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## Examining moral reasoning and ethical decision making among Mississippi's community college administrators

Vernesia Bracey Wilson

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EXAMINING MORAL REASONING AND ETHICAL DECISION  
MAKING AMONG MISSISSIPPI'S COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS

By

Vernesia Bracey Wilson

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 2010

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COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS

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Pages in Study: 112

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As ethical dilemmas arise in community colleges, administrators make decisions that require sensitivity to the organizational, political, and environmental factors surrounding their particular institutional climates and locales. The moral reasoning and ethical decision-making of community college administrators were examined in this study. In addition, the study evaluated these factors to provide an understanding, or lack thereof, of [potential] ethical challenges that may exist within a specific organization.

Research questions for this study encompassed two perspectives: (a) moral reasoning and (b) ethical decision making. Moral reasoning was examined through participants' perspectives of moral, professional, and organizational values. Ethical decision making was examined through participants' assessments of ethical

dilemmas using vignettes. Using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations), the results of this research study suggested that community college administrators in Mississippi have varying perceptions for moral, professional, and organizational values and ethical decision-making (behaviors).

The findings of the study suggested that the most important moral values for community college administrators in Mississippi are truth, fairness, and responsibility and that members of their families would choose these same values compared to other groups within their communities. In addition, they suggested that communities will not provide the same solutions for ethical dilemmas in which they provided and community colleges should assist students by developing their (students) values and teaching them about ethics. In conjunction with leadership, the majority of community college leaders in Mississippi suggested that they are transformational leaders, which is indicative of their abilities to adapt their organization to fit its mission for their faculty, staff, community affiliates, and constituents.

## DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to all who assisted me with their prayers and moral support. These include my loving husband, Kurt L. Wilson, Mom (Myrtis Bracey) and Dad (Walter Bracey), mother-in-law (Jessie Loper), church members (Mt Charity Baptist Church), and class mates. I would also like to dedicate the research to my baby, Kelise, to whom I am a role model. Our prayers are that she too will realize that all dreams can come true through faith, prayer, and supplication.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

For several years, philosophers and ethicists (Day, 2003; Kidder, 1995; Rest, 1994) developed numerous theories, critical thinking models, and morality paradigms to explain ethical decision-making, moral reasoning, and values that may facilitate moral reasoning processes. Examples of these theories, models, and paradigms include the “Golden Rule,” the “Ten Commandments,” consequentialist or utilitarian ethics, Kant’s Moral Imperative, and other theories, legal codes, and Asimov’s Three Laws for Robots (Wallen, Allen, & Smit, 2008). Ciulla and Burns (2004) argued that philosophic writings on ethics are frequently ignored or rejected because they appear to be obtuse and irrelevant to people writing about ethics in their own areas of research or practice. Ideally, though, ethical "best practices" or recommended solutions should be derived from research and analyses of problems, rather than from a polling of organizational leaders concerning their perceptions of their own ethical practices (Miceli & Near, 2001). Bolman and Deal (2003) acknowledged that these practices require what is known as “organizational soul”:

Soul and ethics are inextricably intertwined. Recent decades have regularly produced scandals in which major corporations were found to have engaged in unethical, if not illegal conduct. It happened in the 1980’s, often characterized at

the time as a decade of remarkable greed and corruption in business. It happened again with the spate of scandals in 2001 and 2002. Efforts to do something about the apparently abysmal state of “ethics” in management have ebbed and flowed as scandals come and go. One strand of such initiatives has spotlighted ethics as a topic in professional training programs. (p. 398-399)

Bolman and Deal’s (2003) organizational ideas may also be applied to community colleges and their leaders because they play an integral role in the social, political, and economic lives of their respective communities (Anderson & Davies, 2000). College and university administrators have an interesting population to consider as administrative behavior may be controlled or scrutinized by several constituencies—government officials, students, faculty, boards of trustees, other administrators, and the external community (Bray, 1999). This, in turn, calls for action among the administrators to make decisions that are desirable for each constituency. On the other hand, involvement by these constituencies should not inhibit community college leaders’ responsibilities of creating a vision; communicating the vision; building relationships; developing a supportive organizational culture; exhibiting character; and achieving results (Pielstick, 1998).

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to the literature (Shugart, 1999; Vaughn, 2000), community college leaders encounter challenges that require a well-developed professional ethical identity. Over the past three decades, an increase in unethical practices is evidenced by corporate scandals, fraud, and unorthodox behaviors. These unethical practices combine poor

decision making and misjudgment among administrators (Murphy, 2003) which causes ethical lapses within the organization. However, understanding the fundamental drive of these ethical lapses in any profession is critical to aid administrators in promoting positive moral organizational goals and an ethical vision (Shama & Shoaf, 2008).

Higher education administrators face conflicts over institutional missions, cutbacks in state and federal funding, increasing competition, and a host of other concerns (Townsend & Moyo, 1997) which calls for action. Because administrators must make informed decisions that may affect the lives of faculty, staff, and students on a daily basis, they are tasked with maintaining quality and solving ethical situations and dilemmas as they arise. Unfortunately, the problem has been that some administrators resort to unethical means and poor moral judgment which causes ethical failures within the organizations.

The problems addressed by this study centered around issues relating to the superfluity of unethical practices that have been evident over the last three decades. The main problem that needs addressing is to determine what factors play roles in the increase of unethical practices among administrators. This study addressed those factors by examining the perceptions of [Mississippi] community college administrators regarding moral values, ethical decision making, professional values, and organizational values. In essence, it has been noted that the healthiest individuals are those with the most overlap between their personal or private values and their professional or public values (Sikula, Olmosk, Kim, & Cupps, 2001).

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore Mississippi community college administrators' ethical decision-making behaviors and moral reasoning within their institutions based upon their perceptions of moral, professional, and organizational values. At present, the discussion of ethics in the leadership literature is fragmented, there is little reference to other works on the subject, and one gets the sense that "most authors write from scratch" (Ciulla & Burns, 2004, p. 4). This research study sought to increase research in ethical leadership. Because ethical leadership is usually based upon individual morals and values, this study placed emphasis on the decision-making process through application rather than theory.

### **Significance of Study**

The current study adds to the research base and literature by examining ethical decision-making behaviors and moral reasoning through higher education administrators' moral, professional, and organizational values. The significance of this research may be applied not only to education environments, but also to other public and private sectors.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding moral values?

2. What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding ethical decision-making?
3. What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding professional values?
4. What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding organizational values?

### **Limitations of Study**

The major limitations to this study were (a) research sample size and (b) instrumentation. Each of these is explained below.

#### *Research Sample Size*

Bias may exist among responses due to the institutional tenure of the participants. The reason is because tenured administrators may have more institutional knowledge based on years of employment and established community presence. Compared to administrators who may have less years, these administrators may also have an established credibility and political rigor that developed over a long-range time period. In addition, community college administrators who have been in the role for long periods of time have experienced constant institutional and organizational changes, educational reform, and professional perspectives that may provide varying answers to questions

outlined in this study compared to administrators who have served in their roles fewer years.

### *Instrumentation*

The survey instrument used in this research study was designed for a large community college with emphasis on student and faculty responses. Even though the tool was tailored to fit the participating institution, it was created by an outside consulting firm, which is not an educational institution. The instrument was tested for reliability and validity by a panel of researchers employed by the firm using pilot testing procedures.

The survey instrument was designed by O'Neil and Associates located in Tempe, Arizona. Prior consent was obtained to use their instrument (Appendix B). Using a Likert-Scale and generalized-type format, the survey contains questions about values, ethics, and the basis upon which individuals make decisions (O'Neil, 2000). The instrument was adapted to the current study.

### **Delimitation**

This study was geared to only administrators of community colleges. In addition, only administrators from one state (Mississippi) were included in the study.

### **Definition of Terms**

For this study, the following definitions were used for clarification of terms used throughout the study:

**Code of Ethics** refers to a standard set of rules that are reasonably designed to deter wrongdoing and promote the following: (a) honest and ethical conduct; (b) full, fair,

accurate, timely, and understandable disclosure of reports; (c) compliance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations; and (d) accountability for adherence to the rules (Holmes, Roberts, & Owen, 2003). Codes of Ethics describe an organization's ethical perspective both to the members and to the outside world; a formal ethics statement(s) can improve the company's/group's image while protecting them from lawsuits, and referring to a code can encourage followers and leaders to resist unethical group and organizational pressures (Johnson, 2005).

A **Community College President** is the full-time chief administrator of a two-year institution of higher education responsible for the overall supervision of the institution.

A **Community College Vice President** is the full-time assistant chief administrator of a two-year institution of higher education and its academic and technical units.

**Corporate Scandal** refers to allegations of corporate misconduct usually characterized by financial mismanagement (Coffee, 2005).

**Ethical Behavior** refers to a behavior that conforms to accepted standards of conduct (Donnelly, 2005).

**Ethical Decision-making** is the act of making a decision that is legal and fair to and for all involved parties. In the Van Hoose and Paradise Model, the decision-making process is followed through a pattern of problem identification, defining goals, generating possible courses of action, considering possible consequences of actions, implementation, and evaluating the situation as a whole (Van Hoose & Paradise, 1979).

**Ethical dilemma** is a situation that demands action toward resolution (Wooten, 2001).

**Ethics** is the science of moral duty; more broadly, the science of the ideal human character and the ideal ends of human character (Paulson, 1899).

**Integrity** is the quality of adhering to sound moral principles, possessing honesty, sincerity, and candor (Royeen, 2006).

**Loyalty** is an emotion that manifests internally as caring and concern for another person or entity; it is basic to the nature as human beings – a potent force that can be brought forth for the good of all (Goman, 2003).

**Moral Reasoning** is the basis for ethical behavior (Kohlberg, 1973).

**Moral Values** are factors critical to human relationships and to the upholding of morality (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1999; Rokeach, 1973).

**Morals** are the specific standards of right and wrong (Johnson, 2007).

**Organizational Ethics** is the capacity of an organization to reflect on values in its corporate decision-making processes (Carroll, 1987).

**Organizational Values** are the values of an organization that indicate what the organization allows and what is important to fulfill its mission and work towards its vision (Boone, Safrit, & Jones, 2002).

**Personal Values** are types of social cognition that reflects internal states intervening between stimuli and responses (Kahle, 1983; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

**Professional Values** are principles of self-interest modified and restrained only by the demands of competence and the forces of the marketplace (Mitchell, 1989).

**Transformational Leadership** is a type of leadership whereby the leader empowers workers or employees to achieve an articulated vision of the organization and its mission, leading to increased productivity, employee morale, and job satisfaction, as well as heightened personal and community growth (Al-Mailam, 2004).

**Transactional Leadership** is a type of leadership by which the leader acts as an agent of change, making meaningful exchanges with employees that results in improvements of productivity (Al-Mailam, 2004).

**Values** are the framework for setting priorities to determine right from wrong and relate to judgments, which are reflective of personal behavior (Johnson, 2005).

### **Organization of the Study**

Chapter I of the study outlines the introduction of ethics as a theory. The chapter also provides a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions, limitations of study, delimitations, and definitions of terms.

Chapter II provides an extensive review of the literature relating to community colleges, ethics and ethical failures in colleges and universities, ethical theories and models in education, related empirical studies, and moral reasoning of leaders within community colleges. This chapter also provides a table for commonly used ethical theories and models in research and chapter summary.

Chapter III outlines the methodology, research design, and participants for the study. The chapter also gives descriptions of each section of the survey instrument, its reliability and validity, data collection and statistical tests used in the data analysis.

Chapter IV describes the research results of the study. The results include demographics of participants and data analyses using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations). This chapter also answers the research questions based on the data results of the study.

Chapter V provides a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for the study. Recommendations are described for practice and further research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of literature addresses four aspects and subjects related to the current study. These include the following: (a) history and theoretical perspectives of community colleges, (b) ethics and ethical failures in colleges and universities, (c) ethical theories and models in education; and (d) moral reasoning of leaders in community colleges.

#### **History and Theoretical Perspectives of Community Colleges**

Nationally, there are about 1,100 community colleges, technical colleges, two-year branch colleges, tribal colleges, and independent junior colleges (Vaughn, 2000). During the major community college growth period of the 1960s, one new community college was opened every week across the United States (Anderson & Davies, 2000). With inception beginning in the 1920's, Mississippi has one junior college and fourteen public community colleges that were developed to serve increasingly diverse constituencies, integrate technology into the curriculum, and advance economic development statewide by providing industry with thousands of well-trained workers (Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges [MACJC], 2007). Organizationally, the community college president carries out the general administrative duties (Cohen & Brawer, 2003), while vice presidents, deans, department chairs, and

other administrators organize and supervise administrative support for faculty, staff, and students (Vaughn, 2000). Nationally, the average tenure of a community college president is 13.9 years (McFarlin, Crittenden, & Ebbers, 1999); however, in Mississippi, it has been suggested that a vast majority of the presidents serve a little longer, with an average of 15.5 years (MACJC, 2007).

In Mississippi, the community college presidency began with veteran educators. These educators orchestrated an evolutionary college system from an extension of agricultural high schools to freestanding and comprehensive community colleges (MACJC, 2007). Currently, there are more than 125,000 students enrolled in Mississippi community colleges (MACJC, 2007). Mississippi laws, as they pertain to community and junior colleges, are outlined in the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Title 37, Chapter 004*.

