 21). Northouse (2009) stated that according to the virtue theory “instead of telling people what to do, people should be told whom to be” (p. 381). A study conducted by Propheter, Geoffrey, and Jez (2009) concluded that, regarding virtuous leadership, when faced with moral dilemmas, educational leaders should reflect upon and question the person that one wants to be.
Figure 2. Visual illustration of Aristotle’s Virtue–Based Theory. Adapted from “Ethics: The Basics,” By Mizzoni, 2010.

Figure 2 is a visual depiction of concepts associated with Aristotle’s virtue-based theory. The diagram illustrates a graphic version of Aristotle’s theory; simply stated, repeated behaviors become habits. “Human beings are not born with moral virtues. A moral virtue is a trait that gets developed by habit” (Mizzoni, 2010, p. 27). A good deed does not come first—it is developed through repetitive actions. Habits are developed through repetition; a person's character is the structure of habits and is formed by what he or she continues to do (Hospers, 1995).

In addition to Aristotle’s virtue-based ethics theory, this study was also informed by the theoretical perspectives of Burns’ transformational leadership theory. Burns’ transformational leadership theory is described as leadership with a primary focus on the relationship of the leader and follower (Burns, 2003). Bass and Riggio (2006) said, “A core element of transformational leadership is the development of followers to enhance their capabilities and their capacity to lead” (p. 55). Covey (1990) asserted that transformational leadership theory is closer to virtue-based theories than any other leadership theory. Covey (1990) stated:

The goal of transformational leadership is to “transform” people and organizations in a literal sense to change them in mind and heart; enlarge vision, insight, and understanding; clarify purposes; make behavior congruent with
beliefs, principles, or values; and bring about changes that are permanent, self-
perpetuating, and momentum building. (p. 287)

Effective leaders have a vision, and they promote their vision and themselves in
the process of creating trust (Bryman, 1992). Transformational leaders believe that
success comes from deep and sustained commitment to others. They are, therefore,
extremely people-oriented individuals (Bass, 1990). According to Bass (as cited in
Northouse, 2009), “there are four components of transformational leadership:(a) charisma
or idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d)
personal and individual attention” (p.177).

Table 1

Four Components of Transformational Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charisma</th>
<th>Individual Attention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformational leadership distinguishes the degree in which the leader acts in admirable ways, displays principles and takes positions. These are actions that encourage followers to identify with leaders; leaders who have a clear set of values and acts as a role model.</td>
<td>The focus is on the leader being able to identify what motivates each individual follower and giving each individual the necessary attention needed to be successful. Leaders have a sincere concern for followers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspirational Motivation</th>
<th>Intellectual Simulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational motivation refers to the leader’s ability to inspire confidence, motivate, and instill a sense of purpose in his or her followers.</td>
<td>The leader supports his or her followers by allowing them to participate in the decision-making process and encourages their efforts to be as creative and innovative as possible to identify solutions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 is a visual representation of the four components of transformational leadership. Charisma or idealized influence defines leaders that exemplify strong role-model characteristics; followers identify with these leaders and want to imitate them. Leaders, who practice personal and individual attention as a leadership style, tend to provide sincere, dedicated care and concern for followers. Motivational leaders are leaders who emphasize high expectations for followers. Motivational leaders inspire followers by utilizing motivation to encourage commitment to a shared vision in the organization. Intellectual stimulation leaders support followers by accomplishing creative and innovative endeavors. Followers are encouraged to plan and strategize to solve organizational issues. When woven together, these components comprise the elements of a plan that produces leaders who effectively move followers toward change (Northouse, 2009).

As the current study progressed, the research did not yield any vital information that would lead the researcher in a different direction or a more applicable method of ascertaining perceptions among community college administrators. While qualitative explorations are emergent, and aspects of the study may change and lead the researcher to pursue other theoretical options, this did not occur in this study.

**Overview of Methodology**

Because educational research serves a multitude of purposes and often involves complex subjects, it is important to select the methodology that is equivalent not only to community college leadership perspectives but also informs practice and policies (Lagemann & Shulman, 1999). Qualitative research is a naturalistic approach that respects the context of research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Specifically, for this study,
the researcher was a qualitative researcher interviewing participants “at the site where participants experience the issue or problem in their naturalistic settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Creswell, 2009, p. 175).

**Delimitations**

This study was conducted within certain parameters that may impact generalization of the results. Only midlevel administrators were asked to participate in the study. Also, the study was conducted in only one state, Alabama, and at only one community college. This limitation was imposed because of access and convenience to participants.

**Significance of the Study**

It is envisioned that the results of this study will have the potential to provide pertinent information for individuals charged with developing and implementing curriculum for educational leadership and graduate programs. Additionally, information gathered from this study may influence the practices of current and aspiring community college leaders. Research from this study may be instrumental in the planning and designing of professional development activities for leaders and initiatives for community colleges at the local, national, and international level. This study has the potential of encouraging foundations to employ and provide resources for joint undertakings among multiple scholars to conduct large-scale ethical leadership studies. Finally, this study will add to the body of limited literature addressing ethical leadership and ethical reasoning among educational leaders.
Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter I presented introductory elements of the study and included the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions, delimitations, and definitions of the terms.

Chapter II presented a review of related literature and covered the procedure for selecting studies, a summary of core findings, and statements regarding how the present research differs from prior research.

Chapter III discusses the method and procedures used to conduct the study. Specifically, details are provided regarding research design, study site, population, sampling procedure, ethical considerations, instrumentation, validity of the instrument, reliability of the instrument, and data collection procedures.

Chapter IV covers the results and analysis of the study. The analysis of the study involved demographics of community college leaders in Alabama and an examination of each of the three research questions.

Chapter V concludes this study with a summary of the findings and implications, conclusions drawn from the study, and recommendations for future research.
A brief overview is presented discussing historical and current community college perspectives. Additional subjects covered are ethics, ethical theories, ethical and unethical leadership, ethical reasoning and reasoning models, and preparation of community college leaders. This chapter concludes with a summary of the literature related to ethical leadership and ethical reasoning.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning among leaders in community colleges. The focus of this study was to ascertain the perceptions and understanding of community college leaders as related to ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. Based on the literature, leaders’ attitudes, values, and beliefs significantly impact the ethical culture of the colleges in which they work; it is institutional leaders who set the ethical tone (Bennis, 2003; Ciulla, 2003; Hellmich, 2007; Johnson, 2007; Vaughn, 2006). However, over the years, as a lack of ethical commitment has caused moral lapses to occur, various leaders have used positions of power for personal gain or to pursue personal agendas (Rhodes, 2006).

Researchers have noted that effective leadership is ethical leadership and that currently ethical leadership is in short supply (Ciulla, 2003; Fluker, 2009). Newspapers often report stories about unethical leaders, and community college leaders are not
exempt from this negative notoriety. For example, in 2010 the *Birmingham News* in Alabama reported that 10 defendants were convicted or pleaded guilty in federal probes of corruption in the Alabama 2-year college system with a total of over $18.2 million of court-ordered restitution, fines, fees, and forfeiture orders on the books (Faulk, 2010). In 2007, the *Denver Post* reported that “in Colorado, the president of the Community College of Denver was dismissed after officials found the college allegedly misrepresented its financial records” (p. 1). Further, “Maricopa Community Colleges (Arizona) dismissed two presidents for questionable expenses related to travel abroad” (Pekow, 2006). As a result of negative reports of unlawful practices, the public has lost confidence in the ability of corporations and institutions of higher education to prepare aspiring leaders to behave in an ethical manner (Boggs, 2003).

According to researchers, community colleges are consumed with institutional conflict (Ayers, 2009; Boggs, 2003; Vaughn, 2006). Community college leaders also face numerous ethical challenges when confronting the demands of ambiguous mission statements, pressures to accomplish more with fewer resources, and adherence to obligations associated with stakeholders (Vaughn, 2006). With those challenging issues in mind, researchers agree that administrators may be driven to rationalize decisions that compromise ethics and institutions (Oliver & Hioco, 2012). However, Beck and Murphy (1997) asserted that leaders are challenged to “look within themselves, at their own values, beliefs, commitments, biases, and assumptions to assist them in managing dilemmas…” (p. 191). Ayers (2009) conducted a qualitative study among 40 community college administrators and found:
Three styles are prevalent among community college administrators as they deal with institutional contradiction. The alienated victim, which either conformed to administrative mandates that challenged their values or withdrew, either by retiring, resigning or psychologically distancing themselves from their work. Second, survivors also described acts of resistance only to be rebuked, reprimanded, or demeaned by supervisors. Third, some administrators were able successfully to align a policy or practice with their professional or educational values. (p. 165)

Institutional conflict will undoubtedly always be embedded within the community college environment. Scholars assert that because of their precarious and ambiguous beginnings, diverse missions, and image perceptions, community colleges will be plagued with both internal and external conflict issues (Ayers, 2009; Kerr, 1989; Vaughn, 2006). For the sustainability of these institutions, leaders must practice ethical behavior and implement ethical decision-making strategies. The literature is replete with examples in which consequences of unethical behavior were detrimental for leaders themselves, followers, constituents, and the institutions they served (Chandler, 2009; Josephson, 2002; Shapiro & Gross, 2008; Vaughn, 1992).

Permeated throughout the literature is the belief that improving ethical behavior in higher education is essential to the well-being of universities and colleges (Anderson & Davies, 2000; Johnson, 2008; Kelley & Chang, 2007; Roworth, 2002; Vencat, 2006). Recent studies show that the emerging interest in ethical leadership is vital; scholars suggest that effective leadership creates an ethical organizational environment, and ineffective leadership is toxic and unproductive. Although the issue of ethical leadership
in education is paramount, it remains a subject that has received limited attention (Northouse, 2009). While studies regarding business ethics and leadership are abundant, a gap exists in the literature that addresses ethical leadership among educational leaders (Butler, 2009; Sendjaya, 2005; Yukl, 2006). Furthermore, the debate regarding ethics and leadership continues to cause dissension among scholars. However, there is consensus that there should be a moral component to ethical leadership and leaders’ values and beliefs are equally important (Bolman & Deal, 2001; Fallan, 2003; Gregory, 2010; Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 2005).

Recent incidents of unethical conduct occurring in a number of society’s most prominent higher educational institutions have elevated awareness regarding the significance of professional ethics; consequently, graduate education programs nationwide are responding with more comprehensive curricula in ethical education (Green & Walker, 2009). The literature is filled with recommendations for comprehensive and intense ethics training to be incorporated into the curricula of graduate programs that prepare students for educational leadership. Gregory (2010) asserted that new and aspiring leaders need more in-depth, comprehensive training in ethics in order to “enhance and increase the students’ understanding of their ethical roles, programs should expand instructions on social justice as well as other moral and ethical leadership concepts” (p. 3). Additionally, there is a call for extensive training to use decision-making models that incorporate ethical perspectives as the foundation for ethical resolutions (Farrell, 2009).
Researchers have shown that community colleges, a phenomenon of 20th Century American higher education, were organized to address societal woes and the challenges of a changing economy (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Unlike their predecessors, universities and baccalaureate colleges, community colleges were not designed to serve the elite population. In fact, community colleges had the dubious mission of serving society’s most challenging populations. According to Vaughn (2006), expectations and leaders’ obligations to internal and external forces contributed significantly to the way in which leaders responded to daily dilemmas. From their inception, community colleges were plagued with confusion regarding mission and identity. Community colleges suffered from multiple powers with a vested interest, which added to the perplexity regarding the name and mission of two-year colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Kasper, 2003). The terms community college, junior college, technical college, and technical institute encompassed a broad range of institutions (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). The nuances from numerous societal expectations can be found in the earliest junior colleges as well as current community colleges.

Community colleges have historically grappled with obligations to constituents and ambiguous mission statements. Community colleges were also plagued with funding issues and perceptions caused by faulty institutional images (Bailey & Morest, 2003). According to Voorhess (2001), community colleges have and always will struggle with surviving in the face of local, state, and federal funding issues unless leaders find alternative methods of financing institutional obligations.
As scholars continue to ascertain the phenomenon of unethical behavior among community college leaders, certain issues cannot be ignored. Specifically, historical precarious beginnings, ambiguous mission statements, unique funding issues, and ethical issues must be considered. While historical and current internal and external challenges do not offer an explanation to condone or accept an institutional environment that appears to be tolerant of questionable behavior among its leaders, they may provide insight regarding why some community college leaders make questionable decisions.

**Historical Perspectives**

Community colleges are products of the 20th century higher education explosion (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Typically, contemporary community colleges scarcely resemble traditional community colleges. However, many of the traditional commitments remain in place. For example, many of the early community colleges were associated with high schools and located primarily on high school campuses (Helland, 1987). Initially, community colleges were extremely small and focused on a liberal arts education with the intention of transferring students to four-year institutions (Ratcliffe, 1994). Brint and Karabel (1989) stated that early junior colleges were more aligned with high school needs and lacked a distinctive identity.

Several prominent individuals were instrumental in the development and rapid growth of community colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). In 1851, Henry Tappan, president of Michigan State University, was a strong advocate for what was known as lower-level colleges. “The Panic of 1893-a major economic downturn in the late nineteenth century-led to the first formal thinking about two-year colleges” (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 7). The Panic of 1893 led William Folwell and J.M. Carroll to convene
the Baptist colleges in Texas and Louisiana to discuss the ailing institutions in those states. Folwell and Carroll suggested that smaller colleges should reduce their curricula to the first two years of higher education studies. Additionally, these institutions would be better suited for the task of educating individuals who otherwise would struggle to compete at the university level (Cohen & Brawer, 1996).

Community colleges started as provisional programs and grew rapidly from the demands of social forces and the relentless efforts of individuals like William Rainey Harper (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Affiliated with the University of Chicago and equipped with substantial backing as well as some of the most esteemed academic minds of the era, Harper established a universal blueprint for creating the junior college (Witt, Wattenbarger, Gollattscheck, & Suppiger, 1994). Harper’s plan was creative, uncomplicated, and involved two steps for turning struggling liberal arts schools into two-year institutions. First, advance the development of new two-year colleges, and the second, integrate secondary schools with university programs (Witt et al., 1994). Rainey Harper and Stanley Brown were both strong advocates for junior colleges and advocated relentlessly for the launching of 2-year institutions. Because of Rainey’s efforts, the first community college, Joliet Junior College, was established in 1901 (Vaughn, 2006).

As noted in the literature, in addition to significant individuals, certain events were responsible for the development and rapid growth of community colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Ratcliff, 1994; Vaughn, 2006). This growth was credited in part to the passage of the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1952, also known as the G.I. Bill. Initially, the G.I. Bill was viewed as a genre of various congressional bills enacted to provide funds for college education, home-buying loans, and other benefits for armed
services veterans. Equally important to the development of two-year institutions was President Truman’s Commission on Higher Education (CHE) Report (President’s Commission on Higher Education, 1947). Vaughn (2009) stated, numerous successful passages of legislative bills contributed as well (e.g., Morrill Acts of 1962 and 1990; Smith Hughes Act of 1917; Vocational Act of 1917). As stated in the United States Public Papers of the Presidents (1964):

The Higher Education Acts of 1965 and 1972 had a significant impact on the evolution of community colleges. These were bills introduced and passed as a part of President Lyndon Johnson’s ambitious social policy programs, which were known as the Great Society. (p. 704)

At that time, enrollment increased at a number of higher education institutions; however, community colleges faced the most significant changes in student demographics (Cohen & Brawer, 1994).