Part of the duties of community college leaders involve tailoring programs designed specifically by the people served and developed for the good of the community (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). By design, they are committed to educational values of community, excellence, honesty and integrity, teamwork and innovations (Hellmich, 2007). Since a community involves relationships with others and reciprocal responsibilities (Baucus & Dudley, 2005), leaders of community colleges should also maintain these attributes. Shugart (1999) contended that the senior leaders of the college bear a special responsibility to ensure that self absorption does not happen in actively connecting the college to the whole community it was intended to serve. Shugart (1999) also suggested that this connection is especially important in order for the college's leaders to foster economic and workforce development, resource development,

connection to other sectors of the educational system, and political advocacy for the interest of the college and its mission.

### **Ethics and Ethical Failures in Colleges and Universities**

Procario-Foley and Bean (2002) suggested that one of the strongest indicators of an academic institution's ethical culture is through the organization's mission statement. According to Vaughn (2000), the mission of most community colleges is shaped by five commitments:

1. Serving all segments of society through open-access admissions policy that offers equal and fair treatment to all students
2. Providing a comprehensive educational program
3. Serving the community as a community-based institution of higher education.
4. Teaching and learning
5. Fostering lifelong learning (p. 3)

This mission should build a bridge between the president and the board (Weisman & Vaughn, 1997), the president and vice president(s), and the president, vice president, deans, and other administrators of the college, which may prove challenging. These challenges may pertain to defining and understanding what it means to be a leader of a community-based institution (Weisman & Vaughn, 1997). All colleges and universities have a social responsibility to be faithful to their legal and moral charters, making them accountable to some higher authority [state or local government or an ethnic, racial, or religious community (Wilcox & Ebbs, 1992)].

Several questions and controversies regarding ethics in colleges and universities have been issues for the past several decades. One controversy regarding Alabama's community college systems, involved criticisms for practicing nepotism, cronyism, and

fraud (Ashburn, 2007). Deemed as one of the longest ongoing controversies (scandals), several employees within the system were convicted of fraud and unethical conduct (June, 2004). In addition, several legislators were also involved in the scandal and pleaded guilty to federal bribery, kickbacks, theft, and conspiracy (Beyerle, 2009). Another controversy involving Barton Community College (Great Bend, Kansas) involved allegations of the basketball coach's mishandling of federal funds, embezzlement, fraud, and other felonious activities from 1999-2003 (Dohrmann, 2005). The coach was accused of fraudulent use of work study programs for athletes and pled guilty to one count of misappropriation of student assistance, two counts of theft of federal funds, and one count of mail fraud (Hegeman, 2006). In addition, the coach fraudulently enrolled players into the college knowing that they had not completed a high school diploma or general education degree (Dohrmann). Controversies such as these usually create breaches in organizational and institutional ethics.

At the broadest level, ethical failures can be defined as any act that results in harm to others which can result in direct financial losses and burdens for universities and colleges (Bruhn, Zajac, Al-Kazemi, & Prescott, 2002). A few of those failures (e.g., Dohrmann, 2005; Hegeman, 2006) have received so much attention that they have been recognized as corporate scandals, often involving frauds; whereas, others appear as restatements of financial reports to correct errors (Staubus, 2005). Ethical failures of leadership result when leaders overestimate the importance of their values and, on the basis of this kind of error, make moral exceptions of themselves (Price, 2003).

Failures of professionalism undermine society's confidence that a profession and its individual members can be trusted with professional autonomy (Hamilton, 2006).

Since community colleges impact society and the community, ethical failures should be avoided at all costs and community college leaders should position themselves to lead ethically amidst environmental impacts beyond the control of the institution. Failure to do so may result in the loss of public trust and faith within the organization (Bruhn et al., 2002) and the community.

Questions of what is ethical and what is not may be considered paradoxical opinions (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001). According to researchers Anderson and Davies (2000), managing ethical dilemmas may be solved by applying an ethical decision-making model. College administrators, for the most part, want to make decisions that are justified by their effectiveness in delivering educational programs to students, their manner of promoting organizational health, and their congruency with institutional policies and procedures (Shugart & Joynton, 1997). These administrative decisions may be established through the creation of institutionally initiated and maintained support systems for raising and resolving ongoing ethical dilemmas in relation to the institutions' context of culture and society (Felicio & Pieniadz, 1999). The lack of these support systems may erode the institution's stated values (Kelley, Agle, & Demott, 2005), which could lead to potential ethical failures within the institution.

According to Stark (1993), over three-quarters of America's major corporations are actively trying to build ethics into their organizations and that managers would welcome concrete assistance with primarily two kinds of ethical challenges: (a) identifying ethical courses of action in difficult gray-area situations and (b) navigating those situations where the right course is clear. Today, with the complexity of situations and cultures, it seems more important than ever for educational leaders to think more

broadly and “go beyond self” in an attempt to understand others (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001, p. 8). Even though leaders should act as role models for subordinates, their decision-making process(es) may not be agreed among everyone in the organization. However, since leaders engage in discretionary decision-making behavior, the effect trickles down to the lives and well-being of others (Trevino, 1986).

### **Ethical Theories and Models in Education**

Historic ethical philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle depended upon the notions of virtue, happiness, and the soul (Parry, 2004) to describe the foundations of ethics and morality. Socrates argued that ethical leaders must be without falsehood and believe that their own good is intimately connected to the good as a whole (Hellmich, 2007). He also offered a descriptive and exhaustive theory of value, according to which all things belong to one of three ranks: the good, the bad, and the neither-good-nor-bad (Ahbel-Rappe, 2008). Plato suggested that moral terms of value may be identified with the values of prudence (Mackenzie, 1985), which proposes that the best ethical leaders must be philosophical in nature (Hellmich, 2007). Plato also taught that a person “cannot expect prodigies of virtue from ordinary people,” but rather search for spiritedness for legitimate self-expression (Bloom, 1987, p. 130). His views embraced the notions that (a) the final good is neither determinant nor unitary; (b) virtues are not instrumental with relation to the good but rather are components of it; and (c) the good itself is an ordered system of forms (Irwin, 1978).

Similar to Socrates, Aristotle’s philosophies embraced human logic through understanding the good in human beings; however, he disagreed with Plato’s nature

theories (Knight, 2007). Aristotle suggested that one must think of oneself as a member of the larger community in order to bring out what is best within that person (Baucus & Dudley, 2005). He further suggested that it is useless to communicate knowledge to a person about what is good or correct unless the respective person is already in possession of the right attitude and disposition to act (Saugstad, 2002).

Ethical decision-making models have an important place in the philosophy of ethics (Hill, 2004). Models of ethical decision-making can help bring clarity to a leader's reasoning process (Remley & Herlihy, 2001). At the same time, these models assist leaders in making better choices by applying a systematic approach that encourages teams and individuals to define the problem, gather information, apply ethical standards and values, identify and evaluate alternate courses of action, and follow through with their choices (Johnson, 2005). These models also establish ethical justification for decisions and actions (Anderson & Davies, 2000) that may later produce more moral leaders (Sikula, Olmosk, Kim, & Cupps, 2001). However, researchers must be aware that ethical decision-making models are destined to change as societal issues change (Jones, 1991).

Various ethical theories (e.g., Kidder, 1995; Kohlberg, 1981; Trevino, 1986) exist that administrators may explore in regard to ethics. Table 2.1 provides a comprehensive list of commonly used ethical theories and models (Brown & Finstuen, 1993; Fletcher, 1964; Johnson, 2005; Weber, 1991).

Table 2.1 Commonly Used Ethical Theories in Research

Name of Theory/Model	Summary of Theory/Model
Aristotle and Plato's Ethics	Identified the primary virtues as prudence (discernment, discretion), justice (righteousness, integrity), courage (strength in the face of adversity), and self-restraint (temperance). [p. 68]
Ethical Capacity Development Model	Assists in developing a person's capacity to make better ethical decisions. This model defines ethical capacity with skills, perspective, knowledge, and motivation; challenge, support, and assessment represent the leadership development components. As a result, the following ethical outcomes are presented: follow-through, climate, moral imagination, self-awareness, self-confidence, character, reasoning, and resistance. [p. 54]
Rest's Moral Action Model	Model based on four components: (1) moral sensitivity; (2) moral judgment or reasoning; (3) moral motivation; and (4) moral action. [p.69]
Power and Vogel's Model for Moral Judgment	Identifies six factors/elements that underlie ethical decision-making and follow-through: (1) moral imagination; (2) moral identification and ordering; (3) moral evaluation; (4) moral disagreement and ambiguity; (5) integration of managerial competence with moral competence; and (6) moral obligation. [p. 69-70]
Enright's (colleagues) Four Phase Model of Forgiveness	Enright and his colleagues offer a four-phase model to help people forgive: (1) uncovering phase; (2) decision phase; (3) work phase; and (4) deepening phase. [p.105-106]
Utilitarianism	Concept of doing the greatest good for the greatest number of people; ethical choices should be based on their consequences. [p. 129]
Kant's Categorical Imperative	Concept of doing what is right no matter what the cost. Kant's approach to moral reasoning is the best example of deontological ethics. [p. 132]
Rawl's Justice as Fairness	Concept of guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities behind the veil of ignorance. Rawl encourages leaders to be fair and have the responsibilities of (1) guaranteeing basic rights to all followers; (2) ensuring followers have equal access to promotion, training, and other benefits; and (3) making special efforts to help those followers who have special needs. [p. 137]
Communitarianism	Basic principles of shouldering responsibilities and seeking the common good, considering the needs of the community, and discouraging selfishness and unethical behaviors. [p. 138-139]
Altruism	Theory that advocates loving your neighbor as the ultimate ethical standard. Concept states that "people are never means to an end; they are the ends." [p. 143]
Taoism	Theory that suggests that "what works is what is right." Bases moral decision-making on conformity to principles manifested in the natural world to promote ethical pragmatism and relativism. [p. 172]

Table 2.1 (continued)

Rushworth Kidder's Nine Ethical Checkpoints	Model uses nine steps to help leaders bring order to otherwise confusing ethical issues. [p. 188-189]
Nash's 12 Questions Model	Model developed to help businesses and other groups identify the responsibilities involved in moral choices. Answers to the questions will allow for surfacing ethical concerns that might otherwise remain hidden, identifying common moral problems, clarifying gaps between stated values and performances, and exploring a variety of alternatives. [p. 193].
Day's SAD Formula	Helps build important elements of critical thinking into moral reasoning through three stages: Situation Definition; Analysis of the Situation; and Decision. [p. 197]
Cooper's Active Process Model	Model suggests that emotions play a role in ethical decision-making and leaders must have a reasoned justification for their actions. Cooper developed four methods to assist leaders to move beyond the expressive level to careful analysis. [p. 202-203]
Adler's 4 Step Process to Synergistic Problem Solving	Adler suggests that culturally synergistic problem solving is a four step process: (1) situation description; (2) cultural interpretation; (3) cultural creativity; and (4) implementation. [p. 297-298]
Fletcher's Model of Situational Ethics	Suggested that all decision-making should be based not on fixed law but, rather, on the circumstances of a particular situation. Love (agapi) is the only absolute and should be the sole motive underlying every decision made [Fletcher, 1964 p. 2-3].
Kohlberg' Stages of Moral Development	Theory concentrated around reasons why certain actions are perceived as morally just or preferred. Kohlberg's theory suggested that these reasons are the indicators of the stage of moral maturity [Weber, 1991, p. 294].
Vroom and Yetton's Normative Model for Leadership	Developed systematic decision making processes based on various combinations of situational circumstances [ Brown & Finstuen, 1993, p. 208].

Note. Unless otherwise noted, the source for this chart derived from Johnson (2005). Page numbers are shown in brackets for each.

Models of ethical decision-making (e.g., ethical capacity development, active process) refer to specific approaches for resolving ethical dilemmas (Hill, 2004) and issues that may arise within organizations and educational institutions. Effective ethical decision-making in education can be credited to past and present theorists and psychologists. In relation to this study, Rest's moral action model was implicated.

Rest (1982) originated assessment strategies applicable to teacher education programs and their success. These strategies, also known as Rest's four component model of morality, include (a) ethical sensitivity; (b) moral judgment; (c) moral motivation and commitment; and (d) moral implementation (Johnson, 2005). Rest provided valuable information regarding issues concerning moral judgment, reasoning, and ethics. Since Rest's expertise consisted of ethical decision-making and curriculum implementation, community colleges and other educational institutions may find his theory beneficial to addressing ethical dilemmas.

Two most notable original works in ethics theory were derived from Sigmund Freud and Jean Piaget. Freud proposed his theory of psychosexuality, whereas Piaget developed a theory of cognitive development—both are stage theories and have received much acclaim and attention (Fraedrich, Thorne, & Ferrell, 1994). A notable resemblance of these two theorists is their unique experimentation with moral and cognitive development and early childhood.

First, Freud's theory (psychoanalysis) argues that differences in male and female sexual anatomy have profound significance and result in distinct dynamics and outcomes in moral development for boys and girls. Freud claimed that females have a less developed sense of justice and are more prone to influence by feelings of affection and hostility (Becker & Becker, 2001) as compared to males. Freud equated moral character with the strength of the super-ego as related to males and females (Mennuti, 1987) and he wrote that females and males will develop moral differences based on their sex. Accordingly, ethical decision-making will also be different between the sexes.

Second, Piaget's theories suggested that appropriate education leads to the attainment of an autonomous ethical skill (Kavathatzopoulos, 1994). Piaget described morality as having respect for rules and possessing a sense of justice (Menutti, 1987) and defined morality as the logic of action (Wilhelm, 2004). However, morality is not just about rights (deontology) and welfare (utility) but often includes issues of character (Wallen, Allen, & Smit, 2008). Piaget viewed explicit instruction, indoctrination, or conditioning as having little positive value in furthering moral development; however, these factors did lead to understanding the underlying concepts and reasoning involved in moral judgment and how such judgments change in the individual over time (Becker & Becker, 2001). Piaget also believed that as people reflect on how to build reciprocal relationships on which cooperation is organized, certain naturally occurring solutions occur to those people (Wilhelm).

Another ethical theory and model developed by Vroom and Yetton (1973) advised managers to examine seven factors in a decision situation before determining how much participation should be allowed for subordinates in the making of that particular decision (Field & Andrews, 1998). The elements of a feasible set of decisions are selected from five decision processes which, in turn, allow managers to select decision rules to protect the quality of their decision and its acceptance (Brown & Finstuen, 1993). The central proposition of the Vroom-Yetton model is that the selected decision-making method must be appropriate to the problem requiring the solution (Paul & Ebadi, 1989).

## **Related Empirical Studies**

In a national study of community college leaders conducted by Hammons and Keller (1990), 100% of the respondents indicated that decision-making was a leadership characteristic that was needed among future community college presidents. The researchers in the study used a two-part survey instrument that provided general results and perspectives on competencies of future community college presidents. In regards to ethics, a consensus was not reached in the competency areas of conflict resolution or integrity. In examining their study, decision-making was defined as “the ability to know when and when not to make a decision.” Conflict resolution was defined as “the ability to resolve disagreements between individuals and groups.” Integrity was defined as “the ability to inspire trust in the veracity of one’s words and actions, to be viewed as one who stands on principle, and is devoted to what is right and just” (Hammons & Keller, 1990, p. 40). Another study, conducted by Mennuti (1987), examined how community college presidents used overlapping orientations—justice, care, and self—for moral decision-making. Mennuti used qualitative interviewing to assess the participants’ understanding when reflecting on real life dilemmas of their choice. Each participant had to have at least ten or less years of experience as a community college president. The final analysis of the study showed that orientation patterns differed by presidents’ gender; however, the nature of the dilemma did not impact the use of a preferred moral orientation (p. 123). A similar quantitative study by Haviv and Leman (2002) addressed the issue of moral orientation and its connection with peoples’ real life moral decisions and judgments. The study consisted of a survey instrument that included demographic information, a personal attributes questionnaire, and four dilemmas followed by probing questions. Haviv and

Leman (2002) compared Gilligan's hypothesis (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988), which acknowledged that individuals can employ both justice and care orientation, but only one will prevail. The results of the study did not confirm Gilligan's (1988) theory. Unlike Menutti's (1987) results, Haviv and Leman (2002) found that participants rarely held one orientation across all dilemmas and gender was related neither to justice nor care orientations. One caveat in these two studies is Menutti's (1987) research examined the differences of community college presidents; whereas, Haviv and Leman (2002) examined differences among undergraduate college students.

Based on research from Loges, Kidder, and Novak (1999), similar methodologies and instrumentation for examining morals and ethical decision-making were used. Loges et al. (1999) examined the moral reasoning and practices of members of a community college system and its community. Similar to the current study, the survey instrument asked questions about ethics, values, life priorities, sources of authority and moral boundaries, and moral reasoning. The instrument was sent to the college's students, faculty and staff, whereas, the current study only addressed community college administrators. Results from Loges's et al. (1999) research suggested that (a) there is a strong correlation between ethics and leadership; (b) the participants perceived that people are not properly learning values that would help them become ethical adults; (c) community colleges should teach ethics; and (d) ethical decision-making is important. The second phase of Loges et al.'s research included the results of the state's citizens regarding their perceptions of ethical leadership. The majority (72%) of the state's citizens rejected the idea that "one can be an effective leader without being ethical" (p. 15).

## **Moral Reasoning**

Models of reasoning in moral decision-making have proliferated and are traded back and forth from profession to profession (Shugart & Joynton, 1997). Responsibility for acting morally is given to the individual and is deemed a necessary component of a universal system of moral law (Pretzlaff, 2005). In community colleges, as with any other organization, administrators inherit the duty to provide sound moral reasoning in decision-making; scholars assert that it is an integral part of the ethical decision-making process leading to ethical behavior (Elm, Kennedy, & Lawton, 2001). Identifying the cause of ethical lapses and the development of effective solutions require that the participation and dialogue be transferred between managers and employees (Baucus & Dudley, 2005), which may suggest that an administrator must be a good strategic thinker in order to make wise moral decisions (Johnson, 2005). Strategic planning and thinking at every level of the college is the best tool for mastering change (Shugart, 1999) and making good moral decisions.

Day's (2003) moral reasoning model outlined the processes of building important elements of critical thinking into moral reasoning. Day's situation, analysis of situation, and decision model (SAD) holistically involves managers and begins with an understanding of the subject to be evaluated, followed by identifying the issues, information, and assumptions surrounding the problem, and then concludes with evaluating alternatives and reaching a conclusion (Day, 2003; Johnson, 2005). Similar to Day, Kitchener (1984) incorporated principle ethics into a model of levels of moral reasoning that included an intuitive level and a critical-evaluative level. The intuitive level refers to general beliefs and knowledge about what is right and wrong; whereas, the

critical-evaluative level incorporates three tiers of justification, rules, principles, and ethical theory (Kitchener, 1984; Morrissey & Reddy, 2006). Adding to Kitchener's ideals, Dukerich, Nichols, Elm, and Vollrath (1990) indicated that a group's moral reasoning decreases when a group leader operates at a low level of moral reasoning or thinking.

Kohlberg's (1969; 1981) model represented one of the most widely cited theories of ethical reasoning. As Kohlberg and others proposed (Blasi, 1980; Baucus & Dudley, 2005; Weber & Wasieleski, 2001), research in cognitive moral development is important because moral reasoning enables leaders to understand differences in modes of thinking and may explain moral action. In general, Kohlberg focused on ethics in relation to society (i.e., laws, roles, institutions, general practices) instead of personal, face-to-face relationships (Wilhelm, 2004). The action component, as it relates to morality, consists of the moral reasoning surrounding behavior, its constraints, and the sources of moral authority to which appeal or attribution is made (Nicholson, 1994).

Based on Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development, a relationship between the variables of a corporation's ethical climate type, managers' locus of control, selected demographics of management levels (age, education, work tenure, gender, and industry category), and the moral reasoning ability of individual managers exists (Forte, 2004). Kohlberg's developmental theory of moral reasoning has prompted many in philosophy, psychology, education, and business to closely examine the empirical side of morality. His theory also proposed that individuals sequentially progress through stages in the development of moral reasoning (Fraedrich, Thorne, & Ferrell, 1994); however, there is no guarantee that each individual will progress through all stages of moral development

or that the progression through each stage will take the same requisite time (Pretzlaff, 2005).

In education, moral philosophy is taught through a complex history of ideas about defining the good and about the conditions for sound argument for ethical standards (Gould, 2004). In addition to these ideas, moral philosophy tends to value altruism, the indication that an individual should do good because it is right and not because the individual will benefit from it (Stark, 1993). These standards should produce moral and ethical implications that attend actions; whereby, acknowledging and examining these implications is a responsibility of a leader of academia and as a member of society (Burant, Chubbuck, & Whipp, 2007).

### **Summary**

In summary, this literature review presented information regarding community colleges, ethical theories and models in education, ethical failures, related empirical studies, and moral reasoning. The review of related literature not only provided theoretical perspectives, but also provided dispositions for ethical decision-making and moral reasoning. The current study adds to the literature by identifying behaviors, processes (ethical decision-making and moral reasoning), and associative factors (values) among community college administrators in Mississippi. At the same time, the results of this study adds valuable research for better understanding the ethical decision-making behaviors and moral reasoning of community college administrators.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the responses of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding their values, ethical decision-making, and moral reasoning. Leadership within any sector has a distinguished need for practicing “good ethics” (Ciulla, 1995, p. 6) and good moral values that are not easily embedded within current laws (Gardner, 1990). The obligation for ethical leaders is intertwined within what is right and wrong, just and fair, and virtuous and dutiful (Ciulla, 1995; Johnson, 2005; Ciulla & Burns, 2004). Any decision that a leader makes should be considered ethical, which alleviates potential factors that may lead to an unwanted consequence.

This chapter uses the following sections to present the methodology used in this study: (a) research design, (b) participants, (c) instrumentation, (d) data collection, and (e) analysis. The methodology explained the processes used in conducting the study.

#### **Research Design**

The research design for this study included descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations) to analyze the survey questions. The overall design was non-experimental because no control or experimental groups were defined.

### *Methodological Rationale*

The rationale for this study was based upon two criteria: (a) the type of questions posed to the participants and (b) examining administrator perceptions in regard to the answers for each question. The survey instrument used for data collection was designed with four different types of questions including demographical, multiple choice, Likert-model, and ranking scaled. Quantitative data analyses were used to provide answers to the research questions. Descriptive statistics were used in this research study to provide meaningful data with numerical indices (Fraenkal & Wallen, 2003). For this study, frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations (descriptive statistics) were used for data analysis and results.

### **Participants**

The participants in this research were community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, other administrators) presently employed in the Mississippi community college system. The participants were chosen using the Mississippi State Board of Community and Junior College's (SBCJC) College Directory located on its website. The directory was a queryable and comprehensive database that allows users to search for all Mississippi community college employees (administrators, instructors, subordinate staff) by name, entity, college, or job title. An email field was also available within the directory. After the researcher queried the directory for community college presidents and vice presidents pertaining to this study, 55 results were yielded as of February 2009.

## **Instrumentation**

Located in Appendix B, O'Neil Associates granted the researcher permission to utilize a previously created survey instrument. The tool was created for one of the firm's clients, Illinois Community College, and was very similar to a previous instrument created for Maricopa Community College District. The original title of O'Neil's survey instrument was the *Illinois Community Colleges Staff Survey: A Survey of Values and Ethics*. A copy of the instrument was provided to the researcher in return for full credit and citation given to the firm for their initial development of the instrument. In addition, the researcher adapted the survey (Appendix E) for use in the study and assured the originators that the instrument would only be used for individual research purposes in fulfillment of dissertation requirements.

O'Neil Associates submitted the survey to the researcher in PDF (portable document format) which could not be manipulated for further use. Through granted permission, the researcher used a basic Microsoft© word design that consisted of special characters and figures, such as text boxes and check mark lines, to allow participants easier understanding of the arrangement of the instrument. The survey was divided into five sections (parts): (a) moral values; (b) ethical decision-making; (c) professional values; (d) organizational values, and (e) background and demographics. Each section was developed to collect data information related to the research participants' morals and ethical decision-making. The researcher's application to conduct the study was approved by the MSU Institutional Review Board (Appendix A) in spring 2009.

### *Validity and Reliability*

Fraenkel and Wallen (2003, p. 51) advised that “validity and reliability are very important for the selection and design of a research instrument.” To determine appropriate validity, they advise asking the question “do the results of the assessment provide useful information about the variable(s)?” Whereas validity is concerned with the question of whether the researcher is studying the phenomenon she or he declares to be studying (McKinnon, 1988), reliability is more concerned with the consistency of measurement results and the extent to which they are accurate, error free, and stable (Gaberson, 1997). According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), survey instruments should closely match the proposed research questions or hypotheses; however, developing a new or unpublished instrument may affect validity and reliability. The researcher chose to develop this study with a previously administered and published survey instrument to prevent trumping validity and reliability. In addition, for this study, the researcher was able to answer each of the four research questions. The original developers of the survey instrument, O’Neil Associates, carried out a four-part process of testing their research projects, including their instruments: assessment, design, data collection, data processing, and analysis (O’Neil Associates, 2009). Within these four processes, validity and reliability were measured before the firm attested and confirmed a potential research project.

For measuring validity, the firm used the content-related evidence methodology, whereby, researchers (staff) evaluate the appropriateness of the instruments they create before administering them. The content validity is representative of adequacy in content domain covered by each variable being measured (Fraenkal & Wallen, 2003).

Additionally, the reliability used for the instrument had an estimated .60 reliability coefficient, whereby  $K=23$  (total scored items),  $M=84$  (mean), and  $SD=.89$  using the Kuder-Richardson (1937) methodology and calculations. A reliability coefficient of 1.0 signifies that relationships exist among the variables to be measured compared to a coefficient of 0, which indicates a complete absence of a relationship (Fraenkal & Wallen, 2003) among the variables.

### **Data Collection**

A total of 49 participants were included in this study. According to the SBCJC, there were 55 presidents and vice presidents (administrators) employed with the Mississippi Community and Junior College system. After permission was granted to use the survey instrument from O'Neil Associates, Inc., (Appendix B), permission was later granted for the researcher to conduct the research through MSU's IRB (Appendix A) and at the community colleges (Appendix C). The researcher was given permission to attend one of the SBCJC's monthly meetings. At this meeting, a presentation regarding this study was given to the SBCJC, which consisted of all 14 community college presidents and one junior college president. In turn, they granted permission (verbal and written) to conduct the research at each community college.

After permission was obtained from O'Neil Associates, the MSU IRB, and the SBCJC, survey packets were sent to each of the 15 institutions. The survey packets included five components: (a) a request for participation letter to the president and vice president; (b) approval letter from SBCJC; (c) approval letter from the MSU IRB and informed consent; (d) survey instrument (without personal identifiers); and (e) a self-

addressed stamped envelope. Each institution was sent between 5 and 20 surveys according to the number of presidents and vice presidents listed in the SBCJC online directory. Non-identifying packets were sent to protect identity and confidentiality. After the initial packet was sent, a second packet was sent including the same contents exactly one month later. The last correspondence was sent as a “reminder” email blind-copied to each president and vice president listed in the online directory.