By the turn of the 20th Century, a system of junior and community colleges were publicly supported and accepted; these institutions were not embedded with rich cultures and traditions and therefore could evolve as the needs of society changed (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Contemporary community colleges continue to experience some of the past challenges and obstacles. However, scholars regard community colleges as better suited for rapidly responding to the educational and vocational needs of an evolving economic and technological society (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Although exceptional and complex issues continue to challenge community colleges, many scholars identify 2-year institutions as still the best solution for educating individuals with unique and diverse needs (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2008; Vaughn, 2006).
Current Perspectives

Currently, community colleges face the consistent obligation to fulfill five major goals; obligations of collegiate transfer, open access, comprehensive missions, student success, and service to the community/workforce (Anderson, Lujan, & Hegeman, 2009). However, the most consistent perspective is that of community colleges should be the most dominant force in educating individuals with unique, challenging, and diverse issues (Cohen & Brawer, 2009).

A joint qualitative study with The Roueche Graduate Center; National American University; and The Source on Community Colleges Issues, Trends, and Strategies pinpointed several pressing issues currently confronting community colleges. Researchers asked 12 questions of 16 community college leaders from across the country; these interviews produced a diverse array of issues. Lorenzo (2013) reported the following issues from responses:

1. Security and crisis management
2. Immigration reform
3. Remedial and development education
4. Accelerated programs, employment, and completion
5. The skills gap and achievement gap
6. The death of liberal arts
7. Workforce development
8. Funding issues
9. Leadership and faculty shortage
10. The future (p. 6).
According to respondents, the most prevalent future and current issues facing community college leaders were diversity as related to changes in minority and majority population demographics, the ensuing need for trained and skilled leaders as mass retirements approach, and institutional funding. Leaders agreed that community colleges may not receive sufficient state and local funding to address the needs of student services, remedial education, and responsibilities of increased enrollment, but suggested that they will continue to thrive. For all that community colleges do, they still face the challenges that accompany a negative image. Consequently, when media organizations like the Associated Press (2008) print details of events regarding questionable partnerships between state senators and community college leaders, the image of community colleges suffers.

Ethics Defined

Scholars define ethics in many ways. For example, ethics has been described as the way people act and make decisions (Weegar, 2007). According to Boatright (2007) and Ciulla (2005), “the terms ethics and morality are used interchangeably and have a similar meaning” (as cited in Chandler, 2009, p. 70). Rhode (2006) stated:

The word “ethics” derives from the Greek word “ethikos,” and from the root word “ethos,” referring to the character. The word “morality” derives from the Latin word, “morality,” based upon the root word, “mores,” referring to character, custom, or habit.” (p. 4)

Northouse (2009) maintained that “ethics is concerned with the kinds of values and morals an individual or society finds desirable or appropriate” (p. 378). Ethics and
morality refer to the nature of beliefs, values, and behaviors that form perceptions, according to one’s personal, social, cultural, and religious values of what is right and wrong (Johnson, 2005; Mendonca & Kanungo 2007). Scholars do not agree on an ultimate definition of ethics. However, they agree that ethics involves a commitment to values, beliefs, and morals; it is a commitment to moral standards and norms of right and wrong (Boatwright, 2007; Ciulla, 2005; Johnson, 2009; Kanungo & Mendonca, 2007). One of the fundamental differences in beliefs about ethics is among those who believe that ethics must include absolute and everlasting moral standards and those who view ethics as controlled by numerous factors (Waller, 2008).

**Ethical Theories: Guidelines for Ethical Reasoning**

Ethical theories date back to the times of Plato and Aristotle and are prevalent in most vibrant cultures. Hursthouse (2003) stated:

> Ethical theory provides a system of rules or principles that guide us in making decisions about what is right or wrong and good or bad in a situation, it provides a basis for understanding what it means to be a morally decent human being. (p. 342)

Numerous researchers have noted that leaders benefit from possessing a framework for reasoning and decision-making (Anderson & Davies, 2000; Fugimoto, 2012; Gregory, 2009; McNair, 2009; Oliver & Hioco, 2012). Furthermore, research and practice of ethical decision-making models clearly demonstrate “leaders may be trained to make ethical decisions” (Gregory, 2010, p. 3). According to Gregory (2005), to acquire and apply decision-making formats one must first recognize and comprehend basic ethical philosophies and viewpoints.
As stated by Northouse (2013), “ethical theories tend to fall within two categories: theories about the leader’s conduct and theories about the leader’s character” (p. 490). These two categories explain theories about “either the actions of leaders or who they are as people” (Northouse, 2009, p. 379). Primarily, the teleological theory relates to consequences, and deontological theory relates to the duty (Northouse, 2009). Most studies in ethical theories primarily focus on identifying basic ethical rules individuals can follow in business or human resources practices. Research in educational leadership, which examines ethical theories and ethical reasoning as a relationship, appears to be less prevalent within the literature. However, scholars agree that there is a moral component to leadership, and leadership cannot be removed from the general ideas of ethics and virtue (Bolman & Deal, 2001).

Multiple ethical theories are frequently presented when discussing ethics or morality. Altruism and communitarianism are often identified, and both are closely related to the virtue theory. However, this current study presents assumptions of six ethical theories commonly used as guidelines for moral or ethical reasoning. Since altruism and communitarianism are so closely related to the virtue theory, they will not be discussed. These perspectives may assist educational leaders in applying a more diverse spectrum of reasoning and actions within educational environments. The six principles include Aristotelian virtue-based ethics, Kant’s categorical imperative, Bentham’s utilitarianism, Rawl’s justice as fairness, the ethics of care, and ethical egoism.
Virtue-based Ethics Theory

Aristotle, an ancient Greek philosopher (384-322 BC), is noted for his perspective regarding character and virtues as related to ethical beings. According to Aristotle, examples of virtue include being courageous, extending friendship, being a gentle person, pursuing liberty and rights for all, and displaying modesty (as cited in Irwin, 2000). Aristotelian ethics, also known as virtue ethics, suggests that the focus is on what a good person should be and is not concerned with what action is right or virtuous (Swanton, 2003). Virtue ethics simply ascertain the concept of a person’s character; what must one’s character be like for one to be a moral being (Josephson, 2002). Concepts regarding virtue theories suggest that a leader’s character is the most important aspect of being an effective leader (Northouse, 2009). Virtue ethics moves the attention away from the importance of rules, duties, rights, and determining what act is right or wrong. Rather, importance is placed on the character of the individual: (a) What kind of being does he or she want to be? (b) Will this type of act contribute to or harm the development of virtuous character? (c) What type of communal nurtures virtuous character? (Waller, 2008).

Virtue-based philosophy can be found in almost every vibrant culture, and in most, similarities exist regarding the importance of virtue (Benner, 2007). Taoist/Taoism virtues and the superior man are closely associated with the virtue theory contained in Buddhism, which places significance over joy (Benner, 2007). According to Aristotle, virtue is attained by routine practice and by taking joy in all things, including relations with others (as cited in Irwin, 2000). Benner (2007) noted that Analects of Confucius and Dalai Lama share some of the same beliefs, including “love all individuals as love for
According to Benner (2007), “Virtue is identified as an admirable character trait; freely chosen and habitually acted out in a matter that benefits others as well as oneself” (p. 4).

Confucius, Tao, and Aristotle all shared in the belief that “a leader must be virtuous and that the virtuous person is a leader” (Benner, 2007, p. 3). Virtue theory supports the importance of character growth and the continuous development of good (and bad) habits, commitments, and strengths (Waller, 2008). However, theorists note that problems exist with regard to the virtue theory, for example (a) How do we decide what is a virtuous act or virtuous character? (b) Is the virtue theory too personal or unique? (c) How does the virtuous character fit into society? (d) Are there numerous sets of virtues or is there only one? (Waller, 2008). Scholars agree that the virtue theory faces challenges, but it is useful in some settings, particularly in leadership (Benner, 2007).

Kant’s Categorical Imperative Theory

Immanuel Kant, an 18th Century German philosopher, is generally recognized for perspectives regarding deontology. According to Bennett-Woods (2005), “Deontology (from the Greek deon, meaning duty) refers to an ethical theory or perspective based on duty or obligation” (p. 5). A deontological theory is one in which detailed moral duties or responsibilities are seen as obvious, having fundamental worth in and of themselves and needing no further validation (Waller, 2008). Individuals have the capabilities to engage in some level of reasoning about ethical issues; however, some issues, although the same in nature and context, are conflicting issues.

Based on the Kantian perspective, reason can create vital and absolute ethical truths in the form of categorical principles; specifically, Kant upholds that pure reason
creates the categorical imperative (i.e., that we should always act in such a way that we could will that our acts should be universal law (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001). The Kantian perspective maintains that reason, and only reason is the basis for complete principles of ethical law, and following the moral law requires a special commitment of free will (Waller, 2008). Furthermore, the cost of an action is irrelevant as opposed to the moral appraisal of the action. Moral actions are those that are accepted out of a sense of duty; this means that one acts because one knows that it is the right thing to do (Waller, 2008). According to the Kantian perspective, because one is a human being one knows what duty is and what one’s responsibility is, and one is uniquely rational in a way that all other living creatures on earth are not (Josephson, 2002). Kant suggested that because individuals possess the ability to reason, he or she also possesses the ability to be logical, and therefore to be consistently moral is both logical and reasonable (Bennett-Woods, 2005).

Kant derived this basic rule of morality from the universal rule, which Kant called the categorical imperative. The categorical imperative is required regardless of the rewards or consequences (Josephson, 2002). It is a guideline that one must follow at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances if one wishes to act morally (Waller, 2008). Simply stated, one should do what is right regardless of the cost or consequences. Kant’s rule of universality states that one should behave only in ways that seem appropriate for all people at all times (Josephson, 2002).

The preceding statement sounds like a remarkable and uncomplicated principle. While the principle sounds appealing and simple, it is counterbalanced with the concept of relativism (Stumpf, Holt, Crittenden, & Davis, 2012). Universalists are looking for
something that applies to all people in all situations and at all times. On the other hand, relativists believe that it is difficult to apply universal ethical norms to all people because people have different customs and cultures. Velasquez (1998) defined ethical relativism as:

[T]he theory that, because different societies have different ethical beliefs; there is no rational way of determining whether an action is morally right or wrong other than by asking whether the people of this or that societies believe it is morally right or wrong. (p. 22)

Ethical relativism is based on the concept that different cultures have different views of right and wrong (Koterski, 2002). However, Josephson (2002) stated that “the universal ethical value of respect for others dictates honoring the dignity and autonomy of each person; it cautions against self-righteousness in areas of legitimate controversy for this reason it is essential” (p. 4).

**Utilitarianism Theory**

Jeremy Bentham, an 18th Century English philosopher, is best known for utilitarianism theoretical concepts. As stated by Valasquez (1998), “Utilitarianism is a general term for any view that holds that actions and policies should be evaluated on the basis of benefits and costs they will impose on society” (p. 72). According to Waller (2008), utilitarianism is an integral part of the central and most significant and consequential ethical philosophy, and its different structures include multiple theories of utility. The key focus of utilitarianism is on the consequences of an action; the consequences of an action make the action either honorable or dishonorable (Schumann,
As noted by Valasquez (1998), “An action that leads to beneficial consequences is right or moral; one that leads to harmful consequences is wrong or immoral” (p. 72).

Utilitarianism is known as a consequentiality theory; the consequences that count are those that maximize benefits and minimize harms or costs (Velasquez, 1998). Thus, “one moral thing to do in any situation is that action that can be reasonably seen to provide the greatest net benefit, to do something else is to behave unethically” (Valasquez, 1998, p. 72). Utilitarianism endorses the concept of the greatest good for the greatest number of people and portends that the greatest good means the greatest happiness (Valasquez, 1998). Utilitarianism does not, however, imply that “the moral action is the one that maximizes the benefits or happiness for the person doing the action; it must be the benefits and happiness of all; each person counts equally” (Valasquez, 1998, p. 87).

A major criticism of utilitarian ethics centers on its emotional improbability. Some theorists have asserted that it is incorrect to assume that for humans, the key goals are to feel pleasure and evade pain. They argue that the theoretical foundation of utilitarianism is false (Schumann, 2001).

**Theory of Justice**

John Rawls, a 20th Century American philosopher, argued that “under a veil of ignorance, rational individuals will agree regarding equal rights, if they are not aware of their own situations or positions in society” (Sterba, 1990, p. 659). According to Rawls (1999), determining what is fair or just is based on rational people agreeing and considering all points of view. The Rawlsian perspective is based on the following two principles of justice:
First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others. Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all. (Rawls, 1999, p. 53)

Simply stated, each individual has an equal right to the same freedoms, resolved as good for all, and all prospects must be available to each individual and, therefore, profit the most disadvantaged of society (Sterba, 1990).

Rawls makes it explicit that the most relevant condition required for this hypothetical contract is a veil of ignorance which deprives people of the knowledge of the most particular facts about themselves and their society. According to Rawls (1971), “morally adequate principles of justice are those principles people would agree to in an original position which is essentially characterized by this veil of ignorance” (as cited in Sterba, 1990, p. 660).

In concluding this discussion, Rawls’ theoretical perspective is based on the principles of justice and fairness for all. Accordingly, a good person is a fair and just individual who values community and respects others. Rawls argued that rational people without regard or knowledge of their own situations or positions would do what is just and fair for all. Thus, individuals who practice fairness and justice contribute to the establishment of a well-ordered society.

**The Ethics of Care Theory**

The ethics of care was derived from female advocacy literature, as compared to the distant male-oriented view of ethics which disregards the significance of the
extraordinary rapport between individuals (Gilligan, 1982). In reference to a study conducted by Gilligan (1982), Beauchamp and Childress (2001) stated:

Men tend to embrace an ethic of rights using quasi-legal terminology and impartial principles … women tend to affirm an ethic of care that centers on responsiveness in an interconnected network of needs, care, and prevention of harm; taking care of others is the core notion. (p. 371)

A number of scholars suggest that the ethics of care is related to the virtue theory but emphasizes those virtues important to personal relations, such as compassion, sympathy, empathy, and loyalty (Budd, 2004). Ethics of care perspectives support the ideology that each of us must care for our own needs as well as those of the people in our network of associations, which encompasses people with whom we have close associations as well as those within the communities we live (Schumann, 2001).

Beauchamp and Childress (2001) stated:

Proponents of an ethics of care emphasize the roles of mutual interdependence and emotional response that play an important part in our moral lives: …many human relationships involve persons who are vulnerable, dependent, ill, and frail … [and] the desirable moral response is attached attentiveness to needs, not detached respect for rights. (p. 373)

Beauchamp and Childress (1994) further noted:

A person who acts from rule-governed obligations without appropriately aligned feelings such as worry when a friend suffers seems to have a moral deficiency. In
addition…insight into the needs of others and considerate alertness to their circumstances often come from the emotions more than reason. (p. 89)

The authors concluded, “Thus the emotions seem to have a cognitive role, allowing us to grasp a situation that may not be immediately available to one arguing solely from a justice perspective” (Beauchamp & Childress, 1994, p. 89).

**Ethical Egoism Theory**

Among the theory for ethical egoism, two individuals have distinguished themselves: Ayn Rand and Thomas Hobbes. The most noted perspective regarding ethical egoism is the general assumption that “the right thing to do is to look out for your own self-interest. We are morally required only to make ourselves as happy as possible. We have no moral obligations to others” (as cited in Smith, 2006, p. 4). Rand seemed to endorse this idea as indication review pasages:

> By the grace of reality and the nature of life, man−every man−is an end in himself, He exists for his own sake, and the achievement of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose (Pojman, 2002, p. 74).

Accept the fact that the achievement of your happiness is the only moral purpose of life and that happiness—not pain or mindless self-indulgence—is the proof of your moral integrity … (Pojman, 2002, p. 77)

Several theorists have suggested that ethical egoism is both predatory and self-serving (Pojman, 2002). The most compelling criticism is that ethical egoism does not meet the requirement of being a publicly teachable theory (Pojman, 2002). However, according to Feldman (1978), “egoism does not imply that we should never act altruistically. Rather, it implies that we may act for the benefit of others so long as that
act also maximizes our own hedonic utility” (p. 83) which is a teachable principle. The debate regarding ethical egoism is on-going and some theorists agree that it is an unfinished theory.

**Ethical and Moral Reasoning Models**

Kidder (2005) said that “without moral courage our brightest virtues rust from lack of use; with it, we build piece by piece a more ethical world” (p. 3). The purpose of ethical reasoning is to focus on actions of two kinds: those that support the development of others-that warrant our praise and those suffocate the development of others-and thus warrants our criticism (Paul & Elder, 2009). Paul and Elder (2009) stated that increasing one's ethical reasoning abilities is vital because there is in human nature a strong propensity toward egotism, bias, self-justification, and self-deception. Scholars agree that an important factor in successful ethical leadership is the maturity or “development of a professional ethical identity” (Anderson, Harbour, & Davies, 2007, p. 62). One can easily become impaired or empowered by social and cultural messages that shape our lives, specifically, mass communication agents. Negative tendencies can be vigorously fought only through habitual nurturing of impartiality, candor, integrity, self-knowledge, and consideration for others (Epley & Caruso, 2004). One can never eliminate those egocentric tendencies unconditionally or as a final point. However, one can fight actively by learning to be an ethical individual.

Ethical decision-making models have a significant place in the perspective of ethics (Hill, 2004). According to Remley and Herlihy (2001), ethical decision-making models can help bring understanding to a leader’s reasoning process. Traditionally decision-making models were designed based on Kohlberg’s theory of moral

The researcher must acknowledge, before proceeding with further discussion regarding ethical reasoning models that the literature is filled with various definitions of ethical reasoning and numerous descriptions of reasoning models. For this study, the researcher used Kidder’s (2003) definition of ethical reasoning, “ethical reasoning refers to: decision-making that is driven by our core values, morals, and integrity” (p. 42).

As cited in the research literature, there are a number of evidence-based ethical decision-making models available for use (Aragon & Brantmeier, 2009; Johnson, 2007; Kidder, 2009b; Paine, 2003). However, for this study the steps for only two models are discussed, including Kidder’s Ethical Checkpoints and Nash’s 12 Question Model. Kidder (2009b) developed Kidder’s Ethical Checkpoints to help people resolve ethical issues from the start to following up after the decision is made. The strength of this model is the focus on making decisions between two good or right issues. Kidder’s (2009b) checklist includes the following nine steps:

Step 1: Recognize that there is a moral problem and not just an issue of manners or social convention.

Step 2: Determine the actor. We are all involved in moral issues, and we must determine the players in each instance.

Step 3: Gather the relevant facts bearing on the moral dilemma.

Step 4: Test for right versus wrong issues. This is a four-part test involving (a) the legal test- if a law/regulation is broken, not a moral dilemma; (b) the gut-level or
stench test; (c) the front page of the newspaper test; and (d) the what would my family or mother think of me when making this decision test?

Step 5: Test for right versus right issues. For example, truth versus loyalty, self-versus community, short-term versus long-term, and justice versus mercy. These are the hard decisions!

Step 6: Apply the appropriate ethical principle(s) for the resolution (e.g., utilitarian, altruism, the categorical imperative, communitarianism, or a combination of principles/perspectives).

Step 7: Is there a third way through this dilemma?

Step 8: Make a decision. Obvious but sometimes overlooked! Here is where the leader must now summon the moral courage to make a decision.

Step 9: Revisit and reflect on the decision. “Did I learn anything from this process and did new ethical issues surface?” (p. 180).

Nash’s (1981) model presents 12 practical steps for solving ethical dilemmas. Nash indicated that it is important for people to identify the problem, comprehend the problem from other people's perspectives, determine how the situation occurred, recognize to whom they have loyalty, explain their intention, compare the intention to the results, and consider who will be hurt by the decision (Nash, 1981). Nash recommended that the decision-maker consider if other people could provide input into the decision, if the position is long-term, if the decision is defendable to family members, the symbolic potential of the decision, and if different conditions would change the decision-maker's expectations. Nash’s (1981) 12 steps are as follows:
1. Have you defined the problem accurately?

2. How would you define the problem if you stood on the other side of the fence?

3. How did this situation occur in the first place?

4. To whom and to what do you give your loyalty as a person and as a member of the organization?

5. What is your intention in making this decision?

6. How does this intention compare with the probable results?

7. Who could your decision injure?

8. Can you discuss the problem with the affected parties before you make your decision? Are you confident that your position will be as valid over a long period of time as it seems now?

9. Could you disclose without qualm your decision or action to your boss, the head of your organization, your colleagues, your family, the person you most admire, or society as a whole?

10. What is the symbolic potential of your action if understood? If misunderstood?

11. Are there circumstances when you would allow exceptions to your stand?

12. What are they? (p. 78)

It is likely that only a few administrators would remember or even use the abovementioned models. However, researchers have suggested that these models should
be an integral component of the ethical training needed to equip the educational administrators to be effective leaders (Johnson, 2009).

**Leadership Theories**

During the 20th Century, social scientists presented a number of justifications for leadership behavior (Northouse, 2009). A search for materials, articles, and books that describe leadership theories yielded numerous responses. For this study, the researcher discusses the following six theories: the great man theory, trait theory, behavioral theories, contingency/situational theory, transactional theory, and transformational theory. Historically, theorists argued that leaders were born and not made; only people who inherited the necessary mental and physical characteristics were suited to be leaders (Northouse, 2009). Theories that subscribe to this perspective are categorized as the great man theory.
### Table 2

*Classic Leadership Theories Chart Commonly Used Theories in Leadership Research*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Major Assumptions</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Man</td>
<td>Leaders are born and not made. There are individuals who have unique qualities and are predestined to be leaders.</td>
<td>Carlyle, 1841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait</td>
<td>There are certain individuals who have innate traits that make them the best contender for leadership.</td>
<td>Stodgill, 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>Leaders are made and not born. Leadership encompasses certain behaviors that can be learned and developed.</td>
<td>Skinner, 1967&lt;br&gt;Bandura, 1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational/Contingency</td>
<td>Leaders are individuals who have the abilities to adapt his or her leadership style to the contextual and developmental levels of the followers.</td>
<td>Fiedler, 1964&lt;br&gt;House, 1974&lt;br&gt;Hersey &amp; Blanchard, 1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Leaders motivate and direct followers to share goals and vision by being honest, fair, and respectful to followers.</td>
<td>Burns, 1978&lt;br&gt;Bass, 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>Emphasis is placed on the relationship that exists between the leader and follower. Followers are motivated based on the transactions that occur. A follower’s affinity for either reward or punishment determines his or her motivational level.</td>
<td>Burns, 1978&lt;br&gt;Bass, 1985</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Great Man Theory**

The term “great man” was used because, at the time, only men were considered to be leaders, as in the military (Grayson, 2008). The focus was on the leader and the belief that when there was a need, great men like Buddha, Jesus, Churchill, and Eisenhower rose to the occasion. A second assumption of the great man theory is that great leaders are predestined to become leaders by birth (Northouse, 2010). This theory was popularized by Carlyle (1841) whose theory was inspired by the study of influential heroes. In *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, Carlyle compared a wide array of heroes (Grayson, 2008). According to Carlyle (1841), “The history of the world is but the biography of great men” (as cited in Grayson, 2008, p. 1).

Critics of the great man theory argued that based on the theory: (a) leadership was an endeavor that was not available to all individuals, and (b) no scientific evidence to substantiate the theoretical assumptions existed (Northouse, 2009). However, the great man theory was the first significant attempt to understand which human traits make great leaders.

**Trait Theory**

The trait leadership theory states that individuals are either born or are made with certain assets that will make them successful as leaders. Characteristics such as intellect, trustworthiness, creativity, and other values qualify individuals as good leaders. In fact, “Allport, an American psychologist, identified almost 18,000 English personality-relevant terms" (Matthews, Deary, & Whiteman, 2003, p. 3). Trait theorists suggested “human beings were born with inherited traits or characteristics, and the right combination of traits made them leaders” (Northouse, 2009, p.15). A study conducted by
Jung and Sosik (2006) found that there were certain traits that separated charismatic leaders from others including “traits like self-monitoring, engagement in impression management, motivation to obtain social power, and motivation to obtain self-actualization, separated charismatic leaders from others” (Northouse, 2009, p. 16). The trait theory is not without criticism, and theorists’ strongest criticism is “the failure of the trait approach to delimiting a definitive list of leadership traits” (Northouse, 2009, p. 26). However, the trait theory remains of interest to many researchers and continues to be a theory of importance (Bass, 1990; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Nadler & Tushman, 1989; Zaccaro, 2007; Zaleznik, 1977).

**Situational/Contingency Theory**

The contrast to trait theory is situational theory, which was conceptualized by Hersey and Blanchard in 1969. These theorists noted that there is no single leadership style that works best; instead leaders adapt their style for the task at hand. Consequently, the situational aspect of leadership was a key focus. According to Hershey and Blanchard (1969), effective leaders use leadership styles that match the situation and match the needs of subordinates (Northouse, 2009). Northouse (2009) summarized, “Situational leadership stresses that leadership is composed of both a directive and supportive dimensions and that each has to be applied appropriately in a given situation” (p. 89). Northouse continued: “The premise of the theory is that different situations demand different kinds of leadership” (p. 89).

Situational leadership does have limitations. Major criticisms suggest the following: (a) there are limited research studies that justify the assumptions, (b) there is too much gravity placed on skill or development level of followers, (c) it is unclear how
commitment is defined in the model, and (d) the model is too prescriptive (Northouse, 2009). Despite these criticisms, the situational theory has withstood the test of time, is practical, and easy to apply.

In context, the contingency theory is similar to the situational theory. Burns and Stalker (1961) are known as leading contingency theorists. Burns and Stalker (1961) argued that there is no one way of leading and leadership preference should be based on situations (Gordon, 1998). Theorists observe that there are certain people who respond at a high level in certain places, but at a lower level when taken out of their comfort zone (Northouse, 2009).

**Behavioral Theory**

In response to the trait and situational theories, behavioral theories offer a different viewpoint, one that focuses on the behaviors of the leader in contrast to his or her mental, physical, or social characteristics. Most influential in promoting the behavioral theory are Skinner and Bandura. The behavioral theory states that leaders are made and not born, which is in direct contrast to the trait theory (Weinbach, 2008). Some theorists are attracted to the behavioral theory because it offers more individuals the opportunity be leaders (Callan, 2003). The behavior theory progressed as a result of more sophisticated testing methods, particularly statistical analysis, that allowed measuring the cause and effects relationship of specific human behaviors of leaders (Chance & Chance, 2003). Behavioral theorists’ focus is on the behavior of the leader in his or her capacity as a leader. Behaviorists regard a leader’s behavior as the best indicator of his or her leadership abilities and, as a result, one of the best determinants of success (Bandura, 1982).
Perhaps the most noted behavioral leadership studies are the Ohio State and the University of Michigan studies (Hershey & Blanchard, 2012). Researchers who participated in these studies were Katz, Kahn, Likert, and Warrick. The Institute for Social Research conducted leadership studies to identify styles of leader behavior that resulted in leadership success. The study identified two styles: (1) Production Centered Supervisor: leaders using supervisor-centered leadership behavior spend more time performing tasks similar to employees, used micromanaging, and punished mistakes; and (2) Employee Centered Supervisors: leaders who are interested in developing subordinates and ensuring that employees are satisfied with their jobs (Warrick, 1981).

**Transformational Theory**

According to Northouse (2013), transformational and transactional leadership theories offer a more contemporary view for understanding and describing leadership. Transformational leadership was first posited by Burns in the 1970s and was expanded by Bass in the 1980s. Many scholars regard transformational leadership theory as a relational theory since the major focus is on the relationship between the leader and the follower (Northouse, 2013). According to Saddler (2003), transformational leadership refers to inspiring followers to share and commit to the leader’s values and visions. Based on the transformational leadership perspective less emphasis is placed on power as the major element of leadership. Leaders are more concerned with the development of character and doing what is morally correct (Saddler, 2003). As stated by Burns (1978):

Essentially the leader’s task is consciousness-raising on a wide plane. The leader’s fundamental act is to induce people to be aware or conscious of what they
feel—to feel their true needs so strongly, to define their values so meaningfully that they can be moved to purposeful action. (pp. 43-44)

The researcher believes that because the transformational leadership theory “is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals” (Northouse, 2010, p. 171), it is more harmonious with the virtue theory than any of the other leadership theories. According to Burns (2003), transformational leadership ascribes to the theoretical perspective that leaders’ efforts should be directed toward understanding followers’ needs, values, and morals. Transformational leaders are leaders who have visions, and they share these visions with followers. When leaders’ visions are articulated to followers in a respectful and caring manner mutual respect and dedication are established (Bass, 1999). Four components are associated with transformational leadership, including idealized influence, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation (Avolio, Waldman, & Yammarino, 1991: Bass & Avolio, 1990). As a result of the leader/follower interaction and relationship, Burns envisioned that both individuals would be transformed (Burns, 1978).

**Transactional Theory**

Weber (1947) is the theorist recognized as coining the transactional leadership theory. However, Bass (1981) is recognized as the theorist who expanded and described a contemporary version of the theory (Northouse, 2009). Transactional theory, also known as exchange theory of leadership, is characterized by an arrangement made between the leader and the followers. In fact, the theory involves the role of rewards and punishments (Bass, 1985). Transactional leadership encompasses inspiring and guiding followers mostly through appealing to their own self-interest. The success of
transactional leaders is based on their position and status within the organization. The major purpose of the follower is to adhere to the directives of the leader, whereas the major purpose of the leader is to provide appropriate reward or reprimand to followers for completing an assignment (Waldman, Ramirez, House, & Puranam, 2001).

Assumptions of the transactional theory include the following: (1) Employees are inspired by reward and punishment; (2) followers adhere to the directives of the leader, and (3) leaders provide contracts which articulate what followers will receive if they do something right and what the consequences are if they do something wrong (Bass & Avolio, 1993). The assumption is that followers must be micromanaged to get sufficient work done, and leaders recognize the actions that followers must take to achieve desired outcomes. The leader’s job is to articulate the goal and to choose a suitable reward that guarantees the motivation toward that goal (Saddler, 2003).

Although the topics of ethics and leadership have been debated for centuries among numerous scholars, the phenomena still remain complex and not easily understood (Burns, 1978). An overview of theoretical models and discussions regarding moral principles and values do not holistically and sufficiently explain the concept of leadership or a leader’s behavior (Thomas & Bainbridge, 2001). According to Beck and Murphy (1997), society trusts that leaders of educational institutions represent the highest ethical principles among its citizenry. However, among some community college administrators, an alarming number of documented ethical lapses exist. According to Bennis (2003), leaders know the right thing to do; the problem occurs with doing the right thing. The subject of unethical leadership has gained enormous notoriety in both academic and professional circles; researchers are fervently searching for the answers to
the phenomenon of unethical behavior among leaders. The literature confirms that the phenomenon is complex and involves numerous variables. However, the researcher believes that a theoretical understanding of leadership significantly impacts our understanding of leaders’ behaviors.