Once surveys were mailed back to the researcher, confidentiality remained intact. No personal identifying information was revealed on the survey instrument or the self-addressed stamped envelope. According to the MSU IRB recommendations, very little threats were presented to participants in this study. A cut-off date was given with each mail out and a total of 49 surveys were completed and returned back to the researcher. Afterwards, data analyses were initiated by inputting the collected data into a multi-level Microsoft Excel© Spreadsheet. Collected data from the completed surveys were stored on a private USB “jump” drive that was only accessed by the researcher.

### **Analysis**

The data used in this study were analyzed using SPSS© 17.0, also known as the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 17.0. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis which included frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations.

This study sought to answer the following four research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding moral values?
2. What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding ethical decision-making?
3. What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding professional values?
4. What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding organizational values?

Part I, moral values, of the survey instrument consisted of five questions that examined the participants' moral values which answered research question 1. The first question in part I asked participants to choose five values which were most important in their daily lives. From these selections, the participants were asked to circle the one value that was most important from the list initially chosen. For question 2, participants answered questions regarding how various groups would base decisions on the same five values they chose for Item One. The choices given to the participants included (a) members of their family; (b) students at the college; (c) faculty at the college; (d) elected officials in their county; (e) friends or associates; and (f) other administrators in the college. Question 3 in part I asked questions regarding what is considered to be most valuable and important in the participants' lives using matched pairs. The paired choices

included personal financial success, working in an environment where their ethics are respected, marriage and family life, a satisfying career, and/or ethics and character development. Question 4 in part I of the survey allowed participants to rank in terms of importance the sources they relied on for learning/knowing what is right and wrong. Participants ranked 7 items, indicating a rank of 1 as the most important and a rank of 7 as the least important. The final question (question 5) in part I asked participants for their opinion regarding who/what was most influential in shaping ethics today. The choices included parents, churches, media, schools, friends, and work. Part I of the survey instrument was analyzed using frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation.

Part II, ethical Decision-making, inquired about the participants' decision-making behaviors and answered research question 2. Three cases (vignettes) were presented, whereby participants were asked a series of actions they would choose/take in the given situations. Each case gave the participants a choice of three questions. Case One involved actions regarding a superstore controversy; Case Two involved actions regarding job losses; and Case Three involved actions regarding situational ethics associated with a close friend. Descriptive analyses (frequencies and percentages) were used to answer the research question.

Part III, professional values, asked the participants questions regarding how they agreed or disagreed with nine (9) statements presented. Using a Likert-scale model (1-5), participants were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the given statements. The statements gave illustrations of how the participants considered ethical behaviors and values among themselves, colleges, employees, and people in general. The

collected data in part III was used to answer research question 3. Data were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation.

Part IV, organizational values, consisted of one question that provided participants with a definition for transformational and transactional leader. The participants were asked their perceptions (opinions) of how they considered themselves, transformational or transactional, in their current professions. Data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

Finally, part V, background and demographics, provided the researcher with basic demographical data about each participant. Twelve (12) questions were asked that included minimal background information (i.e. age, race, sex). No personal identifying information (i.e. name, address) was asked on any part of the survey instrument.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter III summarized the research design, participants, instrumentation, validity and reliability, data collection, and analysis of the data for the study. The research design was non-experimental and the methodological rationale was based on the types of questions presented and the perceptions that were associated with each question. The participants in the study included only community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, other administrators) in Mississippi; however, the instrument was previously created for another community college outside of the state. The researcher asked permission to use the survey instrument. Survey validity and reliability were also described and explained.

For collected data, 49 administrators returned the surveys. After all data were collected, the researcher used descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and mean scores) for analyzing the data.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the responses of Mississippi community college administrators regarding ethical decision-making and moral reasoning within their institutions. The findings of the study illustrated that administrators have various perceptions related to their morals, values, and ethical decision-making behaviors within their professions. This chapter focuses on the findings for the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding moral values?
2. What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding ethical decision-making?
3. What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding professional values?

4. What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding organizational values?

### **Demographics**

The demographic makeup of participants in this study included presidents and vice presidents employed with 15 community/junior college system in the state of Mississippi. Table 4.1 presents the number of presidents and vice presidents that were employed by each institution at the time of the study.

Table 4.1 Number of Presidents and Vice Presidents in MS Community Colleges

<b>Mississippi Community College</b>	<b>Number of Presidents</b>	<b>Number of Vice Presidents</b>
Community College A	1	1
Community College B	1	2
Community College C	1	3
Community College D	1	4
Community College E	1	5
Community College F	1	3
Community College G	1	3
Community College H	1	4
Community College I	1	2
Community College J	1	3
Community College K	1	4
Community College L	1	2
Community College M	1	3
Community College N	1	1
Community College O	1	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>40</b>

Source: Mississippi State Board of Community and Junior Colleges, 2009 [queried database]

As outlined in Table 4.1, there were a total of 55 administrators (presidents and vice presidents) employed in Mississippi community colleges. Some researchers have suggested that there is no decisive standard for acceptable response rates, however, a 70% response rate is preferable (Sierles, 2003; Dillman, 1991; Fowler, 2002). For the study, of the 55 administered surveys, 49 returned their completed surveys which yielded a response rate of 89%. Of the 49 returned surveys, 11 (22.4%) indicated that the administrator was in an administrative position other than president or vice president; whereas 8 (16.3%) indicated that the administrator was a president. In addition 30 (61.2%) indicated that the administrator was a vice president.

Demographic data (part V) were collected for race, gender, religion, age, marital status, number of children, yearly household income, and numbers of years in current position for each participant from which responses were received. The vast majority (91.8%) of the participants were white, while 8.2% were African American. The majority of the participants were male (55.1%), and females represented 44.9% of those responding to the survey questions.

According to the participants' self-description, 40.8% suggested that they were strongly religious; 53.1% suggested that they were moderately religious; and 6.1% suggested that they were not very religious. There were no definitions presented for these terms—participants used their own perceptions to describe their level of religiousness.

The majority (51%) of the respondents ranged from 41-55 years of age, suggesting that the overall majority (85.7%) of community college administrators were early to late middle-age (36 and older). The majority of the participants (77.6%)

responded that they were married; whereas, 12.2% responded that they were divorced. When asked how many children they had (whether living at home or not), the majority (53.1%) of administrators had two children.

Overwhelmingly, the majority (93.9%) of participants' responses suggested that they earned more than \$75,000 a year. The majority (18.4%) of participants' responses indicated that they were in their current positions 3-4 years.

Some researchers suggested that taking ethics courses do not constitute a person behaving ethically (Kalichman & Friedman, 1992; Eastwood, et al., 1996; Eisen & Berry, 2002). When asked "how many total ethics courses did you take in college," the data indicated that the vast majority (36.7%) of the community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, other administrators) had no ethics courses. Only 12.2% had more than two ethics courses in college.

### **Research Discussion**

The survey instrument was divided into five parts: (a) moral values, (b) ethical decision-making, (c) professional values, (d) organizational values, and (e) background and demographics. Each part of the survey was developed to identify shared morals, ethics, and values (Maricopa, 2002) among administrators. Using descriptive statistics, the following results were summarized for each research question.

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding moral values?

This question inquired about the perceptions of the administrators relating to their moral values. Question 1 in part I of the survey instrument outlined 15 values that people possess in leadership. The participants chose the top 5 (un-ranked) moral values they considered important. The following table (Table 4.2) shows the breakdown of how the administrators responded to the survey.

Table 4.2 Frequencies and Percentages of Administrators' Perceptions Regarding Most Important Values

NAME OF VALUE	PRESIDENTS WHO CHOSE VALUE		VICE PRESIDENTS WHO CHOSE VALUE		OTHER ADMINISTRATORS WHO CHOSE VALUE	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Compassion	5	62.5	16	53.3	5	45.5
Devotion	1	12.5	2	6.7	1	9
Fairness	7	87.5	20	66.7	11	100
Freedom	1	12.5	7	23.3	4	36.4
Honor	3	37.5	13	43.3	1	9
Humility	3	37.5	11	36.7	6	54.5
Generosity	1	12.5	4	13.3	1	9
Preservation of Nature	0	0	0	0	0	0
Respect for Elders	0	0	1	3.3	0	0
Responsibility	5	62.5	25	83.3	9	81.8
Reverence for Life	1	12.5	5	16.7	0	0
Self-respect	1	12.5	10	33.3	7	63.6
Social Harmony	1	12.5	3	10	1	9
Tolerance	2	25	7	23.3	0	0
Truth	3	37.5	22	73.3	9	81.8

Every president, with the exception of one, considered *fairness* to be an important moral value, followed by *compassion* and *responsibility*. For vice presidents, the majority (83%) considered *responsibility* to be an important moral value, followed by *truth* and *fairness*. All (100%) other administrators considered *fairness* as an important moral value followed by *responsibility* and *truth* at 82% concurrently. In addition to choosing the five most important values, participants were also asked to circle the one value they considered most important from the list. The following results (Table 4.3) were determined from the 49 responses.

Table 4.3 Frequencies and Percentages of Administrators' Perceptions Regarding the Single Most Important Value

NAME OF VALUE	PRESIDENTS		VICE PRESIDENTS		OTHER ADMINISTRATORS	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Compassion						
Devotion	1	12.5				
Fairness	1	12.5	3	10	1	9
Freedom					1	9
Honor			4	13.3		
Humility			3	10	1	9
Generosity			1	3.3		
Preservation of Nature						
Respect for Elders						
Responsibility	2	25	2	6.7	1	9
Reverence for Life	1	12.5	1	3.3		
Self-respect			1	3.3	2	18.2
Social Harmony						

Table 4.3 (continued)

Tolerance							
Truth			3	10		1	9
None Circled	3	37.5	12	40		4	36.4

Of the presidents that circled the value they considered most important, *responsibility* was chosen by 2 (28.6%) of the presidents; however, the majority of presidents (37.5%) did not choose any (None) of the values. The majority (40%) of vice presidents did not choose any (None) of the values they previously circled for the most important value. However, of the circled choices, *honor* was chosen by the majority of the vice presidents at 13.3%. The two single values that were chosen by the majority ( $n=5$ ) of the administrators were *fairness* and *responsibility* equally representing 10.2% of the entire population sample.

Question 2 in part I of the survey asked participants to determine how certain groups located within their communities might base their decisions on the same five moral values they (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) chose. Participants were asked to rank, using a Likert scale (1=Never-5=All of the time), the following populations: (a) members of your family; (b) students at the college; (c) faculty at the college; (d) elected officials in your county; (e) your friends and associates; and (f) other administrators in the college. Tables 4.4 through 4.16 describe the means and standard deviations for all administrators' responses to question 2 (*How often do you think the decisions made by each of the groups of people listed are based of the same five values you selected in number 1?*) in part I of the survey. Due to the small sample size,

analysis was conducted using means and standard deviations of all administrators' (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) responses collectively.

Table 4.4 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of All Administrators' Perceptions: Various Groups Chose Same Five Moral Values As They Chose for *Compassion*

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "All of the Time" [Likert Model]</b>		
<i>n</i> =26		
<b>Groups of People</b>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Members of your family	4.2	0.3
Students at the college	3.0	1.2
Faculty at the college	3.5	1.0
Elected officials in your county	2.7	0.9
Your friends or associates	4.0	0.5
Other administrators in the college	3.7	1.0

Table 4.5 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of All Administrators' Perceptions: Various Groups Chose Same Five Moral Values As They Chose for *Devotion*

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "All of the Time" [Likert Model]</b>		
<i>n</i> =4		
<b>Groups of People</b>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Members of your family	3.8	0.5
Students at the college	2.8	1.0
Faculty at the college	3.5	1.0
Elected officials in your county	2.5	1.0
Your friends or associates	3.8	0.5
Other administrators in the college	3.3	1.0

Table 4.6 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of All Administrators' Perceptions:  
Various Groups Chose Same Five Moral Values As They Chose for  
*Fairness*

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "All of the Time" [Likert Model]</b>		
<i>n</i> =38		
<b>Groups of People</b>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Members of your family	4.1	0.5
Students at the college	2.6	1.2
Faculty at the college	3.5	0.9
Elected officials in your county	2.8	1.0
Your friends or associates	3.9	0.5
Other administrators in the college	3.6	1.0

Table 4.7 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of All Administrators' Perceptions:  
Various Groups Chose Same Five Moral Values As They Chose for  
*Freedom*

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "All of the Time" [Likert Model]</b>		
<i>n</i> =12		
<b>Groups of People</b>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Members of your family	3.8	0.6
Students at the college	2.1	1.4
Faculty at the college	3.5	1.2
Elected officials in your county	2.8	0.6
Your friends or associates	3.9	0.5
Other administrators in the college	3.6	0.7

Table 4.8 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of All Administrators' Perceptions:  
Various Groups Chose Same Five Moral Values As They Chose for  
*Honor*

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "All of the Time" [Likert Model]</b>		
<i>n</i> =17		
<b>Groups of People</b>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Members of your family	3.9	0.6
Students at the college	2.3	1.0
Faculty at the college	3.2	1.0
Elected officials in your county	2.7	0.8
Your friends or associates	3.9	0.5
Other administrators in the college	3.5	0.7

Table 4.9 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of All Administrators' Perceptions:  
Various Groups Chose Same Five Moral Values As They Chose for  
*Humility*

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "All of the Time" [Likert Model]</b>		
<i>n</i> =20		
<b>Groups of People</b>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Members of your family	4.1	0.7
Students at the college	2.7	1.0
Faculty at the college	3.5	0.7
Elected officials in your county	2.8	1.0
Your friends or associates	3.8	0.5
Other administrators in the college	3.7	0.7

Table 4.10 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of All Administrators' Perceptions:  
Various Groups Chose Same Five Moral Values As They Chose for  
*Generosity*

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "All of the Time" [Likert Model]</b>		
<i>n</i> =6		
<b>Groups of People</b>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Members of your family	3.8	0.8
Students at the college	2.8	0.4
Faculty at the college	3.5	0.5
Elected officials in your county	2.8	0.4
Your friends or associates	3.8	0.4
Other administrators in the college	4.0	0.0

Table 4.11 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of All Administrators' Perceptions:  
Various Groups Chose Same Five Moral Values As They Chose for  
*Responsibility*

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "All of the Time" [Likert Model]</b>		
<i>n</i> =39		
<b>Groups of People</b>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Members of your family	4.0	0.5
Students at the college	2.6	1.0
Faculty at the college	3.4	0.9
Elected officials in your county	2.7	1.0
Your friends or associates	3.8	0.5
Other administrators in the college	3.6	0.7

Table 4.12 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of All Administrators' Perceptions:  
 Various Groups Chose Same Five Moral Values As They Chose for  
*Reverence for Life*

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "All of the Time" [Likert Model]</b>		
<i>n</i> =6		
<b>Groups of People</b>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Members of your family	4.2	0.4
Students at the college	1.8	1.5
Faculty at the college	3.3	1.6
Elected officials in your county	2.2	1.2
Your friends or associates	3.8	0.4
Other administrators in the college	3.8	0.4

Table 4.13 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of All Administrators' Perceptions:  
 Various Groups Chose Same Five Moral Values As They Chose for  
*Self Respect*

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "All of the Time" [Likert Model]</b>		
<i>n</i> =18		
<b>Groups of People</b>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Members of your family	4.0	0.6
Students at the college	2.4	1.1
Faculty at the college	3.3	1.0
Elected officials in your county	2.4	0.9
Your friends or associates	3.7	0.5
Other administrators in the college	3.3	1.0

Table 4.14 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of All Administrators' Perceptions:  
 Various Groups Chose Same Five Moral Values As They Chose for  
*Social Harmony*

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "All of the Time" [Likert Model]</b>		
<i>n</i> =5		
<b>Groups of People</b>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Members of your family	4.2	0.8
Students at the college	3.2	0.4
Faculty at the college	3.4	0.5
Elected officials in your county	2.4	0.5
Your friends or associates	3.8	0.4
Other administrators in the college	3.2	1.1

Table 4.15 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of All Administrators' Perceptions:  
Various Groups Chose Same Five Moral Values As They Chose for  
*Tolerance*

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "All of the Time" [Likert Model]</b>		
<i>n</i> =9		
<b>Groups of People</b>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Members of your family	4.2	0.7
Students at the college	2.9	0.6
Faculty at the college	3.3	0.5
Elected officials in your county	2.4	0.5
Your friends or associates	3.7	0.5
Other administrators in the college	3.4	1.0

Table 4.16 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of All Administrators' Perceptions:  
Various Groups Chose Same Five Moral Values As They Chose for  
*Truth*

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "All of the Time" [Likert Model]</b>		
<i>n</i> =34		
<b>Groups of People</b>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Members of your family	4.0	0.5
Students at the college	2.4	1.2
Faculty at the college	2.9	1.1
Elected officials in your county	3.9	0.5
Your friends or associates	3.9	0.5
Other administrators in the college	3.5	0.9

Tables 4.4 through 4.16 indicate the results of how administrators perceived various groups would choose the same five values they chose (survey question 2, part I). Of the choices, none (0%) of the administrators perceived *preservation of nature* as a value the various groups would have chosen. In addition, only one administrator perceived that *respect for elders* would be a moral value that one of the groups would have chosen. These two moral values (*preservation of nature* and *respect for elders*) were considered to be outliers and were omitted from the analysis.

As outlined in Tables 4.4 through 4.16, participants perceived that members of their families would choose the same values they chose. *Compassion* ( $M=4.2$ ,  $SD=.03$ ,  $n=26$ ), *reverence for life* ( $M=4.2$ ,  $SD=0.4$ ,  $n=6$ ), *social harmony* ( $M=4.2$ ,  $SD=0.8$ ,  $n=5$ ), and *tolerance* ( $M=4.2$ ,  $SD=0.7$ ,  $n=9$ ) were the moral values administrators suggested that members of their families would choose all of the time. For students at the college, faculty at the college, and elected officials in their county, administrators had mean scores of 1.8 to 3.9 for each of the values chosen. This indicates that administrators perceived these three groups would never [neutral] choose the same five moral values they chose. Administrators perceived that their friends or associates would choose *compassion* ( $M=4.0$ ,  $SD=0.5$ ,  $n=26$ ) as one of the five moral values they chose. In addition, they also perceived that other administrators in the college would choose *generosity* ( $M=4.0$ ,  $SD=0$ ,  $n=6$ ) as one of the values they chose.

The participants were asked (survey question 3, part I) to indicate which phrases of the following sets were more important: (a) personal financial success **or** working in an environment where ethics are respected; (b) marriage and family life **or** personal financial success; (c) personal financial success **or** a satisfying career; (d) ethics and character development **or** a satisfying career; (e) ethics and character development **or** marriage and family life; and (f) a satisfying career **or** marriage and family life. The results are presented in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17 Frequencies and Percentages for Administrators' Perceptions of Paired Life Importance(s)

	PRESIDENTS		VICE PRESIDENTS		OTHER ADMINISTRATORS	
	<i>n</i> =8		<i>n</i> =30		<i>n</i> =11	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Personal Finance Success</b>	0	0	0	0	2	18.2
<b>Working in an environment where my ethics are respected</b>	8	100	30	100	9	81.8
<b>Marriage and family life</b>	8	100	29	96.7	11	100
<b>Personal financial successes</b>	0	0	2	3.3	0	0
<b>Personal financial success</b>	1	12.5	2	6.7	2	18.2
<b>A satisfying career</b>	7	87.5	28	93.3	9	81.8
<b>Ethics and character development</b>	8	100	27	90	10	91
<b>A satisfying career</b>	0	0	3	10	1	9
<b>Ethics and character development</b>	0	0	14	46.7	4	36.4
<b>Marriage and family life</b>	8	100	16	53.3	7	63.6
<b>A satisfying career</b>	0	0	2	6.7	0	0
<b>Marriage and family life</b>	8	100	28	93.3	11	100

As shown in Table 4.17, the majority of presidents (100%), vice presidents (100%), and other administrators (81.8%) indicated that working in an environment where their ethics are respected was more important than personal financial success. The majority of presidents (100%), vice presidents (96.7%), and other administrators (100%) indicated that marriage and family life was more important than personal financial success; however, they suggested that a satisfying career was more important than personal financial success at 87.5%, 93.3%, and 81.8% respectively. The majority of presidents (100%), vice presidents (90%), and other administrators (91%) indicated that ethics and character development was more important than a satisfying career; however, the majority reported that reported that marriage and family life was more important than

ethics and character development at 100%, 53.3%, and 63.6% respectively. The majority of presidents (100%), vice presidents (93.3%), and other administrators (100%) also indicated that marriage and family life was more important than a satisfying career.

For question 4, part I, participants were asked to rank (1 = most important; 7 = least important) the source they rely/relied on for knowing what is right and wrong. The following choices were given to each participant: (a) what I learned in school; (b) what I've learned at work; (c) what my personal experience in life has taught me; (d) what my religion has taught me; (e) what I have learned from mass media; (f) what I've learned from my friends; and (g) what I've learned from my family. Mean scores were used to examine the different perceptions among the three groups:

Table 4.18 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Administrators' Perceptions of Who/What They Relied for Knowing What is Right and Wrong

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Most Important" to 7 = "Least Important"</b>						
<b>Reliance</b>	Presidents <i>n</i> =8		Vice Presidents <i>n</i> =30		Other Administrators <i>n</i> =11	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
What I learned in school	4.1	1.2	5.2	0.8	4.1	1.2
What I've learned at work	3.9	1.6	4.6	1.2	4.4	1.4
What my personal experience in life has taught me	2.9	1.8	2.4	0.9	2.5	1.0
What my religion has taught me	2.3	1.8	1.8	1.3	2.6	1.8
What I have learned from mass media	6.4	1.2	6.9	0.4	6.9	0.3
What I've learned from my friends	4.8	4.0	4.5	1.0	5.2	1.3
What I've learned from my family	3.1	2.2	2.0	0.9	2.2	1.6

As shown in Table 4.18, presidents and vice presidents ranked *what my religion has taught me* ( $M=2.3$ ,  $SD=1.8$ ,  $n=8$  and  $M=1.8$ ,  $SD=1.3$ ,  $n=30$  respectively) as most

important. Other administrators ranked *what I've learned from my family* ( $M=2.2$ ,  $SD=1.6$ ,  $n=11$ ) as most important. Other similarities existed for the indicator *what I've learned from mass media*. In each of the groups, this indicator was perceived as least important with mean scores ranging from a low 6.4 to a high 6.9. Vice presidents and other administrators similarly perceived *what I've learned from mass media* ( $M=6.9$ ,  $SD=0.4$ ,  $n=30$  and  $M=6.9$ ,  $SD=0.3$ ,  $n=11$  respectively) as being least important in knowing what is right and wrong. In addition, mean scores for *what I've learned from my friends* ranked from a low 4.5 for vice presidents to a high 5.2 for other administrators, thus, indicating that they perceived this indicator as not important. The indicator, *what I've learned from my family* indicated similar rankings (important) for vice presidents and other administrators with mean scores of 2.0 and 2.2 respectively compared to presidents.

In summary, presidents and vice presidents ranked *what my religion has taught me* as being most important with mean scores of 2.3 and 1.8 respectively. Other administrators ranked *what I've learned from my family* ( $M=2.2$ ,  $SD=1.6$ ,  $n=11$ ) as being most important.

The final question in part I of the survey asked participants to give their perceptions (opinions) of who/what is most influential for shaping ethics today. Results are indicated in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Administrators' Perceptions of Who/What is Most Influential for Shaping Ethics Today

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Not Influential at all" to 7 = "Very Influential" Likert Model</b>						
<b>Population</b>	Presidents <i>n</i> =8		Vice Presidents <i>n</i> =30		Other Administrators <i>n</i> =11	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Parents and other family members</b>	4.8	0.5	4.7	0.5	4.5	0.9
<b>Churches</b>	3.6	0.7	4.0	0.9	4.3	0.9
<b>Advice in media (i.e. Dr. Phil, Dear Abby)</b>	2.4	1.2	2.6	0.9	3.4	1.3
<b>Entertainment media</b>	3.0	1.4	3.0	1.4	3.8	1.2
<b>Schools</b>	3.2	0.9	3.3	0.8	3.2	1.5
<b>Friends</b>	4.0	0.8	3.8	0.6	4.0	0.9
<b>Work</b>	3.6	0.5	3.4	0.8	3.4	1.5

For Table 4.19, each group had similar rankings for *parents and family other members* as being influential; however, presidents ranked this population ( $M=4.8$ ,  $SD=0.5$ ,  $n=8$ ) for being influential higher than the other two groups. Other administrators had higher mean scores for *churches* ( $M=4.3$ ,  $SD=0.9$ ,  $n=11$ ), *advice in the media* ( $M=3.4$ ,  $SD=1.3$ ,  $n=11$ ), and *entertainment media* ( $M=3.8$ ,  $SD=1.2$ ,  $n=11$ ) compared to presidents and other administrators in being the most influential. This suggested that administrators had varying perceptions regarding who/what is perceived as being the most influential in shaping ethics today.

Presidents and vice presidents ranked *entertainment media* ( $M=3.0$ ,  $SD=1.4$ ,  $n=8$  and  $M=3.0$ ,  $SD=1.4$ ,  $n=30$  respectively) equally for being most influential in shaping ethics today; whereas, presidents and other administrators equally ranked *schools* ( $M=3.2$ ,  $SD=0.9$ ,  $n=8$  and  $M=3.2$ ,  $SD=1.5$ ,  $n=11$  respectively). In addition, presidents and other administrators similarly ranked *friends* ( $M=4.0$ ,  $SD=0.8$ ,  $n=8$  and  $M=4.0$ ,

$SD=0.9$ ,  $n=11$  respectively) as being most influential. Vice presidents and other administrators similarly ranked *work* ( $M=3.4$ ,  $SD=0.8$ ,  $n=30$  and  $M=3.4$ ,  $SD=1.5$ ,  $n=11$  respectively) for being the most influential in shaping ethics today.

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding ethical decision-making?

This question was answered in part II of the survey instrument. Three cases were presented to the participants in which they were asked to respond to the ethical approach they would follow to dilute the situation. Each case contained three items (questions) the participants had to answer.

### Case One

The following summarizes Case One:

**CASE ONE:** A proposed superstore is causing controversy in your community. Some community members are in favor of the project, others are against it. Those in favor point out that a superstore will quickly bring much needed revenue to the community. Those opposing the project point out that in the long run, it will result in drastically increased traffic to the area, and an inevitable increase in crime. You are a member of the town council and must vote in favor of or against the project.