**Unethical Leadership**

A significant number of research studies have been conducted to examine ethical leadership. However, the avalanche of unethical behavior among leaders has sparked interest in the phenomenon of unethical behavior of leaders (Conger & Riggio, 2006a; Price, 2006; Sayles & Smith, 2006). Ethics scholars have not comprehensively examined the disadvantages of unethical conduct of leaders, especially how unethical practices and behavior impact institutions, employees, and society (Dasborough, 2006; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Pelletier & Bligh, 2008). Trevino and Brown (2005) found that leaders play an important role in influencing employees’ ethical and unethical conduct. Trevino and Brown (2005) also noted “admired leaders who are seen as trustworthy, and who treat employees fairly and considerably, will develop social exchange relationships that result in an employee’s reciprocating in positive ways” (p. 83).

Based on the literature, unethical leadership defeats a leader’s ability to construct the environment that encourages the moral integrity and ethical behavior essential for ethical reasoning to occur. Furthermore, support for individuals, to develop the skills and attitudes to maintain caring and trusting relationships, is diminished when unethical leaders lead organizations or institutions (Barna, 2009).

Comparing unethical behavior to cancer, Chandler (2009) and Sims and Long-Chuan (2003) identified the eroding quality of unethical behavior on all personal and
professional levels. Johnson (2005) commented, “We can and do condemn the actions of leaders who decide to lie, demean followers, and enrich themselves at the expense of the less fortunate” (p. 6). A number of definitions for unethical leadership exist, but scholars agree that unethical leadership is leaders performing inconsistently with agreed upon principles of character, morals, and honesty (Brass, Butterfield, & Skaggs, 1998). Because of personal self-interest, leaders violate clear, measurable, and legal standards. Consequently, leaders, foster distrust among those who rely on educational leaders to lead with integrity.

Quinn (2011) discovered that school leaders experienced tension between their guiding moral viewpoints and policies when making decisions. In light of the inundation of leadership scandals across all spheres of society, researchers more recently have begun to assess unethical leadership behavior. While the subject of ethical and moral leadership has received an excess of research consideration (Brown & Trevino, 2006; Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005; Cameron, 2003; Chandler, 2009; Ciulla, 1998; Trevino, 1986), literature regarding unethical behavior is still in its infancy. However, Calabrese and Roberts (2002) found “over 600 stories on school administrators’ misconduct in the United States” (p. 269).

Scholars agree that unethical leadership should be ascertained from the perspective of leaders, followers, and situational circumstances (Chandler, 2009; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Popper, 2001; Vardi & Weitz, 2004), but recognizing that there are other variables that could easily be included, researchers have only addressed unethical leadership from three points of view: (a) leaders (Dotlich & Cairo, 2003; Kets
Recently, scholars have presented conceptual frameworks that combine the three views (Padilla et al., 2007; Popper, 2001). Padilla et al. (2007) presented a theoretical model entitled the “toxic triangle” to illustrate negative leadership. The toxic triangle consists of three components: destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive to learning environments. These three systems were further examined by exploring the characteristics of each system. Similarly, Popper (2001) proposed that immoral and detrimental leadership encompasses the interplay between leaders, followers, and circumstances; further this interaction can be seen as responsible for the dynamics of unethical leadership.

As researchers, scholars, and practitioners contemplate what may be encouraging unethical behavior and ethical acts among leaders, an integral element for examination may be the role that leaders play in influencing unethical behavior in the work environment (Trevino & Brown, 2005). There are scholars who assert that ongoing ethical training throughout a leader’s career is an excellent strategy for combating unethical behavior (Ciulla, 2004; Hellmich, 2007; Vaughn, 2006). Others have suggested that the solution may be to incorporate intense, comprehensive, and innovative ethical training into leadership, graduate and professional development programs (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Fullan, 2003; Gregory, 2010; Johnson, 2007). The debate regarding how to address unethical behavior continues. However, scholars agree that the behavior is detrimental to organizations and institutions, undermines public trust in leaders, and
prohibits healthy sustainable growth of organizations (Bennis, 2003; Boggs, 2003; Ciulla, 2004; Hellmich, 2007).

**Ethical Leadership**

Little research has been published on the theoretical foundations of leadership ethics (Northouse, 2010). While there have been many studies on leadership, little has been specifically dedicated to ethical and unethical leadership (Chandler, 2009; Ciulla, 2003; Northouse, 2009). Johnson (2009) described ethical leadership through a metaphor of casting light or shadow. According to Johnson, “We cast light by developing ethical greatness in our upcoming and current leaders with clear ethical outcomes (sound ethical reasoning, strong character, follow-through, ethical climate, ethical decision-making, and others) in the workplace” (p. 20). Johnson further stated, “Leaders also cast shadows in the workplace through abuse of power and privilege, deceit, disloyalty, and inconsistency, among others” (p. 20).

Brown, et al. (2005) defined ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (p. 120). Mendonca and Kanungo (2007) stated, “Ethical leadership is essentially transformational in nature and includes the self-transformation of both leaders and followers” (p. 74). According to Bass and Steidlmeier (1999), ethics is an element of authentic transformational leadership.

Boggs (2004) noted that higher education leaders exhibit the same types of lapses in ethics currently found throughout society, and community college leaders are no exception. According to Benner (2007), numerous models have been proposed as
foundations for ethical leadership and reasoning. However, most of these proposals have not accomplished their intended goals, and scholars have provided critiques about the strengths and weaknesses of them. Bennis (2003) asserted that all admirable leaders exhibit the following six competencies: “They create a sense of mission, they motivate others to join them on that mission, they create an adaptive social infrastructure for their followers, they generate trust and optimism, they develop other leaders and they get results” (pp. xxi-xxii). Kouzes and Posner (2011) viewed leadership from the perspectives of style and practice, as presented below:

1. Model the Way
   Clarify values by finding your voice and affirming shared ideas.
   Set the example by aligning actions with shared values.

2. Inspire a Shared Vision
   Envision the future by imagining exciting and enriching possibilities.
   Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations.

3. Challenge the Process
   Search for opportunities by seizing the initiatives outward for innovative ways to improve.
   Experiment and take risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from experiences.

4. Enable Others to Act
   Foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships.
   Strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence.
5. Encourage the Heart

Recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual’s excellence.

Celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community (p. 16).

Bolman and Deal (2008) described leadership as behavior that can be identified through different frames, with certain characteristics that match leaders’ behaviors. Although there are numerous perspectives among scholars regarding leadership, researchers agree that community college leaders face ethical dilemmas daily and these ethical dilemmas challenge their abilities to be ethical leaders and to engage in ethical reasoning (Boggs, 2003; Hellmich, 2007; Vaughn, 2006). However, leaders must be committed to practicing behaviors that reflect positive images about the institutions they serve.

The belief that leaders of higher education institutions should be ethical is not new. Historically, leaders of educational institutions have been depicted as individuals of good moral character (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Vaughn, 2006). Researchers have demonstrated that leaders set the tone for either an ethical or unethical organization. Consequently, most organizations take ethical cues from leaders and those leaders have a significant impact on employees and the organizational culture (Bennis, 2004; Hellmich, 2007; Jose & Thibodeaux, 1999; Vaughn, 2006; Conger & Riggio, 2006b). Reacting morally to critical events indicates that leaders are ethical and committed to ethical principles.
Another indication of ethical leadership is the monitoring and controlling of moral issues and use of ethical criteria when conducting institutional activities (Schein, 1992). A leader, who desires to lead an ethical organization must purposely and consciously demonstrate ethical behavior. Ethical leadership is effective leadership, with a demonstrated commitment to moral and ethical behavior. A societal expectation is that at the heart of ethical leadership is a leader who upholds the values and ideals of the culture. Johnson (2003) stated, “Ethical leadership begins with the way leaders perceive and conceptualize the world around them” (p. 1).

**Summary**

Based on previous research, an overwhelming, ongoing distrust for leaders among the public is due, in part, to a lack of ethical conduct by one’s leaders and institutions. Community college leaders are faced with numerous ethical challenges, and some have responded by exhibiting deviant and counterproductive behaviors. Researchers have asserted that educational leaders respond to ethical dilemmas and challenges daily, and a significant challenge for these leaders is practicing moral leadership in the presence of conflicting obligations to external and internal forces (Ciulla, 2004; Edmond & Fisher, 2002; Stefkovich & Shapiro, 2003).

Leaders face a major challenge when attempting to be true to their integrity and creditability in the face of questionable opportunities for personal, monetary, or status gain (Kelley & Chang, 2007). Bennis (2003) asserted that leaders know “the right thing to do; the problem is doing the right thing” (p. 25). Leaders are obligated to use privileges in a responsible matter and in the best interest of the organization and its stakeholders (Loritts, 2008). Community college leaders are expected to respond to
dilemmas in a way that does not violate the public’s expectations of ethical, moral, or professional behavior (Hardy, 2007). However, in reality, it is a difficult task for community college leaders to make decisions that both protect institutional commitments and adhere to personal and professional values (Hardy, 2007). Leaders are often placed in situations that require a compromise between professional and personal values (Ciulla, 2004; Hellmich, 2007; Josephson, 2002; Vaughn, 2006).

Finding solutions for solving the phenomenon of unethical behavior among leaders is still an ongoing debate, and no specific solutions have been identified (Gregory, 2010). However, scholars agree that leaders must be able to manage colleges without influence, coercion, or manipulation from internal and external forces (Vaughn, 2006). The literature also confirms that there is a need for ethical and moral preparation of school leaders (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Fullan, 2003; Gregory, 2010, Johnson, 2007, 2009; Sergiovanni, 1992; Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 2005). Previously, practitioners regarded professional codes of ethics, standards, and institutional policies as deterrents to unethical behavior (Hardy, 2007). Typically, professional codes of ethics, standards, and institutional policies have limited preventive powers, unquestionably not enough to deter unethical behavior among leaders. Nevertheless, when professional codes of ethics, standards, and institutional policies have enforcement powers “they do have some value” (Hardy, 2007, p.117).

While, there is no absolute solution for decaying ethical leadership, researchers recommend comprehensive ethics training in leader preparation programs. Edmond and Fisher (2002) concluded “one of the greatest gaps present in the training of education leaders nationwide is that of ethics” (p. 14). Additionally, the authors noted that among
leaders, “71.6 percent scored 60 percent or lower, and 86.4 percent scored lower than 70 percent in relation to their understanding of ethics” (Edmond & Fisher, 2002, p. 14).

Recent literature discusses institutional mentor programs as a strategy for ethical leadership training. An ethical leadership mentor program allows leaders to demonstrate appropriate ethical leadership behaviors for aspiring and new leaders (Hockaday & Puyaar, 2000). Another strategy of interest is that of developing and implementing in-house professional development opportunities that comprehensively addresses ethical issues. In-house professional development opportunities would allow aspiring and new leaders to engage in case studies, vignettes, and role playing.

Research and practice of ethical decision-making models clearly demonstrate that educational leaders may be educated to make ethical decisions (Cooper, 1998; Gregory, 2010; Kidder, 2009b; Nash, 1989). Researchers assert that professional development activities would provide opportunities for leaders to perform in authentic case study environments with time for relevant discussion. Strike et al. (2005) concluded that value judgments and moral judgments should be at the heart of the school administrator’s job, and administration should not be a science that does not deal with values and value judgments.

This chapter began by discussing the ambiguous and precarious beginnings of community colleges. The literature guided the researcher to reviewing theories and models that should serve as a moral compass for leaders. Researchers are recognizing occurrences of scandals in business and conceding that it occurs in higher education as well. Just as the queen of home décor Martha Stewart caused tremendous suffering and financial losses to herself and business associates; institutions, students, and the public
suffered greatly at the hands of a few leaders who put their desire for personal gain above their duties and obligations. Leaders are not perfect, and situations involving individual corruption can be expected. However, it is the recent behavior among educational leaders which has caused harm for innocent institutional members, students, the public, and constituents that served as an impetus for this research. Scholars agree that regaining trust among subordinates, students, and constituents are a long and precarious endeavor; recovery from incidences of unethical behavior is not an easy or a short journey (Kelley, 2009).

Previous researchers have indicated that unethical behaviors exist among educational leaders. However, it is evident that leaders are capable of altering their behaviors. Through training and awareness of issues that impact ethical behavior, leaders can become ethical leaders, dedicated to making ethical decisions. This study may offer some insight into the gap that exists and provide inferences for integrating ethics training into leadership preparation and training programs.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter begins with a comprehensive description of the study’s research design, including detailed information regarding qualitative phenomenological research. Another important aspect of this chapter is the presentation of the research questions. The research questions were designed to assist the researcher in determining the perceptions among community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. Additionally, information regarding the research site, sampling, population, participants, instrument/materials, data collection procedures, data analysis, and validity/reliability is discussed. Each section provides a detailed description of its function within the qualitative tradition.

Research Design

This was conducted as a qualitative phenomenological study from the constructivist perspective. The goal of this study was to gain insight into the perceptions among community college administrators regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. The researcher attempted only to determine what community college administrators believe is ethical leadership (study variable) and what administrators
believe should guide ethical reasoning (study variable). The study involved only one group of participants, with no pre-study procedures.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements and regulations were strictly addressed and adhered to, and all requests related to the study were submitted in a timely matter. No research was conducted prior to IRB approval (Appendix A). Additionally, documentation was submitted to personnel authorized to grant approval to conduct research on the selected site (Appendix B). Approval to use research instrument was requested and received as well (Appendix C). The researcher requested permission to use tables and figures and received authorizations from the appropriated personnel (Appendices D and E). Recognizing that all research has ethical issues, the researcher addressed ethical concerns at the appropriate time by making sure that consent and release forms were presented, explained, and signed.

**Research Questions**

Individuals, who work in higher education, must train students and aspiring leaders for the challenges and obstacles they will encounter and prepare them for the circumstances of the communities in which they work and live. Consequently, it is imperative that the necessary tools are provided for success. The questions for this research project were as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of community college leaders regarding ethical leadership?

2. What are the perceptions of community college leaders regarding ethical reasoning?
3. What do community college leaders believe should guide ethical reasoning?

Through these questions, the researcher ascertained the perceptions that community college leaders have regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning.

**Research Site**

This site was selected based on convenience of the researcher to participants and participants’ knowledge and experience regarding the study problem. A community college in Alabama was selected as the study site. Additionally, research approval was given by the appropriate college official. The college was founded in 1949 and ranks among the 50 top community colleges in the United States. The college currently enrolls 3,100 students in credit programs and 2,200 students in noncredit programs. On June 23, 2007, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Alabama State Board of Education voted to merge the community college with a nearby technical college.

**Sampling**

Purposeful convenience selection is the preferred sampling strategy. These administrators are available to the researcher, have experiences with the phenomenon to be studied, and can inform the research questions being investigated (Creswell, 2013). Several retired and all current mid-level administrators from a community college were sent an e-mail describing the research and requesting that they voluntarily participate in the study. Only 15 mid-level current administrators agreed to participate in the study. Current mid-level educational administrators were asked to participate because of the
pivotal role they play in implementing and interpreting decisions made by upper-level administrators. Because of the researcher’s proximity and access to the anticipated sample, the sampling method was one of convenience. The final number of participants was based on the number of administrators who responded and voluntarily agreed to participate.