#### *Case One, Item 1*

Table 4.20 shows the frequencies and percentages for the respondents' choices. Respondents were asked to select a choice in response to their behavior to address the scenario in the vignette.

Table 4.20 Frequencies and Percentages for Case 1, Item 1

ACTION CHOICE	PRESIDENTS		VICE PRESIDENTS		OTHER ADMINISTRATORS	
	<i>n</i> =8		<i>n</i> =30		<i>n</i> =11	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Vote against the superstore	0	0	3	10	2	18.2
Vote in favor of the superstore	4	50	10	33.3	4	36.4
Propose that the city government regulate the store's traffic and tax the store to pay for the roads and police.	3	37.5	17	56.7	5	45.4
Did not Answer	1	12.5	0	0	0	0

Table 4.20 indicated that the majority (50%) of presidents would choose to vote in favor of the superstore; however, the majority (56.7%) of vice presidents and other administrators (45.4%) would choose the action to propose that the city government regulate the store's traffic, as well as tax the store to pay for the roads and police.

***Case One, Item 2***

Table 4.21 indicates the frequencies and percentages for the respondents' choices. Respondents were asked to select a choice in response to their behavior to address the scenario in the vignette.

Table 4.21 Frequencies and Percentages for Case 1, Item 2

ACTION CHOICE	PRESIDENTS		VICE PRESIDENTS		OTHER ADMINISTRATORS	
	<i>n</i> =8		<i>n</i> =30		<i>n</i> =11	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
This decision would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people	6	75	30	100	11	100
This decision is what everyone should do in such a situation, regardless of the consequences.	0	0	0	0	0	0
I would want to be treated this way if I were building a store.	1	12.5	0	0	0	0
Did not Answer	1	12.5	0	0	0	0

Table 4.21 indicated that administrator perceptions were similar according to responses to this question. The majority of each of the groups, 75% for presidents and 100% for both vice Presidents and other administrators, responded that the decision they chose (in question 1) would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people.

### ***Case One, Item 3***

Table 4.22 indicates the frequencies and percentages for the respondents' choices. Respondents were asked to select a choice in response to their behavior to address the scenario in the vignette.

Table 4.22 Frequencies and Percentages for Case 1, Item 3

ACTION CHOICE	PRESIDENTS		VICE PRESIDENTS		OTHER ADMINISTRATORS	
	<i>n</i> =8		<i>n</i> =30		<i>n</i> =11	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Vote against the superstore	0	0	3	10	2	18.2
Vote in favor of the superstore	5	62.5	20	66.7	5	45.4
Propose that the city government regulate the store's traffic and tax the store to pay for the roads and police.	2	25	7	23.3	4	36.4
Did not Answer	1	12.5	0	0	0	0

Table 4.22 indicated that there the majority (62.5%) of presidents, vice presidents (66.7%), and other administrators (45.4%) agreed that they would vote in favor of the superstore. As a supplementary notation, a proportionally equal percentage of presidents (25%) and vice presidents (23.3%) chose that they would propose that the city government regulate the state's traffic, as well as tax the store to pay for the roads and police.

### Case Two

The following summarizes Case Two:

**CASE TWO:** You are employed by a company that is replacing many jobs with computerized systems. Even though you are not at risk, fellow employees in your department are losing their jobs. You discover that a good friend of yours is part of a group that is intentionally damaging the computer system in order to try to save jobs.

**Case Two, Item 1**

Table 4.23 shows the frequencies and percentages for the respondents' choices. Respondents were asked to select a choice in response to their behavior to address the scenario in the vignette.

Table 4.23 Frequencies and Percentages for Case 2, Item 1

ACTION CHOICE	PRESIDENTS <i>n</i> =8		VICE PRESIDENTS <i>n</i> =30		OTHER ADMINISTRATORS <i>n</i> =11	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Tell your friend to confess or you will inform management yourself	5	62.5	19	63.3	9	81.8
Tell management that sabotage is taking place, but without exposing your friend.	3	37.5	10	33.3	2	18.2
Take steps to hide evidence of your friend's guilt.	0	0	0	0	0	0
Do nothing.	0	0	1	3.3	0	0

Table 4.23 indicated that the majority (62.5%) of presidents, vice presidents (63.3%), and other administrators (81.8%) suggested that they would tell their friend to confess or they would inform management. None (0%) of the groups suggested that they would take steps to hide evidence of their friend's guilt.

**Case Two, Item 2**

Table 4.24 shows the frequencies and percentages for the respondents' choices. Respondents were asked to select a choice in response to their behavior to address the scenario in the vignette.

Table 4.24 Frequencies and Percentages for Case 2, Item 2

ACTION CHOICE	PRESIDENTS		VICE PRESIDENTS		OTHER ADMINISTRATORS	
	<i>n</i> =8		<i>n</i> =30		<i>n</i> =11	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
The decision would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people.	3	37.5	7	23.3	6	54.5
This decision is what everyone should do in a situation, regardless of the consequences	5	62.5	21	70	3	27.3
I would want to be treated this way if I broke the rules at work.	0	0	2	6.7	2	18.2

Table 4.24 indicated that the majority (62.5%) of presidents and vice presidents (70%) chose that the action they chose in question 1 is what everyone should do in that situation regardless of the consequences. However, the majority (54.5%) assumed that the decision they chose in question 1 would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people.

***Case Two, Item 3***

Table 4.25 shows the frequencies and percentages for the respondents' choices. Respondents were asked to select a choice in response to their behavior to address the scenario in the vignette.

Table 4.25 Frequencies and Percentages for Case 2, Item 3

ACTION CHOICE	PRESIDENTS		VICE PRESIDENTS		OTHER ADMINISTRATORS	
	<i>n</i> =8		<i>n</i> =30		<i>n</i> =11	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Tell your friend to confess or you will inform management yourself	1	12.5	0	0	5	45.4
Tell management that sabotage is taking place, but without exposing your friend.	2	25	16	53.3	2	18.2
Take steps to hide evidence of your friend's guilt.	1	12.5	1	3.3	0	0
Do nothing.	4	50	13	43.3	4	36.4

Table 4.25 indicated that the majority (50%) of presidents chose to do nothing; the majority (53.3%) of vice presidents chose to tell management that sabotage is taking place, but without exposing their friend; and the majority (45.4%) of other administrators chose to tell their friend to confess or they would inform management. Overall, only 4% of the overall participant responses' chose to hide evidence of their friend's guilt, which could be defined as unethical.

### Case Three

The following summarizes Case Three:

**CASE THREE:** Earl, who is a senior employee in your department, is eventually going to lose his job, but no one has told him. When Earl is on a business trip, the department has you change Earl's voice mail, move everything out of his office, and change the name on the parking spot. The director tells you he will call Earl and let him know what has taken place. However, before that happens, Earl calls you. He can't get into his voicemail and wants you to tell him why.

**Case Three, Item 1**

Table 4.26 shows the frequencies and percentages for the respondents' choices. Respondents were asked to select a choice in response to their behavior to address the scenario in the vignette.

Table 4.26 Frequencies and Percentages for Case 3, Item 1

ACTION CHOICE	PRESIDENTS		VICE PRESIDENTS		OTHER ADMINISTRATORS	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Tell Earl he has been fired	4	50	9	30	1	9.1
Tell Earl nothing, as your boss told you	4	50	18	60	9	81.8
Invent an explanation (lie) that will calm Earl without letting on that he had been fired.	0	0	2	6.7	1	9.1
Did not Answer	0	0	1	3.3	0	0

Table 4.26 indicated that there was an equal percentage (50%) of presidents who chose that they would either (a) tell Earl he has been fired or (b) tell Earl nothing, as the boss told them. On the other hand, the majority (60% and 81.8% respectively) of both vice presidents and other administrators chose that they would tell Earl nothing, as the boss told them. A notable caveat is that only 6.1% of the participants chose that they would invent a lie that would calm Earl without letting on that he had been fired.

**Case Three, Item 2**

Table 4.27 shows the frequencies and percentages for the respondents' choices. Respondents were asked to select a choice in response to their behavior to address the scenario in the vignette.

Table 4.27 Frequencies and Percentages for Case 3, Item 2

ACTION CHOICE	PRESIDENTS		VICE PRESIDENTS		OTHER ADMINISTRATORS	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
This decision would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people.	2	25	5	16.7	6	54.5
This decision is what everyone should do in such a situation regardless of the consequences	2	25	14	46.6	3	27.3
I would want to be treated this way if I were Earl.	4	50	11	36.7	2	18.2
Did not Answer	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4.27 2 indicated that the majority (50%) of presidents suggested that the reason for their answer in question 1 was they would want to be treated the same way if they were Earl. The majority (46.6%) of vice presidents chose the answer in question 1 because the decision is what everyone should do in such a situation regardless of the consequences. The majority (54.5%) of other administrators suggested that the decision they chose in question 1 would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people.

**Case Three, Item 3**

Table 4.28 shows the frequencies and percentages for the respondents' choices. Respondents were asked to select a choice in response to their behavior to address the scenario in the vignette.

Table 4.28 Frequencies and Percentages for Case 3, Item 3

ACTION CHOICE	PRESIDENTS		VICE PRESIDENTS		OTHER ADMINISTRATORS	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Tell Earl he has been fired	2	25	7	23.3	2	18.2
Tell Earl nothing, as your boss told you	2	25	13	43.3	4	36.4
Invent an explanation (lie) that will calm Earl without letting on that he had been fired.	3	37.5	10	33.3	5	45.4
Did not Answer	1	12.5	0	0	0	0

For Table 4.28 the majority (37.5%) of presidents and the majority (36.4%) of other administrators suggested that members of their community would choose to invent a lie that would calm Earl without letting on that he had been fired. However, the majority (43.3%) of vice presidents suggested that members of their community would choose to tell Earl nothing, as the boss told them.

Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding professional values?

In response to the research question, a Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strong agree) was used to determine how much the participants agreed or disagreed with the given statements. These statements described ethical values as they related to the

respondents' respective organizations (community colleges). Using descriptive statistics (mean scores and standard deviations), the following results (Table 4.29) were found for each statement.

Table 4.29 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Administrators' Perceptions of Ethical Values in Their Organizations

<b>Responses ranged from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 5 = "Strongly Agree" [Likert Model]</b>						
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Presidents n=8</b>		<b>Vice Presidents n=30</b>		<b>Other Administrators n=11</b>	
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
A) Ten years from now, if I were asked to choose my most important morals or values, my choices would probably be much different from today's choices	2.6	1.8	2.2	1.6	1.7	1.3
B) Community college students are very concerned about ethics	2.9	1.0	2.8	0.8	3.2	0.6
C) The values of other administrators at my college have changed a lot since I first came here	2.9	1.6	2.5	1.4	2.3	1.2
D) Most people's values change over time in response to events in their lives	3.1	1.1	3.0	1.1	3.1	1.6
E) Faculty members at my college know what is considered ethical behavior within and outside the college	4.0	1.4	4.2	0.6	3.5	1.4

Table 4.29 (continued)

F) Other administrators at my college know what is considered ethical behavior within and outside the college	4.1	1.4	4.3	0.5	3.6	1.4
G) My community college should play a role in educating the students about ethics	4.2	1.0	4.0	0.8	4.5	0.5
H) My community college ought to help students develop values	4.0	1.7	4.1	0.9	4.5	0.7
Table 4.29 (continued)						
I) We should have yearly in service ethics trainings among administrators, faculty, and staff within my community college	3.8	0.7	3.7	1.3	4.1	0.8

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For Table 4.29, mean scores for *statement a* ranged from a low 1.7 for other administrators to 2.6 for presidents in agreeing with the statement. Mean scores were low among the three groups which suggested that, in essence, they disagreed with this statement regarding them being asked, in ten years from now, if their choices for most important values would be different.

For *statement b*, mean scores ranged from 2.8 for vice presidents to 3.2 for other administrators. This indicated that other administrators agreed more with this statement compared to the other two groups regarding community college students being very concerned about ethics.

For *statement c*, mean scores ranged from 2.3 for other administrators to 2.9 for presidents. Each group had low mean scores which suggested that they disagreed with

this statement regarding the values of other administrators having changed since they first started at the college.

For *statement d*, presidents and other administrators similarly ranked this statement ( $M=3.1$ ,  $SD=1.1$ ,  $n=8$  and  $M=3.1$ ,  $SD=1.6$ ,  $n=11$  respectively). Vice presidents indicated a similar mean score of 3.0. This suggested that the administrators had similar perceptions [slightly agreeing] to this statement regarding most people's values changing over time in response to events in their lives.

For *statement e*, mean scores ranged from 3.5 for other administrators to 4.2 for vice presidents. Mean scores for presidents and vice presidents suggested that they agreed with this statement regarding faculty members at the college knowing what is considered ethical behavior within and outside the college.

For *statement f*, mean scores ranged from 3.6 for other administrators to 4.3 for vice presidents. This suggested that vice presidents strongly agreed with this statement compared to other administrators who moderately agreed that other administrators at the college know what is considered ethical behavior within and outside of their institution.

For *statement g*, each group indicated high mean scores ranging from 4.0 for vice presidents to 4.5 for other administrators. This suggested that each of the groups agreed with this statement regarding their perception of their community college playing a role in educating students about ethics.

Similar to *statement g*, mean scores for *statement h* indicated high mean scores for how presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators agreed to the given statements. For this statement, other administrators had a high mean score of 4.5; presidents and vice presidents had mean scores of 4.0 and 4.1 respectively. This statement was concerned

with administrators' perceptions regarding the community college helping students develop values.