Population

The sample was purposely selected from a population of educational leaders in one community college in Alabama’s community college system. The population consisted of community college leaders who serve at the institution’s mid-management level (i.e., deans, associate deans, directors). The college has a total of 36 mid-level administrators, and all have the responsibilities of supervising, coordinating, directing, and evaluating institutional affairs. Current mid-level administrators, who participated in this study, were deans, associate deans, and directors. All of the college’s administrators received a request to participate in the study (Appendix F). At the time of the study, administrators’ ages ranged from 25 to 65. Participants included females and males who were Caucasian and African American. Administrators had institutional experience between 5 and 30 years.

Participants

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the perceptions of community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. Participants included males, females, Caucasians, and African Americans. Study participants ranged in age between 25-65 years. In terms of educational background, all participants had a minimum of a
Master’s degree or higher. For the purpose of this study, the term “administrators” refers to deans, associate/assistant deans, and directors. No monetary inducements were offered as compensation. Permission to conduct this study on campus was requested by the researcher, and the president’s authorized IRB representative granted approval. Each person who voluntarily agreed to be interviewed was asked to read and sign an informed consent form (Appendix G). Consent forms were signed prior to participating and participants were assured complete confidentiality.

**Instruments and Materials**

The researcher was the key instrument for this study. According to Creswell (2009), “Primarily in qualitative research, the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study” (p. 196). The researcher’s perceptions of ethical leadership and ethical decision-making have been shaped by personal and professional experiences. As an administrator from July 1996 to August 2004, the researcher was involved with numerous top-level leader proceedings and considerations and worked closely with faculty members, cabinet officers, and the president during incidences of ethical dilemmas. Consequently, the researcher believes this understanding of situations and functions enhances awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity to many of the challenges, decisions, and issues encountered by administrators. Also, the researcher believes that these experiences assisted the researcher in working with participants. Due to previous experiences of working closely with administrators, the researcher brought certain biases to this study. Although every precaution was taken to ensure impartiality, these biases may have shaped the way the researcher viewed and understood the data collected and
the ways in which the researcher interpreted her experiences and those of. The researcher initiated this study with the perception that administrators have limited decision-making power and are often faced with difficult situations when encountering ethical dilemmas.

For this study, the researcher conducted face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Strategies for recording responses included taking handwritten notes, audiotaping interviews (with participant permission), and transcribing interviews immediately after they were completed. To address the three research questions, interviews were conducted using a questionnaire comprised of six questions. A limited number of questions were developed to allow the opportunity to address other questions that may have ensued. The limited number of questions also allowed participants to express their thoughts and elaborate on specific points, to complement interview questions. Questions were adapted from a questionnaire (Appendix H) developed by Data Collections Statistical and Data Analysis Services (2013). The questionnaire was reviewed by local experts, and changes were made based on the study questions and information that the researcher was attempting to ascertain. Additionally, the questionnaire was developed based on literature and other relevant information. After IRB approval had been received, the questionnaire was piloted by the researcher. Five administrators were interviewed using the research instrument to determine if there were any confusing questions or questions that were difficult to answer, to identify concepts that could be changed for clarification or understanding, and to provide any relevant or pertinent critique. The pilot revealed that the instrument was easy to administer, instructions were comprehensible, and the wording was appropriate for the questionnaire. However, four out of five administrators recommended that in question six, the word
“affect” be changed to “influence.” Also, reviewers suggested that the word “incidents” be deleted from the questionnaire; these were the only changes that were made. All five administrators agreed that the questionnaire would answer the research questions. Additionally, all five recommended that the researcher should be more aggressive when asking the probing questions.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), establishing validity and reliability in qualitative research can be less precise than in quantitative research. However, the researcher used participant/member checks (sharing the information with participants) and committee chair evaluation of procedures and processes (committee chair checked the researcher’s inferences based on the instrument and research design; data were reviewed by evaluator). As evidence of consistent results, the researcher used audiotapes, conducted follow-up checks as needed, and transcribed the interviews immediately after they were completed.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Before the study was conducted, an approval to conduct the study was obtained. The researcher was the research instrument. After the selection process, researcher interviewed participants, who were selected from a group of community college administrators. Participants and the researcher discussed the consent form and signed it prior to the interview. Participants were also informed that the purpose of the study was to ascertain perceptions of community college administrators regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. The researcher engaged in extensive interviews with study participants. Each participant participated in a semi-structured, face-to-face interview. All interviews were conducted in a private environment, without interruptions, and lasted
no more than 45 minutes. To begin the interview, the researcher asked the participant, “To describe what he/she perceived as ethical leadership.” After the description of ethical leadership, the researcher asked participants to compare their version of ethical leadership to the college’s leadership.

Questions were adapted from a questionnaire developed by Data Collection Statistical and Data Analysis Services (2013); the following questions were posed to participants during the interviews:

1. What do you perceive as ethical leadership?
2. What is your perception regarding ethical leadership among administrators in Alabama Community College System?
3. What do you perceive as ethical reasoning?
4. What is your perception regarding ethical reasoning among administrators in Alabama Community College System?
5. What factors do you consider important when making ethical decisions?
6. Probe question: In your opinion, what individuals or organizational policies have the most influence on the ethical culture within your institution?

Interviews were conducted as conversations with minimal structure other than to encourage interviewees to provide their honest opinions. Open-ended questions were not provided to participants prior to the interviews being conducted. According to Creswell (2013), an environment familiar to the study participants makes them more agreeable to speak; consequently, the researcher conducted interviews in areas familiar to participants.
An interview guide sheet was used to record each participant’s responses. Additionally, a digital recorder was used to ensure that all of the responses were captured efficiently. The recordings were transcribed, and after transcribing, selected responses were confirmed with specific participants individually by phone.

Appendix H displays the interview guide sheet used by the researcher to conduct face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. According to Creswell (2013), researchers should have an instrument to help them focus and remain on track during the course of the interview.

**Data Analysis**

Interviews were analyzed using the expanded seven steps from the modified Van-Kaam Method described by Moustakas (1994):

1. list data and develop groupings for data;
2. reduce and eliminate data to develop invariant themes of the phenomenon;
3. cluster and label constituent score themes of the phenomenon;
4. check and validate the invariant constituents and their accompanying themes against participant’s transcript;
5. create an individual textural description of the phenomenon for each participant;
6. create an individual structural description based upon the individual textural description; and
7. create an individual textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience (pp. 120-121).
Data analysis consisted of transcribing, coding, identifying themes, and interpreting participant responses. The researcher converted the audio text into written text developing a transcript that produced verbatim interview responses. According to Creswell (2013), the next step is to extract and analyze data for significant statements and develop clusters of meaning units from participant statements. Based on clustered and categorized data, concepts and themes were used to define and understand participants’ statements and responses. The researcher also used constant comparative analysis with themes being identified and coded as they appeared (Creswell, 2013). From the relevant themes, the researcher developed a textual description of participant perceptions and how they experienced the phenomenon. As with most qualitative studies, ongoing data analysis occurred throughout the duration of the study. All of the taped interviews, memos, and telephone follow-ups were entered into computer files. Computer software aided the researcher with managing and organizing data around different topics and themes. MAXQDA (The “MAX” in MAXQDA is reminiscent to the German economist and sociologist Max Weber. The “QDA” stands for Qualitative Data Analysis) software program was utilized for analyzing data. MAXQDA software was instrumental in organizing analysis and textural interpretations. The researcher was able to import additional files, organize them in document groups, develop a system of categories, code segments of documents, write and organize memos, and utilize various search options.

The researcher used structured, analytical techniques involving sorting, categorizing, and naming themes. A scheme of numbers and letters was used to designate key categories and subcategories. Original copies of all computer files of data
were color coded with the appropriate numbers and letters when needed. Connections between categories and themes were used to further understand community college administrators’ perceptions and to design the structure of the data for positioning in the final document.

As new themes emerged, they were compared with the previous ones and grouped with similar themes. As new meaning units emerged, a new theme was formed. It was the phenomenological researcher’s goal to interpret the essence of the experience as described by the participant. The researcher examined all statements to write a textural description of what participants experienced and a structural description of how participants experienced the phenomenon. Facets of the experience, which were universal to all of the participants, were invariant structures that revealed the essence of the experience. Quoting Moustakas (1994), Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004) stated:

The way of analyzing phenomenological data, follows a systematic procedure that is rigorous yet accessible to qualitative researchers. The steps involve the inquirer describing their own experiences with the phenomenon (epoch), identifies significant statements in the database from participants, and clusters these statements into meaning units and themes. Next, the researcher synthesizes the themes into a description of the experiences of the individuals (textual and structural descriptions), and then constructs a composite description of the meanings and the essences of the experience. (pp. 21-22)

First, the researcher adhered to the epoch or bracketing the phase; suspending what was known about the phenomenon, keeping an open context, and setting aside preconceptions (Creswell, 2013). The researcher acknowledged biases and beliefs and
set them aside so that responses were more fully understood and interpreted from the participant’s view. Finally, the researcher combined both textural and structural statements to convey the essence of the experience.

Validity and Reliability

According to researchers, validity and reliability in qualitative research may be the most difficult and complex issues in regard to a qualitative study (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Qualitative researchers use terminology that is different from that used by quantitative researchers (Creswell, 2009). However, qualitative researchers seek an abundance of proof that establishes credibility and allows a feeling of confidence about one’s observations, interpretations, and conclusions (Eisner, 1991). Lincoln and Guba (1985) applied the terms credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability “as the naturalist’s equivalents for internal validation, external validation, reliability, and objectivity” (p. 300).

With the aforementioned in mind, the researcher used participant/member checks, and auditing of the process by the committee chair as methods of establishing credibility. A thick description was applied to the interpretation of all data to ensure that findings were transferable between the researcher and those being studied (Creswell, 2013). The committee chair audited the research process in order to assure dependability. The committee chair provided critical and consultative evaluations regarding the merits of the research procedures, specifically looking at significance and methodological integrity. For qualitative reliability, the researcher checked that the consistency of coding was in agreement throughout the process. Additionally, the researcher consistently examined transcripts to ensure that if mistakes were made, they were corrected.
Summary

This qualitative phenomenological study utilized concepts based on the constructivist perspective. Research questions guided the collection and analysis of data (Mason, 2002). As the data collection instrument, the researcher used interview skills recommended as best practices by experts in the field. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research study sites should be familiar to participants; a familiar environment is less intimidating, and participants will be more willing to respond honestly to questions. Consequently, the researcher conducted interviews at the research site in each participant’s office.

The researcher used purposeful convenience sampling strategies to select participants. The researcher selected this method because participants were easily accessible and because they possessed requisite information and experiences to answer the research questions. Appropriate permission, consents, and release documents were signed and collected. In accordance with qualitative research, the sample was sufficient for gathering rich data, and the size of the sample was appropriate for managing the collection and analysis of data.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This chapter is organized starting with the research questions, information regarding the demographic profiles, and a summary of the results obtained from the study. The researcher engaged in 20 extensive interviews with 15 administrators using the steps described by Moustakas (1994). As the data collection instrument, the researcher began by sharing and reflecting about experiences encountered as an administrator. After the interviews, the researcher began the reading and memoing processes. The researcher read through the transcript, then continued to the next step which involved coding and identifying significant statements. From the significant statements, the researcher developed themes and wrote narratives that represented textural and structural descriptions of administrators’ perceptions. The results are presented using a format adapted from Creswell (2013).

Research data were collected by conducting 20 semi-structured interview sessions. As the study unfolded, the researcher needed additional information regarding participants’ feelings as each experienced an ethical incident. Consequently, the researcher found it necessary to ask five of the participants to engage in a second interview session, for a total of 20 sessions. A total of 15 out of 36 administrators participated in the study, for a participant response rate of 42%. Study participants were not given the questions prior to participating in the interview process. However,
participants received assurances that all data collected would be used for the purpose of research and all identities would be confidential.

The purpose of this study was to collect data and ascertain the perceptions among community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. The results of the study revealed diverse and multiple meanings constructed by community college leaders as they encountered and experienced ethical challenges. The results indicated that community college leaders believe that ethical leadership is about the leader. Community college leaders believe that ethical leadership is about who the leader is and what he or she does. Leaders believe that ethical reasoning is about following policies, procedures, legal laws, and doing what is in the best interest of all partners involved. Additionally, leaders believed that policy; procedures; legal laws; and being just, fair, and honest should guide ethical decision-making.

**Part 1: Demographic Profiles**

Participant demographic profiles are identified in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, educational attainment, and number of years in administrative positions. In this study, data were gathered from community college leaders in Alabama. The sample from this population provided an excellent study group in relation to the research objectives. The demographic section of this report includes a comprehensive profile of participants. It is probable that the attributes of the participants influenced perceptions as related to the study problem.

The age range of three of the participants was between 35-45 years old (20% of the participants). The remaining age range of participants was between 55-65 years old,
indicating that most of the participants were approaching retirement age and that the responses were basically those of more experienced administrators.

There were nine female participants (60%) and six male participants (40%). Female participation in the study was larger than male participation, which may indicate that more females were interested in the topic (ethical leadership and ethical reasoning) or that females were less intimidated than males to participate.

There were eight African American participants (53%) and seven Caucasian participants (47%) who participated in the study. However, the findings indicated that participation was about the same for both groups.

In terms of educational attainment, 13 participants (87%) held a Master’s degree while two (13%) had earned a doctoral degree. Based on national trends, the majority of community college leaders hold at least a Master’s degree. Leaders at the doctoral level were less accessible to the researcher.

With regard to administrative experience, four participants (27%) had been in leadership for 5 years or less and three participants (20%) had served as leaders for over 20 years. The remaining eight participants (53%) had between 5 and 20 years of experience. The data indicated that participation was about the same for experienced leaders as the number of leaders with much less experience. Therefore, the researcher was confident that a diverse range of experiences and perspectives was represented.

Part 2: Research Questions

Historically, ethical leadership has been viewed as one of the fundamental characteristics embedded within the structure of higher education. However, based on recent unethical behavior among educational leaders and how decisions made during
times of ethical challenges, the public is questioning the awareness of ethical leadership among educational leaders. Consequently, the researcher wanted to ascertain what community college leaders perceived as ethical leadership, ethical reasoning, and what guided ethical reasoning. To ascertain leaders’ perspectives and views the researcher used the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of community college leaders regarding ethical leadership?
2. What are the perceptions of community college leaders regarding ethical reasoning?
3. What do community college leaders believe should guide ethical reasoning?

Table 4 shows that based on the responses to research questions, community college administrators believed that ethical leadership was primarily about the leader. Additionally, it shows that policies and procedures were heavily relied upon when making decisions. The table also demonstrates a connection between the theoretical concepts utilized in the study and the responses of the participants.

Research questions for this study were designed to ascertain the perceptions among community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. Two theories were selected to interpret and analyze data. First, the researcher examined the data as they related to Aristotle’s virtue-based theory. According to the theory, good character is a major qualification towards being a virtuous human being. With regard to leadership, Aristotle suggested that a good leader has to be of good moral character, and to develop this character one must be good continuously and habitually. There are tenets
of the theory that assign importance to the concept that virtue is about who one is and what one does. As the researcher became emerged in the data, a recurring theme became obvious; participants believed, as Aristotle did, that ethical leadership is about the leader. Results of this study indicated that community college leaders strongly believed that ethical leadership was about whom the leader is and what the leader does.

Second, the researcher viewed the data based on the theory of transformational leadership, which is about a leader motivating followers to share goals and visions. Leaders motivate followers by the way he or she responds to and interacts with followers. Transformational leaders care about followers; they are respectful, honest, and fair towards followers. Results of the study revealed that community college leaders believed that ethical leadership is about leaders who value employees, treat them with respect, and value employees’ opinions.

Administrators stated, ethical decision-making involves making decisions that are in the best interest of all and adhering to policies, procedures, and legal laws. Additionally, leaders noted that policies and procedures should guide ethical decision-making.
Research Questions Perceptions, Theory, and Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Theory/Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. What are the perceptions of community college leaders regarding ethical leadership? | Community college leaders viewed ethical leadership in terms of what leaders do, how leaders respond to situations, and how leaders treat followers. Community college leaders believed that ethical leadership involves leaders who do the right thing and respect followers. Ethical leaders follow policies and procedures, and adhere to legal laws.  
  "My perception of ethical leadership is a leader who values integrity. It values the employee’s opinions, ideas, and value system. The leader works to develop employees and help them to understand the institutions goals and missions” (E12CM).  
  "I think ethical leadership is when an administrator or leader evaluates a decision based on the good of the institution or others without regard for personal agendas that may benefit the administrator” (E2CM). | Aristotelian Ethics: Habitual good actions create a virtuous human being. Transformational leaders motivate and direct followers to share goals and vision by being honest, fair, and respectful to followers. |
| 2. What are the perceptions of community college leaders regarding ethical reasoning? | Leaders suggested that gathering the facts, looking at the situation, and identifying solutions that would impact the greatest number of people, constitutes ethical reasoning. Additionally, leaders indicated that decisions should be in the best interest of students, faculty, staff, and the institution. Leaders believed that adhering to policies and procedures should be a consideration when making ethical decisions.  
  "Yes, based on the interest of others and the broader context of the institution rather than my personal agenda or personal opportunity for gain. It could be summed up by an attitude of giving rather than taking or of service rather than being served” (E2CM).  
  "Ethical reasoning means looking at what would benefit the most people. So it is not always going to be a cut and dry, black and white type of issue. So you need to look at what is going to benefit people without causing undo harm. I used to say if I can go to sleep at night and get up with myself in the morning and feel that I have done the right thing” (E9AAF). | According to scholars, ethical reasoning means that the problem is analyzed in an attempt to arrive at the best resolution based on a commitment to arrive at the best resolution based on a commitment to a set of ethics or morals as guidelines. |
| 3. What do community college leaders believe should guide ethical reasoning?      | Community college leaders believed that policies, procedures, codes of ethics, and legal laws guide ethical reasoning. Additionally, leaders suggested that consideration should be given to what is fair and just for all.  
  "Is there a policy in place, first of all, what are the procedures that are in place?” (E9AAF).  
  "Truth, honesty, integrity, facts, consequences, and your goal” (E1AAF). | Responses to ethical reasoning indicated that participants believed to some extent that decision-making depends on the leader’s cognitive moral development. |

Table 3

Research Questions Perceptions, Theory, and Literature
Table 4 shows the significant responses selected by the researcher as related to the study questions. The researcher initially started with 150 significant statements, with a database coding size of 100 codes. However, during the final stage of the process, 21 significant statements were selected from the database. The reduction was made based on the fact that many of the codes were overlapping or had the same meaning. The primary focus was on recurring statements and significant quotes. Participants typically expressed views by using familiar quotes; one participant stated that one should “do what is right, even when no one is watching.” The researcher specifically focused on patterns of thought, emotions, and behaviors, as a method of selecting significant statements. For example, one participant shared the statement that, “they feel if it is not physically hurting someone, it is ok to be unethical.” The researcher included this as a significant statement because the participant appeared to have had an epiphany as the statement was being made.
The significant statements were grouped into larger units of information, which created the themes for this study. For example, 5 of the 15 participants discussed, directly or indirectly, the characteristics of a leader in response to a question regarding...
ethical leadership. Also, 8 of the 15 participants discussed what a leader should do in response to a question regarding ethical leadership. Grouping the responses from 13 participants, the researcher developed the theme: ethical leadership is about the leader.

Significant statements were an important component in interpreting the data. Typically, these statements revealed how leaders experienced the phenomenon or how they interpreted ethical or unethical incidents. For example, when responding to issues that shape the institution’s ethical culture, policies or procedures were the dominant responses. Participants spoke passionately about situations they experienced firsthand as related to following or not following policies and procedures. Thus, the following theme was selected: policies regarding hiring, terminating, and evaluating employees had the most influence on the ethical culture of the institution. Significant statements guided the analysis and interpretation stage of the study and established much of the foundation for selected themes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Thematic Category</th>
<th>Key Terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Leadership</td>
<td>Ethical leadership is about the leader</td>
<td>Fair, honest, just, and have integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What ethical leaders do</td>
<td>Ethical leadership involves how leaders behave towards followers</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical leadership behaviors</td>
<td>Ethical leadership among community college administrators</td>
<td>Current leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Past leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethical behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unethical behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical reasoning</td>
<td>Ethical decision-making among community college leaders</td>
<td>Situational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Morals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals that influence the ethical culture or environment</td>
<td>Individuals that influence the institutional ethical culture</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Middle/upper-level leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chancellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies that influence ethical culture or environment</td>
<td>Policies that influence the institutional culture</td>
<td>Hiring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Terminating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders should have courage to make the right decisions</td>
<td>Leaders have limited decision-making powers</td>
<td>Fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for addressing unethical behavior</td>
<td>Aspiring leaders need comprehensive and intense ethics and ethical training</td>
<td>Leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 shows the themes, codes, and key terms use to categorize the responses. A total of eight themes were derived from an examination of the most recurrent responses. Theme 1 presents administrators’ perspectives regarding ethical leadership. Theme 2 speaks to what leaders should do and how leaders should behave. Theme 3 identifies administrators’ beliefs regarding ethical leadership among Alabama’s community college leaders. Theme 4 provides insight into the perception among administrators related to ethical reasoning. Theme 5 identifies the individuals that administrators believe most influence the ethical culture or environment at the institution. Theme 6 discusses policies and procedures that administrators believe have a significant impact on the ethical culture of the institution. Theme 7 identifies leaders’ fears regarding ethical decision-making. Theme 8 discusses administrators’ perceptions regarding possible solutions to unethical leadership.

Theme 1: Participants appeared to be passionate about the characteristics that a leader should possess. Responses indicated that leaders believe that ethical leadership is about the leader. Most indicated that ethical leadership involves leaders who are honest, fair, just, and have integrity. However, participants spoke hesitantly regarding these characteristics in all situations. Typically, participants spoke in hypotheticals. For example, participants routinely used the phrase: “the leader should be” as opposed to a leader is fair, just, and honest. Administrators generally explained experiences clarifying the importance of the situations and whom the issues involved. Leaders rarely addressed ethical leadership in terms of being fair and just in all situations.

Rather, ethical leadership was about the leader, what a leader does and who the leader is. Ethical leaders follow policies and procedures; ethical leaders are fair, just, and
honest. Participants focused primarily on the leader when discussing ethical leadership. Consequently, each spoke fervently regarding what leaders should do and who the leader should be.

Theme 2: A predominant statement among participants was in relation to how leaders should behave toward subordinates. Participants suggested that leaders should not put subordinates in jeopardy by asking them to do anything unethical, that followers be respected, and that decisions should reflect the best interests of all. A female participant stated, “the leader should not expect your people to do anything that puts them in jeopardy, either legally, or even with a moral feeling that they are doing something wrong” Participants who responded using the example of how to behave toward subordinates expressed sensitivity and displayed strong emotions as they discussed the issue.

Theme 3: Current leaders are more ethical than past leaders in Alabama’s community college system. Participants spoke of current leaders with a sense of pride and admiration; it appeared that this statement was a badge of honor that proudly announced that leaders in Alabama’s college system have changed. Any mention of past leaders was brief and evasive, and participants often provided limited clarification. One female participant spoke candidly about past leaders and stated that there were still “remnants of the old regime,” and unlike the other participants, she suggested that there were no excuses for the inappropriate behavior. In fact, the female participant displayed a hint of anger, stating that a significant number of innocent administrators, “just got caught in their stuff.”
Theme 4: Participants struggled with the reality that ethical decisions are frequently made based on the situation and based on whom is involved. Participants displayed a sense of conflict regarding this issue and several abruptly discontinued this conversation altogether. However, none of the participants recanted the statement. This particular incident led the researcher to probe deeper to determine the origination of the conflict and to seek additional insight. At this point, the researcher began to ask participants about situations that they had encountered when ethical challenges occurred. Again, the predominant emotion was fear. Leaders fear having to make ethical decisions, because of who may involve or what the consequences might be involved. Some participants said that positions and jobs could be in jeopardy, depending on the decisions made, whether right or wrong. Participants appeared committed to the belief that consideration must be given to the situation, circumstance, and persons involved.

Theme 5: Participants indicated that the president has the most influence on the ethical culture of the institution. Leaders noted that middle and upper-level administrators were important as well. Leaders were more closely associated with the faculty, staff, and students. Participants shared the belief that upper and middle-level administrators, if they possessed courage, could make a difference in the institutional environment as related to ethical leadership and behavior.

Theme 6: Participants indicated that policies used for hiring, terminating, and evaluating employees have the most influence on the ethical culture of the institution. Participants overwhelmingly identified policies relating to human resources or personnel issues as having most influence on the ethical culture of the institution. Participants strongly emphasized the need for an institution to adopt policies and procedures that are
fair to all individuals in the processes of hiring, terminating, and evaluating. A female participant stated: “I do not know if it is the policies or just not following the policies that influence the culture.” According to participants, it was significant that policies were not being enforced. More specifically, participants suggested that the issue was that policies were enforced for some people and not for other people. They said that it goes back to inconsistencies in the policies and how they are enforced.

Theme 7: Leaders noted that leaders frequently have limited decision-making powers. A surprising phenomenon was that of fear. Participants indicated that most leaders are fearful of making decisions because of the consequences. Participants believed that leaders would make ethical decisions if there were no negative repercussions regarding decisions that were not favorable for certain parties. Most leaders recalled at least one incident involving wanting to make the right decision and to do the thing that was most just and fair for all involved. However, leaders said that they felt pressure to do just the opposite. The most overwhelming response was that leaders wanted to do the right thing, but it required having the courage to do what is right. The researcher sensed a great deal of conflict and apprehension among leaders regarding this subject.

Theme 8: According to participants, aspiring leaders need more training regarding ethics and ethical behavior in graduate and leadership preparation. Participants often spoke about the lack of training that aspiring leaders receive regarding ethics and ethical behavior. While most participants believed that ethics should be established from values that one acquires while growing up, there was a belief that leadership preparation programs could contribute to the responsibility for developing ethical leaders. A male
participant stated, “I think the ethical training that we receive might be fine-tuned…”

Another participant stated, “I think these leadership programs should do a better job of training and discussing ethical dilemmas with leaders.”

**Part 3: Category of Responses to Interview Questions**

Table 6 shows the responses of participants who indicated that ethical leadership was difficult to understand especially in an era of diverse moral reasoning and beliefs. Participants agreed that gray areas existed among administrators regarding what constituted ethical behavior. Participants suggested that ethical leadership was about the leader as well as adhering to policies and procedures, treating people fairly and justly, and having integrity. Participants suggested that ethical leadership is what leaders do, who they are, and how they treat followers.
Community college leaders believe that ethical leadership is about who leaders are, what leaders do, and how followers are treated by leaders.

**a.** Community college leaders view ethical leadership in terms of what leaders consistently do, how leaders respond to challenging situations, and how followers are treated. Also, leaders believe that ethical leaders follow policies, procedures, and legal laws.

“I perceive ethical leadership as leadership that displays continuous ethical responses to ethical issues. Leadership that is committed to integrity and honesty no matter what the situation is” (E15AAF).

**b.** Ethical leadership is about leaders who are just, fair, and who are individuals of integrity that lead by example.

“I perceive ethical leadership as leading in a way that you are just and fair. I perceive ethical leadership as leading in a way that shows integrity, that you are just and fair, that you lead by example” (E3AAF).

**c.** Ethical leadership incorporates ethics and moral values into the decision-making process

“I believe ethical leadership is making the best decision for one’s area of responsibility within the confines of acceptable moral and social norms” (E8AAM).

**d.** Ethical leadership adheres to policies and procedures

“Well, I think of things like policies and procedures that you would need to adhere to within the organization” (E9AAF).

**e.** Ethical leadership is doing what is right

“Ethical leadership has standards and principles. For example, my… have principles that are considered to be ethical standards” (E2CM).

“To me, ethics is very simply doing the right thing” (E13CM).
Table 7  

Participant’s Responses to Interview Question 2: What Is Your Perception Regarding Ethical Leadership among Administrators in Alabama’s College System?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Participants’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past administrators struggled with providing ethical leadership. However, current administrators are more ethical, and the system is making steady growth toward ethical leadership.</td>
<td>“I believe the system still has remnants of the old guard, which do need to go home as well because they still practice under the surface a form of leadership that is questionable to be called leadership. I think that there are still policies and procedures that are not fairly handed down and handled and that there’s a new day coming in the ACCS; it just hasn’t quite gotten there yet (E4CF).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Current administrators exhibit more commitment towards ethical leadership than those in the past.</td>
<td>“Typically, in the past administrators did as they were told. Today decisions are often made based on the situation, and they may not always be the one that the administrator would make, I think we still lack the power to make the hard decisions” (E15AAF).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Administrators are ethical and know the right thing to do but lack the power to exercise good ethical judgment.</td>
<td>“Most of my colleagues that I engage with regularly follow the policies and therefore they are making ethical decisions because they are guided by those policies” (E2CM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Administrators in Alabama’s college system are ethical because they follow the guidelines, policies, and procedures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 shows administrators response to a question regarding ethical leadership among Alabama’s community college administrators. As participants discussed ethical leadership among administrators, it appeared difficult to give examples of integrity, fairness, and ethical behavior among past administrators. However, it appeared easier for participants to discuss ethical leadership as it relates to current administrators. A re-occurring subject among participants was the perception that current leaders are more ethical, than those in the past; most participants mentioned the behavior of past leaders
and unethical behavior. However, most believe that Alabama’s Community College System is slowly becoming an ethical entity and that new leaders are bringing a commitment to ethical leadership that was not there in the past.

Administrators consistently identified ethical leadership in terms of policies, procedures, and compliance issues. Half (50%) percent of the participants alluded to policies and procedures when responding to ethical leadership, ethical reasoning, and factors that should guide ethical reasoning. A review of participant's responses revealed that the only two indicated the attention to the use of a moral decision-making model to guide decision when addressing ethical situations.

Regarding the importance of policies, procedures, and legal laws; the researcher found one outlier. One participant stated, “I think what is best for the student should supersede policies and procedures.” Leaders ultimately believe that ethical leadership is about the leader. Specifically, who he is and what a leader does.
Community college administrators believe that ethical reasoning is about gathering the facts, looking at the situation, and identifying the solution that would impact the greatest number of people. Community college administrators believe that doing what is in the best interest of students, faculty, staff, and the institution is ethical decision-making.

In graduate school, one of the first things they taught us in the ethics class was the ethical decision-making process. Moreover, ethical reasoning essentially is using that decision-making process and going through the pros and cons and sometimes things are legal but they are not ethical. Moreover, then sometimes there is no question, they are illegal, and they are unethical. But you have to be able to weigh out the greater good and figure out who is going to benefit and who is going to be hurt by something. The greater good of the college and the student body or of the faculty and staff has to be taken into consideration. The policy might not be good for one person whereas 99% of the student body is going to benefit. But you have to make sure that things are handled with fairness. Also, that things are handled with a lens that looks at the big picture and not just your small world because no decisions, no reasoning ever exist in a vacuum (E4CF).