For *statement i*, mean scores ranged from 4.1 for other administrators to 3.7 for vice presidents. This indicated that other administrators agreed more with this statement regarding whether the college should have yearly in-service ethics trainings among administrators, faculty, and staff. Presidents and vice presidents moderately agreed with the statement.

In summary, *statement g* ("my community college should play a role in educating the students about ethics") and *statement h* ("my community college ought to help students develop values") indicated that each group agreed with these statements. In addition, mean scores indicated that the administrators disagreed most with *statement a*.

Research Question 4: What are the perceptions of Mississippi community college administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators) regarding organizational values?

Transformational leadership strategies rely on persuasion, idealism, and intellectual excitement, while motivating employees through values, symbols, (Lashway 1996), vision, trust-building, continuous learning, and long-term sustainability (Sama & Shoaf, 2008). Transactional leadership follows a thorough series of negotiated steps (Calabrese, 2003). At the same time, transactional leaders engage in contingent rewards and management-by-exception based upon followers carrying out their roles and reaching their objectives (Johnson, 2005). Participants were given the definition of these two terms, transformational and transactional leaders, and were asked to choose what type of

leader they considered themselves. This question produced the following results as shown in Table 4.30.

Table 4.30 Administrators' Perceptions of Leadership Styles: Transformational or Transactional Leader

	<b>Presidents <i>n</i>=8</b>		<b>Vice Presidents <i>n</i>=30</b>		<b>Other Administrators <i>n</i>=11</b>	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Transformational	7	87.5	27	90	8	72.8
Transactional	1	12.5	3	10	3	27.2
Did Not Answer	--		--		--	

The majority (presidents, 87.5%; vice presidents, 90%; and other administrators, 72.8%) of each of the three groups suggested that they are transformational leaders. According to the definition given in the survey tool, a transformational leader is one who is defined as a leader “who empowers workers to achieve and articulate the vision of the organization and its mission” (Al-Mailam, 2004). The majority of the administrators suggested that they believe they exhibited these characteristics as a transformational leader.

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Summary**

This study was conducted to examine the responses of Mississippi community college administrators as they related to ethical decision-making and moral reasoning within their institutions. The survey tool consisted of five areas of emphasis by which the administrators were given questions. The five areas included the following: (a) moral values, (b) ethical decision-making, (c) professional values, (d) organizational values, and (e) background and demographics.

Analysis of data indicated that perceptions in moral values among community college administrators (research question 1) were diverse. In particular, survey question 1, relating to most important values (Table 4.2), indicated that the majority (83%) of vice presidents perceived *responsibility* as the most important value; whereas, *fairness* (87.5%), was the most important value to presidents. Even though *responsibility* was considered important among several presidents and other administrators, the variety in responses may suggest that a combination of values are also important for effectiveness in ethical leadership and bringing people together to define tasks and take individual responsibility (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Mean scores varied for participants' perceptions regarding groups making decisions based on the same five moral values they chose. Based on the five moral values administrators chose, members of their families indicated the highest mean scores for *compassion* ( $M=4.2$ ,  $SD=.03$ ,  $n=26$ ), *reverence for life* ( $M=4.2$ ,  $SD=0.4$ ,  $n=6$ ), *social harmony*, ( $M=4.2$ ,  $SD=0.8$ ,  $n=5$ ), and *tolerance* ( $M=4.2$ ,  $SD=0.7$ ,  $n=9$ ). For students at the college, faculty at the college, and elected officials in their county, administrators indicated mean scores of 1.8 to 3.9 for each of the values chosen. In addition, administrators perceived that their friends or associates would choose *compassion* ( $M=4.0$ ,  $SD=0.5$ ,  $n=26$ ) and other administrators would choose *generosity* ( $M=4.0$ ,  $SD=0$ ,  $n=6$ ) as a moral value they chose.

For survey question 3 in part I, the researcher asked participants to indicate which pairs of subjects were more important than the other. The choices included (a) personal financial success **or** working in an environment where ethics are respected; (b) marriage and family life **or** personal financial success; (c) personal financial success **or** a satisfying career; (d) ethics and character development **or** a satisfying career; (e) ethics and character development **or** marriage and family life; and (f) a satisfying career **or** marriage and family life. Results indicated that presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators reported that marriage and family life are more important than personal finances at 100%, 100%, and 81.8% respectively. The majority of presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators indicated that working in an environment where their ethics are respected was more important than personal financial success at 100%, 100%, and 81.8% respectively. In addition, the majority of presidents (100%), vice presidents (96.7%), and other administrators (100%) indicated that marriage and family life was

more important than personal financial success and also a satisfying career was more important than personal financial success at 87.5%, 93.3%, and 81.8% respectively. The majority of presidents (100%), vice presidents (90%), and other administrators (91%) indicated that ethics and character development was more important than a satisfying career; however, the majority reported that reported that marriage and family life was more important than ethics and character development at 100%, 53.3%, and 63.6% respectively. The majority of presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators also indicated that marriage and family life was more important than a satisfying career at 100%, 93.3%, and 100% respectively.

Survey question 4 (part I) asked participants to rank from 1 (most important) to 7 (least important) whom or what they relied for knowing and/or learning what is right and wrong. Among administrator perceptions, presidents and vice presidents ranked *what my religion has taught me* as being most important with mean scores of 2.3 and 1.8 respectively. Other administrators ranked *what I've learned from my family* ( $M=2.2$ ,  $SD=1.6$ ,  $n=11$ ) as being most important. Similar to survey question 4, survey question 5 asked participants' perceptions (opinions) of who/what is most influential for shaping ethics today. A ranking of 1 indicated "not influential at all" and a ranking of 5 indicated "very influential." Presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators perceived *parents and other family members* as being the most influential with mean scores of 4.8, 4.7, and 4.5 respectively. In addition, other administrators had higher mean scores for *churches* (4.3), *advice in the media* (3.4), and *entertainment media* (3.8) compared to presidents (3.6, 2.4, and 3.0 respectively) and other administrators (4.0, 2.6, and 3.0 respectively) in being the most influential.

To answer research question 2, the participants were presented with three cases whereby they had to provide their opinions on how to resolve each dilemma. Case One examined political ethical decision-making. Case Two examined professional ethical decision-making, and Case Three examined personal ethical decision-making. There were varying perceptions (opinions) among the participants' responses to Case Three, question 3, which represented the community's views on the issue. Administrators' perceptions for question 3 indicated that the majority of presidents (37.5%) and other administrators (45.4%) suggested that their community would invent an explanation (lie) that would calm Earl. This case combined personal and workplace ethics and indirectly portrayed the caveats of ethics through loyalty. It should be noted that if the participants were placed in these "real life" situations, their responses may change accordingly. Overall, the results suggested that a discourse between actual decision-making behaviors and what communities' perceptions are may exist.

For research question 3, administrator perceptions were examined for participants' responses regarding professional values. Using mean scores and standard deviations, participants were asked how they agreed (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) with nine statements relating to professional values. Only *statement g* ("my community college should play a role in educating the students about ethics") and *statement h* ("my community college ought to help students develop values") indicated similar rankings among each of the groups regarding their perceptions of ethical values within their organizations. For *statement g*, the mean scores for presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators were 4.2, 4.0, and 4.5 respectively indicating each group agreed with this statement regarding their community college playing a role in the

educating the students about ethics. For *statement h*, regarding the administrators' community colleges helping students develop values, the mean scores for presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators were 4.0, 4.1, and 4.5 respectively.

Part IV (organizational values) of the survey instrument answered research question 4. Participants were asked if they considered themselves to be a transformational or transactional leader. According to Sama & Shoaf (2008), ethical leaders inspire others in organizations to behave in [similar] ethical ways as indicated by their individual leadership styles. To this end, vice presidents and other community college administrators should have input in the (college) president's decision-making process to provide a more straightforward assessment of all aspects of an issue (Hill, 2004). The resulting decisions made may rest upon the administrators' practice of transformational or transactional leadership. In turn, these leadership types can lead to the success or failure of the institution's organizational structure if careful observatory and evaluative measures are not rendered within the institutions. In this study, the majority (87.5%) of presidents, vice presidents (90%), and other administrators (72.8%) perceived that they are transformational leaders. Even though 27.2% of other administrators perceived themselves to be transactional leaders, there is a possibility that they too, can transform organizations by raising the level of morality and increase the ethical capacity of followers (Johnson, 2005).

### **Research Findings**

This study is useful to future community college administrators because its results may be disseminated to show factors that may be examined internally for developing a

desirable ethical climate within an organization. In general, the findings of this study indicated that community college administrators had varied perceptions about moral, professional, and organizational values and ethical decision-making.

The first research question in this study asked what the perceptions of [Mississippi] community college administrators are regarding moral values. Based on the study's results, the administrators suggested that fairness, truth, and responsibility were important moral values. In regard to certain groups within their communities choosing the same values which they chose, the administrators' moral values were similar (mean score 4.2) according to members of their families regarding *compassion, reverence for life, social harmony, and tolerance*. In addition, administrators suggested that working in an environment where their ethics are respected, marriage and family life, a satisfying career, and ethics and character development were most important throughout life. The administrators also indicated that they relied on religion and family for knowing what is right and wrong. In regards to who/what was most influential for shaping ethics today, the administrators similarly agreed that their parents and other family members were the most influential.

The second research question (research question 2) asked what the perceptions of the administrators are regarding ethical decision making. In regard to each vignette, the last case suggested that the administrators had varying opinions regarding their respective communities. Interestingly, the majority suggested that their communities would "tell Earl nothing" or "invent an explanation (lie) that will calm Earl without letting on that he had been fired." This suggested that the administrators perceived their communities will solve ethical dilemmas in manners not similar to them.

The third research questions asked what the perceptions of the administrators are regarding their professional values. The analysis suggested that *statement g* (my community college should play a role in educating the students about ethics) and *statement h* (my community college ought to help students develop values) indicated high mean scores for presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators suggesting that they agreed to the given statements. In essence, in regard to ethical values within their organizations, the administrators perceived that students should not only be educated about ethics, but also assisted [by the college] to help them develop values.

The final question (research question 4) asked what the perceptions of community college administrators are regarding organizational values. Based on administrator perceptions, the majority of presidents, vice presidents, and other administrators indicated that they were transformational leaders. This suggests that they afford subordinates the opportunity to conduct tasks through motivation, trust, and continuous learning (Lashway 1996; Sama & Shoaf, 2008).

### **Conclusions**

The following conclusions are based on the analyses and results conducted in this study. Even though this study was adapted for community college administrators in Mississippi, its conclusions may be applicable to other educational entities as well.

Conclusion 1: The most important moral values for community college administrators in Mississippi according to the research are truth, fairness, and responsibility. In regards to moral values, they suggested that members of their families

would choose the same values which they chose compared to other groups within their communities.

Conclusion 2: Community college administrators in Mississippi have differing opinions regarding ethical dilemmas. In addition, they indicated that their communities will not have the same solutions based upon their perceptions of what would be most ethical in the situations.

Conclusion 3: Community college administrators suggested that their community colleges should aid students in developing their values and in learning about ethics.

Conclusion 4: The majority of the community college leaders in Mississippi are transformational leaders, suggesting that they are able to adapt their organization to fit its mission for their faculty, staff, community affiliates, and constituents.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

The results of this study are indicative for ethical decision and moral reasoning among present and future community college leaders in Mississippi. The study can provide avenues for expanding institutional paradigms to develop a more inclusive ethical climate for faculty, staff, and students by comparing morals, values, and ethical decision making behaviors among the leaders of the institutions. For practical purposes, the following suggestions are recommended for community college leaders in Mississippi:

1. Assess ethical practices of all administrators within the community college
2. Implement ethical principles and standards to create an ethically friendly environment

3. Assess the causal ethical behaviors and practices of faculty, staff, and students
4. Implement annual mandatory ethics trainings and in-services for faculty and staff
5. Introduce a morals and values assessment upon hiring new staff and administrators
6. Evaluate past and present leadership ethics within Mississippi community colleges
7. Establish best practice models and implement effective policies and procedures to address ethical dilemmas.

Even though the aforementioned suggestions have not been proven to have an effect on organizational ethics, Mississippi community colleges may take assertive action steps geared toward improving the ethics and other relating factors within their institutions. This may not be accomplished directly through behavior changes, but rather through periodic assessments and in services to encourage ethical behavior and conduct among all affiliates of the institution.

### *Challenges and Inferences*

Historical research and relative studies in ethics suggested that individual behavior may be the most difficult, if not impossible, to transform. For that matter, institutional leaders may forego organizational changes to counteract in developing ethical accountability standards. Changing organizational ethics paints a global picture for leaders to transform the institution, which may compel ethical behavior and actions. In other words, the ethical culture and environment will be changed, thus, incorporating

individual changes for conforming to standards set forth by administrators of the institutions. In community colleges, most standards and principles are adopted by a Board. Through acclimated efforts, the Board may be able to assist administrators in re-defining ethical consistency within the organization; however, the challenges may still exist for sustaining such efforts and ensuring that the institutional ethics are not exploited.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The need exists for more large scale studies incorporating morals, values, ethics, and ethical decision-making. Even though studies have been conducted regarding ethical decision-making, more generalized studies may be conducted to include ethical leadership in education. The present study did not link descriptive data among the participants; however, larger demographic data could produce more intensity within the study without delimiting external occurrences. For example, researchers may administer similar studies locally, regionally, or nationally. These studies may be developed to compare responses of administrators to staff, instructors to students, board members to administrators, and/or a combination of each. Studies such as these or in relation to the context may prove useful for researchers, especially if future studies examine correlations within professional and organizational morals, ethics, and values regardless of the type of educational entity (i.e., K-12, proprietary, university).