Table 8 shows that participants willingly discussed their perceptions of ethical reasoning as related to doing what is in the best interest of all parties involved or making a decision based on the greatest number of persons. However, only four individuals (27%) found it important to link decision-making behaviors with ethical principles, high standards, and integrity. Additionally, leaders expressed that with regard to leadership

Table 8

Participant’s Responses to Interview Question 3: What Do You Perceive as Ethical Reasoning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Participants’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community college administrators believe that ethical reasoning is about</td>
<td>“I believe ethical reasoning is making decisions based on the interest of others and the broader context of the institution rather than my personal agenda or personal opportunity for gain” (E2CM).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gathering the facts, looking at the situation, and identifying the solution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that would impact the greatest number of people. Community college</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college administrators believe that doing what is in the best interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of students, faculty, staff, and the institution is ethical decision-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Ethical reasoning should involve a process of gathering the facts and</td>
<td>In graduate school, one of the first things they taught us in the ethics class was the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should involve consideration for the best interest of all parties involved.</td>
<td>ethical decision-making process. Moreover, ethical reasoning essentially is using that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decision-making process and going through the pros and cons and sometimes</td>
<td>decision-making process and going through the pros and cons and sometimes things are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legal but they are not ethical. Moreover, then sometimes there is no</td>
<td>legal but they are not ethical. Moreover, then sometimes there is no question, they are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question, they are illegal, and they are unethical. But you have to be</td>
<td>illegal, and they are unethical. But you have to be able to weigh out the greater good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>able to weigh out the greater good and figure out who is going to benefit</td>
<td>and figure out who is going to benefit and who is going to be hurt by something. The</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and who is going to be hurt by something. The greater good of the college</td>
<td>greater good of the college and the student body or of the faculty and staff has to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the student body or of the faculty and staff has to be taken into</td>
<td>taken into consideration. The policy might not be good for one person whereas 99% of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consideration. The policy might not be good for one person whereas 99%</td>
<td>student body is going to benefit. But you have to make sure that things are handled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the student body is going to benefit. But you have to make sure that</td>
<td>with fairness. Also, that things are handled with a lens that looks at the big picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>things are handled with fairness. Also, that things are handled with a</td>
<td>and not just your small world because no decisions, no reasoning ever exist in a vacuum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lens that looks at the big picture and not just your small world because</td>
<td>(E4CF).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no decisions, no reasoning ever exist in a vacuum (E4CF).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
there are no moral absolutes. One participant described this situation in the following way, “taking into consideration the rules and regulations but also taking into consideration the situation at hand” (E12CM). Another participant stated “it is not always going to be a cut and dry or black and white issue (E15AAF).” Furthermore, other administrators made similar statements indicating that there are gray areas in regards to ethical decision-making among community college leaders. Only two leaders (14%) stated that an ethical issue is either right or wrong, regardless of the situation or whom it involves. One participant was adamant about ethical reasoning involving values morals and principles. Additionally, this participant believed that values and morals are instilled at home and community as well as through one’s religious affiliation.

Table 9 shows that participants believed that Alabama community college administrators typically resolved ethical problems based on the situation, whom it involved, policies, procedures, and legal laws. Participants responded equally between policies and making decisions based on the situation. However, results of the study indicated that leaders relied overwhelmingly on following policies and procedures to resolve ethical issues. Secondly, administrators considered the situation and depending on the situation leaders make decisions. According to eight participants (54%), leaders do not have the power to make decisions based on what one believes is the right thing to do.
Alabama community college leaders depend on policies, procedures, and legal laws to resolve ethical issues. Additionally, the situation and whom it involves are factors in making ethical decisions.

a. Leaders resolve ethical problems based on the situation.  
   “Well, I think it is often subjective and, it’s almost situational, which is another line of thinking; I think it is more situational ethics as opposed to having a code of ethics and following them” (E8AAM).

   “We first look at the policy and we follow policy and procedures. I think that is the ethical thing to do” (E15AAF).

b. Leaders rely on policy and procedures when making decisions and rarely apply ethics or moral reasoning models as a part of the process.  
   “And it is clear when a decision has been made that is outside of the policy at hand because our policies govern our responses and most of our decisions. So my perception is that most of my colleagues that I engage with regularly follow the policies and therefore they are making ethical decisions because they are guided by those policies. We have policies, and we have guidelines to those policies” (E2CM).

   “Well, I think of things like policies and procedures that you would need to adhere to within the organization” (E9AAF).

c. Leaders make decisions based on what others are doing or what they think others are doing.  
   “I think that we talk among ourselves for the most part to see what the climate is; then they determine based on what others think sometimes and sometimes whatever they think is not right, ethical or just, but that's what they’re going to do, regardless if it’s ethical or not” (E7AAF).
Table 10

Participant’s Responses to Question 5: What Factors Do You Consider Important When Making Ethical Decisions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Participants’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama’s community college administrators believe that students, facts, and policies are important factors when making ethical decisions.</td>
<td>“First and foremost is to get information. There are two sides to every situation, so you want to make sure you know both sides of whatever situation or whatever it is you are making a decision about. To get information that’s number one, to be informed” (E3CF).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Administrators believe that gathering facts and getting relevant information is an important factor when making ethical decisions.</td>
<td>“Is there a policy in place, first of all, what are the procedures that are in place? And whether I agree with them or not, am I following those policies and procedures? And if I feel that they need to be changed, will it benefit the students to have them changed. That was some main things. What has been practiced? Because you can have policies in place but if that is not your practice…and then whether or not you are fair to everyone. You know I will tell students sometimes, ‘well, I cannot do this for you without doing it for everyone’” (E9AAF).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Administrators believe that policies and procedures are important factors to consider when making ethical decisions.</td>
<td>“Honesty, and in our job, what’s best for our students within the framework of our policies and rules. What is best for our students, and the student that I am working with at that point in time and again our colleagues/work associates (E13CM)”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Administrators believe that the consideration for student’s best interest is an important factor when making ethical decisions.</td>
<td>“I think you have to consider the context of the situation. I think you have to be very clear that you understand the guidelines and the policies that speak to the problem at hand” (E2CM).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Administrators believe that ethical decisions should be made based, who is impacted by the decision.</td>
<td>“And it is clear when a decision has been made that is outside of the policy at hand. Because our policies govern our responses and most of our decisions. So my perception is that most of my colleagues that I engage with regularly follow the policies and therefore they are making ethical decisions because they are guided by those policies. We have policies, and we have guidelines to those policies” (E2CM).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The students, that is number one, always number one. My faculty is number two” (E5CF).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Who are you going to hurt? Who’s going to benefit? The ends do not always justify the means. And can you look at yourself in the mirror the next day” (E4CF).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10 shows that Alabama’s community college administrators identified students, facts, and policies as important factors when making ethical decisions. There was limited evidence that leaders believed that ethical decisions are made using a moral decision-making model. Typically, decision-making did not go beyond gathering the information and getting the facts. Two participants mentioned using moral decision-making models. One participant stated, “I learned in graduate school that you always apply a decision-making model.” The other participant said that some ethical framework should be applied when making ethical decisions.

Table 11 shows that community college leaders believed that the chancellor, president, and upper-level administrators have the most influence on the ethical culture of the institution. Additionally, leaders suggested that policies regarding hiring, terminating, and evaluating employees influence the ethical culture of the institution. However, participants noted that upper-level and middle-level leaders have the most responsibility because upper- and middle-level leaders have the most interaction with faculty, staff, and students; therefore, leaders believed that these individuals had the most impact.
Table 11

Participant’s Responses to Interview Question 6: In Your Opinion, What Individuals or Organizational Policies Have the Most Influence on the Ethical Culture within Your Institution?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Participants’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community college administrators believe that the chancellor, president and upper-level administrators have the most influence on the ethical culture of the institution. Additionally, administrators believe that the policy regarding hiring, terminating, and evaluating the influence the ethical culture of the institution.</td>
<td>“I think that the President has the most influence on the ethical culture of the institution. However, his cabinet has the greatest responsibility toward informing faculty and staff of the institution’s tolerance for unacceptable behavior. I think that faculty and staff have more interactions with administrators than the president, so they are the ones that truly set the tone” (E15AAF).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. The president and the upper-level cabinet have the most influence on the ethical culture of the institution.</td>
<td>“The Chancellor, then the President and the cabinets, whoever are the administrators within the cabinet. Here we have associate deans and assistant deans” (E6AAF).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Administrators believe that the chancellor has the most influence on the ethical culture of community colleges.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Policies that involve hiring, terminating, and evaluating employees have the most influence on the ethical culture of the institution.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 4: Discussion and Analysis

This part of the report provides discussion and analysis of the perceptions of participants based on interviews conducted during the data collection stage of the study. Participants in this study engaged in face-to-face, semi structured interviews and responded to questions developed specifically for this study. The researcher identified 21
significant statements from 20 original transcripts and organized and interpreted
meanings into clusters resulting in eight themes.

Community college leaders viewed ethical leadership in terms of what leaders do, how leaders respond to situations, and how followers are treated by leaders. Additionally, administrators believed that ethical leadership involved leaders who had the courage to do what was right regardless of the situation. Of the total number of participants, twelve participants (80%) used terminology that described what leaders do as characteristics of ethical leadership. In response to Question 1, eight participants (54%) used the terms “doing what is right or doing the right thing” as a descriptive for ethical leadership. Nine individuals (60%) alluded to the treatment of others either directly or indirectly as a description of ethical leadership. Only seven participants (47%) spoke of “courage” or “regardless of the situation.” However, this was one of the highest numbers of responses given regarding the perception of ethical leadership. As the researcher compared and contrasted what was stated regarding ethical reasoning and ethical leadership, there appeared to be some conflicting beliefs.

Four participants described ethical leadership by contrasting the past behavior of community college leaders to behaviors of current leaders. All four of these participants indicated that current leaders were more ethical than those of the past. However, none of these individuals appeared comfortable discussing past behaviors of community college leaders. Participants were much more willing to discuss the behaviors of current leaders. One participant stated, “there are remnants of the old regime,” but preferred not to elaborate.
Only two participants (14%) mentioned using some moral decision-making model as a guide. Ten participants (67%) mentioned obtaining the correct information or gathering the facts as an important step in reasoning from an ethical perspective. However, only one administrator stated using a moral decision-making model and another participant used the term “employing a framework” as a step in the decision-making process. Twelve participants (80%) indicated that following policies and procedures were very important when making ethical decisions.

A preponderance of philosophy and research from the areas of leadership and moral reasoning suggests that unethical leadership behavior and immoral reasoning behavior may be related to perceptions of customary occurrences (i.e., what was typically done in the past). Comparable patterns appear in the literature from each field that supports the notion that unethical behavior may be the result of insufficient training in ethics and limited commitment to values and integrity. Based on participant responses, leaders agreed that preparation for leadership should be more comprehensive and intense; which includes studying case studies and role playing real-life situations encountered by community college leaders on a daily basis. Participants stated that leadership curricula should be taught throughout graduate and leadership training and administrative careers. Based on the literature, scholars and experts agree that more time and effort should be dedicated to training and discussing ethics and ethical behavior related to leaders and leadership. With regard to individuals who are in leadership roles and their thoughts about increased training; limited empirical data exist.

With regard to ethical reasoning, participants suggested that the most important factors to consider were: what is in the best interest of the greatest number of people,
institutional policies and procedures, and legal guidelines. The research literature suggests that, among leaders, when making ethical decisions, not much attention is given to using moral decision-making models. The finding of this current study supported this ideology. Additionally, community college leaders did not believe that they had the power to make the right decisions; identified barriers that prohibited ethical decision-making, and noted that decisions were often based on the situation. Research findings revealed that leaders perceived ethical leadership and ethical reasoning to be two separate entities and typically did not understand the connection between the two. Community college leaders suggested that as long as one follows the policies, procedures, and institutional guidelines, then one is an ethical leader. Leaders understood ethics and morality, but believed that the power to exercise them within Alabama’s community college system was not an option for leaders.

This study revealed that leaders were concerned that leadership and graduate programs do not provide sufficient opportunities to develop an ethical identity and strategies for dealing with ethical dilemmas. Leaders recommended that leadership training programs include a more comprehensive and intense curricula regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. For decades, experts and scholars have advocated for leadership and graduate programs to incorporate more opportunities to study ethics, ethical leadership, and ethical reasoning. This study revealed that leaders support and were willing to invest more time toward continuous training in ethics, ethical leadership, and what it means to be an ethical leader.

The main findings suggest that leaders were concerned with ethical leadership as it relates to a leader's actions. This study found that leaders were concerned with ethics
and ethical behavior but rarely linked virtue ethics with leadership. Participants suggested that ethical decisions should be based on a leader's values and morals. However, participants believed that it was more important that the leader follow policies, procedures, rules, and legal laws, when making ethical decisions. This study found that participants identified more with Kant’s ethical theories as opposed to Aristotle’s virtue ethics.

The findings suggest that community college administrators regarded current leaders as better at practicing ethical leadership than past leaders. Participants believed that the problem of unethical leadership was in the past, along with past leaders, and that only remnants of that leadership era remained. Participants noted that current leaders have more courage than past leaders, so these leaders tend to make more ethical decisions. However, participants acknowledged that most decisions were still made based on the situations and who was involved.

Participants maintained that the problem of unethical leadership may be resolved by providing comprehensive and intense ethics and ethical leadership opportunities through leadership and graduate programs. Participants highlighted in house leadership programs, which offer leaders opportunities to discuss ethical issues, as an appropriate strategy for addressing unethical leadership. Additionally, participants argued that if upper-level leaders encouraged and assured leaders that no negative repercussions would occur if ethical choices were made, leaders may have the courage to do the right thing at all times.

The most unexpected result of this study was that of fear among leaders when ethical dilemmas occur and decisions need to be made. Leaders contended that making
decisions that were not favorable for certain people or certain organizations, could jeopardize a leader’s career or job. Participants noted that because community colleges are indirectly connected to the political arena, decisions are often politically motivated. Participants believed that leaders have limited decision-making powers and primarily do as they are told.

The study revealed two outliers. Of the total number of participants, only two believed that community college leaders (past and present) were ethical leaders with integrity, at all times, and in all situations. Additionally, both of these leaders maintained that decisions were made based on ethical reasoning and in the best interest of all parties involved. The findings revealed, however, that most participants believed that ethical leadership among community college leaders was still a work in progress.

This study found that participants identified more with Kant’s theory of ethics, than with Aristotle’s virtue ethics. The findings revealed that participants were more committed to duty related decision making and doing what was dictated by policies, procedures, and legal laws. Participants believed that community college leaders are ethical and provide ethical leadership. However, the most important aspect of ethical leadership is adhering to organizational policies and procedures.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, LIMITATION OF STUDY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This chapter contains a summary, conclusion, and recommendations derived from this study. The study addressed the overall research question: What are the perceptions among community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning? Community college leaders identified ethical leadership as being about the leader. Ethical leadership is about whom the leader is and what the leader does.

Summary of the Study

This study examined perceptions among community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. Participants were leaders from a rural community college in Alabama. At the time of the study, this college offered over 82 degree and certificate programs and had earned a number of statewide and national distinctions. Study participants included six males and nine females who were current administrators at the college. An examination of responses collected during semi-structured, face-to-face interviews enabled the researcher to analyze significant statements and develop themes for interpretation and analysis of data. A narrative report from interpreting the themes was used to describe the results.
The prevalence of unethical leadership among society’s leaders has become increasingly alarming (Kelley, 2009). Scholars have presented concerns regarding the behavior among leaders for over a decade. Specifically, they note that behaviors among educational leaders are of serious concern. Traditionally, educational leaders have been viewed as the moral leaders of society; to model ethical behavior is an obligation and a responsibility. A great concern among the public is that, if educational leaders are to teach integrity and maintain honor, how can it be done if educational leaders display unethical behavior? Community colleges cannot afford to lose the trust and respect of the public. In spite of a few public incidents, community colleges are still the best option for much of the economically oppressed population to escape poverty.

The literature indicates that, it has become more important for leaders to use his or her power for personal gain, rather than in the best interest of others. However, the literature also tells us that the most influential leader is the one who has ethics and conducts all phases of his or her life in an ethical matter. If educational institutions are to continue to be successful, leaders must adhere to ethical principles and honor their responsibility to the institutions, stakeholders, students, faculty, and staff they serve.

Based on the research literature, leaders know that one should do the right thing at all times; and typically this individual is a person of integrity, honesty, and of good moral character. The question that guided this study was: What are community college leaders’ perceptions of ethics and what it means to be an ethical leader? An additional question was: What do leaders find so challenging about making decisions that are ethical? According to scholars, decisions should be based on one's values, morals, and simply just doing the right thing (Josephson, 2002). Scholars have suggested that if leaders apply a
moral decision-making model and follow specific steps to the decision-making process along with sound ethical principles, the results will be ethical decisions (Anderson & Davies, 2000).

Community college leaders in this study believed that leaders should be ethical at all times, and that most community college leaders are ethical. However, leaders in community colleges face ethical challenges on a daily basis and often it may not be easy to make decisions when so many entities are involved and need be considered. Leaders want to do what is right, but most of all, want to do those things that ensure sustainability related to the institution.

The findings of this study suggest that perceptions among Alabama’s community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning are comprehensive. Specifically, ethical leadership is about the leader. Ethical leadership is about whom the leader is and what the leader does. Community college leaders believed that ethical reasoning was about following institutional policies, procedures, and legal guidelines. With regard to ethical reasoning, administrators indicated that the most important factors to consider were attention to what is in the best interest of the greatest number of persons and following institutional policies, procedures, and legal guidelines.

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of themes developed from the research data, the following conclusions to the research questions were drawn.

Research question 1: What are the perceptions of community college leaders regarding ethical leadership? Based on the results of this study, participants believed that ethical leadership was about what leaders do and who they are. Participants suggested
that ethical leaders should be concerned about the people they lead and should adhere to policies, procedures, and legal laws. According to study participants, ethical leadership is about the leader and what leaders do. Participants indicated that, the leader should be a person of courage and conviction and should consider the best interest of followers above all else. Throughout the course of the interview process, participants mentioned that leaders should be of good moral character. This, however, did not appear to be a major requirement for ethical leadership.

Research question 2: What are the perceptions of community college leaders regarding ethical reasoning? Participants noted that ethical reasoning employs some type of action framework that incorporates gathering the facts, looking at the situation, and determining who will suffer or benefit from the decision. There appeared to be an overwhelming focus on making decisions based on the situation and in relation to whom it involved. Participants strongly believed that successful ethical reasoning meant making decisions based on some form of moral conviction. However, limited attention was given to using a moral compass.

Research question 3: What do community college leaders believe should guide ethical reasoning? Community college leaders maintained that policies, procedures, and codes of ethics should guide ethical reasoning. Additionally, leaders believed that consideration should be given to what is fair and just for all.

Limitations of the Study

Issues that may have impacted the results of this study include the sampling method, time in which the study was conducted, and the reliability of self-reported data. First, the researcher selected purposeful convenience as the sampling strategy. The
sampling strategy is problematic because the results of the study may not be generally applied to a larger population. Second, the study was conducted during a period of time in which there was less public exposure to unethical behavior among community college leaders. Finally, self-reported data can potentially contain sources of bias. An example of bias includes sharing details regarding events or experiences as one would have hoped they occurred.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Unethical behavior of leaders has ignited an interest among scholars for more than a decade. Especially perplexing is the behavior among community college leaders. If educational leaders are to be the moral compass of society, then leaders must be ethical. There are limited research studies that address the increasing surge of unethical behavior among leaders. More disconcerting is the lack of studies dedicated to addressing the problem of unethical behavior and recommendations to resolve this issue. Significant strides have been made in identifying the existence of unethical leadership among current leaders. However, research regarding solutions is still in its infancy. Ethical leadership continues to be the elephant in the room and, regardless of the size, it is one that is seldom addressed.

**Implications for Further Research**

This study presented evidence to support the need for change in the ways in which leaders are trained in ethics and ethical leadership. The researchers recommends that further research be conducted in the area of ethical training of aspiring leaders. Leaders in this study indicated that graduate and leadership training programs should offer more
comprehensive and intensive training opportunities in the areas of ethics and ethical leadership. Edmond and Fisher (2002) concluded, “one of the greatest gaps present in the training of education leaders nationwide is that of ethics” (p. 14). Further research should also be conducted to determine if these changes have been implemented.
REFERENCES


Barna, P. J. (2009). *Ethical behavior in the framework of educational and ethical leadership: Grounded theory research* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (UMI Number. 3388303)


http://rhchp.regis.edu/HCE/EthicsAtAGlance/index.html


Bennis, W. (2004). The character of leadership. In M. Josephson & W. Hanson (Eds.),
*Power of character: Prominent Americans talk about life, family, work, values,
and more* (pp. 143-149). Bloomington, IN: Unlimited Publishing.


Blackledge, B. J. (2006a, April 18). Corruption in Alabama community college system.

Blackledge, B. J. (2006b, October 8). Dozens of legislators paid by 2-year colleges.


Higher Learning*, 6, 6-11. doi: 10.1080/00091380439604237


http://blogal.com/spotnews/2010/12/alabamas_2-year_college_probhtml


122


MAXQDA, software for qualitative data analysis (1989-2013) VERBI Software - Consult - Sozialforschung GmbH, Berlin, Germany.


127


Wilson, V. B. (2010). *Examining moral reasoning and ethical decision making among Mississippi’s community college administrators* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database (UMI Number 3398555)


APPENDIX A

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL
Study 14-150: Ascertaining Perceptions Among Community College Leaders Regarding Ethical Leadership and Ethical Reasoning

Renay Herndon
Community College Leadership
Mailstop 9698

RE: HRPP Study #14-150: Ascertaining Perceptions Among Community College Leaders Regarding Ethical Leadership and Ethical Reasoning

Dear Ms. Herndon:

This email serves as official documentation that the above referenced project was reviewed and approved via administrative review on 5/22/2014 in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). Continuing review is not necessary for this project. However, in accordance with SOP 01-03 Administrative Review of Applications, a new application must be submitted if the study is ongoing after 5 years from the date of approval. Additionally, any modification to the project must be reviewed and approved by the HRPP prior to implementation. Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project. The HRPP reserves the right, at any time during the project period, to observe you and the additional researchers on this project.

Please note that the MSU HRPP accreditation for our human subject’s protection program requires an approval stamp for consent forms. The approval stamp will assist in ensuring the HRPP approved version of the consent form is used in the actual conduct of research. Your stamped consent form will be attached in a separate email. You must use the stamped consent form for obtaining consent from participants.

Please refer to your HRPP number (#14-150) when contacting our office regarding this application.

Thank you for your cooperation and good luck to you in conducting this research project. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at nmorse@orc.msstate.edu or call 662-325-5220.

Finally, we would greatly appreciate your feedback on the HRPP approval process. Please take a few minutes to complete our survey at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YZC7QQD.

Sincerely,

Nicole Morse, CIP
IRB Compliance Administrator
APPENDIX B

PERMISSION LETTER FOR STUDY SITE APPROVAL

Name of Institution or Organization Providing IRB Review:

Name of Institution Relying on the Designated IRB: Mississippi State University

The Official signing below agrees that ____Renay Herndon______ may rely on the
designated IRB for review and continuing oversight of its human subjects described below: (check one)

____X____ This agreement applied to all human subjects research covered by Institution Review Board

____ This agreement is limited to the following specific protocol(s):

Name of Research Project:

Name of Requestor:

This letter acknowledges receipt of the appropriate documents from ____Renay Herndon______ (a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Mississippi State University and of

) seeking approval to conduct research with human subjects at

Mississippi State University Institutional Board Requesting Approval to Conduct Research, and an

official letter from ____Renay Herndon______, requesting permission to conduct research at

Signature of Signatory Official.

Date: 3 24 17

Vice President for
APPENDIX C

PERMISSION STATEMENT FROM ORIGINATORS FOR FIGURE 2
Confirmation Number: 11180643  
Order Date: 04/07/2014

Customer Information  
Customer: Renay Herndon  
Account Number: 3000774859  
Organization: Renay Herndon  
Email: herndon@iastate.edu  
Phone: +1 (205)5686690

Order Details

Ethics: the basics
Order detail ID: 64657105
ISBN: 978-1-4051-8993-4
Publication Type: Book
Publisher: Wiley-Blackwell
Author/Editor: Mizzoni, John

Permission Status: Granted
Permission type: Republish or display content
Type of use: Republish in a thesis/dissertation
Order License Id: 3363811237673

Note: This item was charged to your credit card through our RightsLink service. More info

Total order items: 1
Order Total: $141.50

https://www.copyright.com/orderView.do?id=11180643&rp=main&sf=false&cp=1

6/9/2014
APPENDIX D

PERMISSION STATEMENT FROM ORIGINATORS FOR TABLE 1
This is a License Agreement between Renay B Herndon ("You") and Elsevier ("Elsevier") provided by Copyright Clearance Center ("CCC"). The license consists of your order details, the terms and conditions provided by Elsevier, and the payment terms and conditions.

All payments must be made in full to CCC. For payment instructions, please see information listed at the bottom of this form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplier</th>
<th>Elsevier Limited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Company Number</td>
<td>1982084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer name</td>
<td>Renay B Herndon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer address</td>
<td>1404 Winola Lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35235</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>License number</td>
<td>336920386289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>License date</td>
<td>Apr 07, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed content publisher</td>
<td>Elsevier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed content publication</td>
<td>The Leadership Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed content title</td>
<td>Ethics, character, and authentic transformational leadership behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed content author</td>
<td>Bernard M Bass, Paul Steidlmeyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed content date</td>
<td>Summer 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed content volume number</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed content issue number</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pages</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Page</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End Page</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Use</td>
<td>reuse in a thesis/dissertation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portion</td>
<td>figures/tables/illustrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of figures/tables/illustrations</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you the author of this Elsevier article?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will you be translating?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

https://s1c0.copyright.com/CustomerAdmin/PLF.jsp?ref=57eff286-1694-4897-9e07-5c6d99... 6/9/2014
APPENDIX E

PERMISSION STATEMENT FROM ORIGINATORS OF QUESTIONNAIRE
Dear Renay,

Thank you for your email!

Please feel free to use the questionnaire we've created for you.

Best regards,

Sam Petekson
DataCollectionServices.net Support Representative

www.DataCollectionServices.net

=======Ticket history====== Ticket History (Client) Posted On: 01 December 2014 02:51 PM

Dear Sir, Please send me permission to use the questionnaire that your company developed for my study. Thanks, Renay Herndon

From: DataCollectionServices.NET [support@datacollectionservices.net]
Sent: Tuesday, November 12, 2013 9:12 AM
To: Renay Herndon
Subject: [#12966]: Quote Request at datacollectionservices.net from Renay - 1383773039
APPENDIX F

REQUEST E-MAIL FOR STUDY PARTICIPATION
Dear Fellow Colleagues,

This e-mail is to request your voluntary participation in a study being conducted by Renay Herndon at Mississippi State University. The purpose of this study is to ascertain the perceptions among community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. The study is a qualitative study involving face-to-face interviews. It is important that you know that this e-mail is not to tell you to join this study. It is your decision. Your participation is voluntary. Whether or not you agree to participate in this study will have no effect on your employment status at the college, or any relationship that you have with Mississippi State University.

Please respond to this e-mail to indicate your interest in participating or to ask questions about the research study.

You do not have to respond if you are not interested in participating in this study. If you do not respond, no one will contact you regarding this study.

Thank you for your consideration.
APPENDIX G

CONSENT FORM
Mississippi State University
Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research
Title of Research Study: Ascertaining Perceptions among Community College Leaders Regarding Ethical Leadership and Ethical Reasoning
Study Site: Lawson State Community College
Researchers: Renay Herndon, Mississippi State University

Purpose
The purpose of this research is to collect data and ascertain the diverse and multiple meanings constructed by community college leaders as they encounter and experience ethical challenges.

Procedures
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a face-to-face semi-structured interview about ascertaining perceptions among community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. The interviewer will take written notes as well as audio record your responses, with your permission. The interviews will take a minimum of 60 minutes, either during lunch time or after work hours. Interviews will be conducted in an office that provides a confidential environment.

Risks or Discomforts
The researcher does not foresee any reasonable risks to study participants. However, because the subject is one that often requires discretion there may be some discomfort for some study participants.

Benefits
This study will have the potential to provide pertinent information for individuals charged with developing and implementing curriculum for educational leadership and graduate programs. Additionally, information gathered from this study may influence the practices of current and aspiring community college leaders. Research data may be an instrumental tool when planning and implementing professional development activities.

Incentive to participate
There are no cash payments, gift cards, or any tangible incentives being offered for participation. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and participants may withdraw from participating at any time during the study. There is no penalty for withdrawing from the study.

Confidentiality
All records will be maintained on the premises of a secure facility under lock and key. Participants will be assigned numbers and no names or otherwise identifying information will be used during the course of the study. Only the researcher will have access to written and taped interview responses. Interviews will be tape recorded (with permission
from study participants) for the purpose of accurate interpretations. All professionals associated with the study will be required to sign and adhere to confidentiality statements.

Approved: 5/22/14  Expires: 5/22/19  IRB #: 14-150

Page 2 of 2

Please note that these records will be held by a state entity and therefore are subject to disclosure if required by law. Research information may be shared with the MSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP).

Questions
If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact Renay B. Herndon at (205) 568-6690.
Advisor: Dr. Stephanie King at 662-325-7066

Voluntary Participation
Please understand that your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

Options for Participation
Please initial your choice for the options below:
___The researchers may tape record my interview sessions
___The researchers may NOT tape record my interview sessions.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study. If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

_________________________________  _______________________
Participant Signature Date

_________________________________  _______________________
Investigator Signature Date

Approved: 5/22/14  Expires: 5/22/19  IRB #: 14-150
APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW GUIDE SHEET
Hello. I am Renay Herndon and I am conducting a study on ascertaining perceptions among community college leaders regarding ethical leadership and ethical reasoning. The purpose of the study is to determine what community college leaders believe constitutes ethical leadership and what guides ethical reasoning. Will you agree to voluntarily participate in this study?  Y _______ N _______

Interviewee’s Name: ___________________________ Position: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Rapport: ___________________________ Permission to Tape: Yes______ No_____  
Logistics: ___________________________ Consent Forms Signed: Yes______ No______

1. What do you perceive as ethical leadership?
2. What is your perception regarding ethical leadership among administrators in Alabama Community College System?
3. What do you perceive as ethical reasoning?
4. What is your perception regarding ethical reasoning among administrators in Alabama Community College System?
5. What factors do you consider important when making ethical decisions?
6. Probe question: In your opinion, what individuals or organizational policies have the most influence on the ethical culture within your institution?

Interviewee’s Comments:

Interviewer’s Comments:

Interviewer’s Name and Reflective Notes:

Thank you for participating in this study. Do you have additional information or comments to add?