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APPENDIX A  
MSU IRB APPROVAL



# Mississippi State UNIVERSITY

Office of Regulatory Compliance

Post Office Box 6223

Mississippi State, MS 39762

Compliance Division  
Administrative Offices  
Animal Care and Use (IACUC)  
Human Research Protection  
Program (IRB)  
1207 Hwy 182 West  
Starkville, MS 39759  
(662) 325-3496 - fax

Safety Division  
Biosafety (IBC)  
Radiation Safety  
Hazardous Waste  
Chemical & Lab Safety  
70 Morgan Avenue  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
(662) 325-8776 - fax

<http://www.orc.msstate.edu>  
[compliance@research.msstate.edu](mailto:compliance@research.msstate.edu)  
(662) 325-3294

February 5, 2009

Vernesia Wilson  
1013 Laurel Drive  
Flowood, MS 39232

RE: IRB Study #08-307: Examining the Moral Reasoning and Ethical Decision Making Among Community College Vice Presidents and Presidents in Mississippi

Dear Ms. Wilson:

The above referenced project was reviewed and approved via administrative review on 2/5/2009 in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). Continuing review is not necessary for this project. However, any modification to the project must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project. The IRB reserves the right, at anytime during the project period, to observe you and the additional researchers on this project.

**Please note that the MSU IRB is in the process of seeking accreditation for our human subjects protection program. As a result of these efforts, you will likely notice many changes in the IRB's policies and procedures in the coming months. These changes will be posted online at <http://www.orc.msstate.edu/human/aahrpp.php>.**

Please refer to your IRB number (#08-307) 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 [cwilliams@research.msstate.edu](mailto:cwilliams@research.msstate.edu) or call 662-325-5220.

Sincerely,

Christine Williams  
IRB Compliance Administrator

cc: Laura Crittenden

APPENDIX B  
PERMISSION STATEMENT FROM ORIGINATORS  
OF SURVEY—O'NEIL AND ASSOCIATES

# PERMISSION EMAIL STATEMENT FROM O'NEIL

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Top of Form

[Delete](#) | [Reply](#) | [Reply to All](#) | [Forward](#) | [Redirect](#) | [Blacklist](#) | [Message](#) | [Back to INBOX](#)  
[Source](#) | [Save as](#) | [Print](#) 

**Date:** Wed, 25 Oct 2006 13:39:28 -0500

**From:** "[Wilson, Vernesia](#)" <[Vernesia.Wilson@msdh.state.ms.us](mailto:Vernesia.Wilson@msdh.state.ms.us)>

**To:** "[vernwilson@bellsouth.net](mailto:vernwilson@bellsouth.net)" <[vernwilson@bellsouth.net](mailto:vernwilson@bellsouth.net)>, "[vw34@msstate.edu](mailto:vw34@msstate.edu)" <[vw34@msstate.edu](mailto:vw34@msstate.edu)>

**Subject:** FW: Ethics Survey

Vernesia Wilson, MPH  
Branch Director II  
PRAMS Program - MS Dept. of Health  
Phone (601) 576-7135  
Fax (601) 576-8168

"What we are is God's gift to us. What we become is our gift to God."  
~Eleanor Powell

-----Original Message-----

From: Mike O'Neil [<mailto:oneil@oneilresearch.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2006 12:16 PM

To: dawn@oneilresearch.com

Cc: Wilson, Vernesia

Subject: FW: Ethics Survey

Dawn

Can we send her all the MCCD ethics surveys.....a presume the blank ques and the marginals. Might as well include the full reports as well.

Mike

---

From: Wilson, Vernesia [mailto:[Vernesia.Wilson@msdh.state.ms.us](mailto:Vernesia.Wilson@msdh.state.ms.us)]  
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2006 9:44 AM  
To: 'Mike O'Neil'  
Subject: RE: Ethics Survey

Thanks Dr. O'Neil. I will most definitely give full acknowledgment to your organization.

I would like a copy or sample of an ethics survey that is tailored to college/university students. My major professor has stated that we can use an instrument that has been previously tested if we are able to obtain one. The title of my dissertation is "Addressing the Need to Implement Ethics as a Major: Perceptions of College and University Students." After my dissertation is completed/signed, etc, your firm is welcomed to a free copy. Hopefully, I can have everything finished no later than the Summer of 2008.

I thank you again for your assistance in this effort.

Vernesia Wilson, MPH  
Branch Director II  
PRAMS Program - MS Dept. of Health  
Phone (601) 576-7135  
Fax (601) 576-8168

"What we are is God's gift to us. What we become is our gift to God."  
~Eleanor Powell

-----Original Message-----

From: Mike O'Neil [mailto:[oneil@oneilresearch.com](mailto:oneil@oneilresearch.com)]  
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2006 11:32 AM  
To: Wilson, Vernesia  
Subject: RE: Ethics Survey

We would expect full acknowledgment and citation in anything you do.

No fees. Best Wishes. Let us know what you would like from us.

Also, we have done major national surveys for the Ethics Resource Center  
[www.ethics.org](http://www.ethics.org) <<http://www.ethics.org>>

You might want to contact them as well.

Mike O'Neil

.

<<http://www.oneilresearch.com/>>

---

From: Wilson, Vernesia [mailto:[Vernesia.Wilson@msdh.state.ms.us](mailto:Vernesia.Wilson@msdh.state.ms.us)]  
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2006 6:06 AM  
To: 'oneil@oneilresearch.com'  
Cc: 'info@oneilresearch.com'  
Subject: RE: Ethics Survey

Hi Dr. O'Neil:

I am currently a PhD student at Mississippi State University majoring in Community College Leadership. I am in the preparation stages for writing my dissertation, in which will focus on ethics. My focus is to prove that there is a major need for an Ethics Curriculum in our Colleges and Universities across the US.

There was a study that was done by your firm and Maricopa Community College that struck my interest. My question is, what are your fees and/or processes for a student who wants to use one of your survey instruments for dissertation purposes?

Vernesia Wilson, MPH  
Branch Director II  
PRAMS Program - MS Dept. of Health  
Phone (601) 576-7135  
Fax (601) 576-8168

"What we are is God's gift to us. What we become is our gift to God."  
~Eleanor Powell

APPENDIX C  
PERMISSION LETTER FROM PRESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION  
MISSISSIPPI STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY  
AND JUNIOR COLLEGES



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

February 2, 2009

Ms. Vernesia Wilson  
1013 Laurel Drive  
Flowood, MS 39232

Dear Ms. Wilson:

Thank you for providing the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior College Presidents with an overview of your dissertation proposal at their meeting on January 27, 2009. Members of the association have approved your dissertation study and agreed to participate in data collection.

We look forward to working with you in the completion of your educational goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Willis H. Lott'.

Willis H. Lott, Ed.D.

grb

APPENDIX D  
REQUEST LETTER FOR STUDY PARTICIPATION

March 1, 2009

**TO: All Campus Presidents and Vice Presidents**

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student enrolled in a PhD program in Community College Leadership offered through Mississippi State University (MSU). Like many of the students in the program, I am planning to conduct original research to satisfy the graduation requirements of the program.

My proposal, entitled, “**EXAMINING THE MORAL REASONING AND ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE VICE PRESIDENTS AND PRESIDENTS IN MISSISSIPPI**” will seek to research the differences in ethics-related responses among community college administrators in Mississippi. I propose to use the results from the study not only for graduation purposes, but also for presentation purposes, which may include Mississippi community colleges, universities, and/or public K-12 schools.

I need your help. Please fill out the following survey and return it in the enclosed self addressed stamped envelope by March 31, 2009. All of your answers and responses are strictly confidential and will only be used for analytical purposes. Even though the survey is not mandatory, it will assist in assuring that my research will prove to be reliable and valid to my advisors and dissertation committee at MSU in essence of receiving an applicable number of participants. 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, and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

Once the dissertation is complete, signed, and filed through MSU’s library services, upon your request, I will be happy to provide you with the findings/results of the research.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please feel free to contact me at 601-503-5706 or by email at [yw34@msstate.edu](mailto:yw34@msstate.edu). You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Laura Crittenden at 662-325-9092 or by email at [LCrittenden@aoce.msstate.edu](mailto:LCrittenden@aoce.msstate.edu). In addition, if you have any questions relating to Institutional Review Board (IRB) Regulations, please contact the MSU IRB Office at 662-325-5220.

Thanking you in advance for your time and consideration in this project.

Sincerely,



Vernesia Wilson, MPH  
Doctoral Student, MSU

ENC: Survey Tool  
Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope

Approval Letter (president's Association)

APPENDIX E  
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

# Survey Introduction

**This survey contains questions about morals, values, ethics, and the basis upon which individuals make ethical decisions. Your response to the survey is important. For each item in the survey, please follow the instructions given for each and answer according to your corresponding views.**

**The survey takes about 20 minutes to complete.**

**After completing the survey, please return it in the self-addressed stamped envelope by March 31, 2009.**

*Please check your current occupation:*

Instructor    Dean    Vice President    President    Other

**THANK YOU FOR ASSISTING IN THIS EFFORT!**

[Mississippi State University]  
Doctoral Student Survey

*Note: Permission to use questionnaire granted by O'Neil and Associates in Tempe, Arizona. [www.oneilresearch.com](http://www.oneilresearch.com)*

## PART I – MORAL VALUES

1. **Below is a list of 15 moral values. Please look at the list carefully and place a check (✓) next to the FIVE values that are most important to you in your daily life.**

- Compassion
- Devotion
- Fairness
- Freedom
- Honor
- Humility
- Generosity
- Preservation of Nature
- Respect for Elders
- Responsibility
- Reverence for Life
- Self-respect
- Social Harmony
- Tolerance
- Truth

**After choosing the five values you find most important to you, please circle the ONE value that you think is the most important of all from the list.**

2. Using the scale below, rank the following question by circling the corresponding number in each category:  
**How often do you think the decisions made by each of the groups of people listed below are based on the same five values you selected in number 1?**

	Never				All of time
a. Members of your family	1	2	3	4	5
b. Students at the college	1	2	3	4	5
c. Faculty at the college	1	2	3	4	5
d. Elected officials in your county	1	2	3	4	5
e. Your friends or associates	1	2	3	4	5
f. Other administrators in the college	1	2	3	4	5

3. **Look at the following pairs of subjects, and for each indicate by a check (✓) which you think is more important than the other.**

a. Which is more important?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Personal financial success  
**OR**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Working in an environment where my ethics are respected

b. Which is more important?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Marriage and family life  
**OR**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Personal financial success

c. Which is more important?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Personal financial success  
**OR**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ A satisfying career

d. Which is more important?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Ethics and character development  
**OR**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ A satisfying career

e. Which is more important?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Ethics and character development  
**OR**

\_\_\_\_\_ Marriage and family life

f. Which is more important?

\_\_\_\_\_ A satisfying career

**OR**

\_\_\_\_\_ Marriage and family life

4. **What source do you rely on for knowing what is right and wrong? Please rank the following sources from 1 to 7 beside each, where 1 is the most important and 7 is the least important.**

\_\_\_\_\_ What I learned in school

\_\_\_\_\_ What I've learned at work

\_\_\_\_\_ What my personal experience in life has taught me

\_\_\_\_\_ What my religion has taught me

\_\_\_\_\_ What I have learned from mass media

\_\_\_\_\_ What I've learned from my friends

\_\_\_\_\_ What I've learned from my family

5. **In your opinion, how influential are the following in shaping the ethics of most people today? Please circle the appropriate number for each group?**

	<i>Not influential at all</i>			<i>Very influential</i>	
a. Parents and other family members	1	2	3	4	5
b. Churches	1	2	3	4	5
c. Advice in media (i.e. Dr. Phil, Dear Abby)	1	2	3	4	5
d. Entertainment media	1	2	3	4	5
e. Schools	1	2	3	4	5
f. Friends	1	2	3	4	5
g. Work	1	2	3	4	5

## PART II – ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

Below you will find brief descriptions of situations in which difficult decisions are required. Do the best you can to put yourself in the positions described and answer the questions for each situation. In all cases, assume that the decision **MUST BE MADE** in your life and in the present.

**CASE ONE:** A proposed superstore is causing controversy in your community. Some community members are in favor of the project, others are against it. Those in favor point out that a superstore will quickly bring much needed revenue to the community. Those opposing the project point out that in the long run, it will result in drastically increased traffic to the area, and an inevitable increase in crime. You are a member of the town council and must vote in favor of or against the project.

1. **Which of the following actions is closest to the action you would take?**

Please place a check (√) next to only one.

\_\_\_\_\_ Vote against the superstore.

\_\_\_\_\_ Vote in favor of the superstore.

\_\_\_\_\_ Propose that the city government regulate the store's traffic and tax the store to pay for roads and police.

2. **Given what you know about this situation described above, indicate below the statement that best describes the reason for your decision.**

Please place a check (√) next to only one.

\_\_\_\_\_ This decision would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people.

\_\_\_\_\_ This decision is what everyone should do in such a situation, regardless of the consequences.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would want to be treated this way if I were building a store.

3. **Which of the following statements describes the decision you think most other members of your community would make in this case?** Please place a check (√) next to only one.

\_\_\_\_\_ Vote against the superstore.

\_\_\_\_\_ Vote in favor of the superstore.

\_\_\_\_\_ Propose that the city government regulate the store's traffic and tax the store to pay for road and police.

**CASE TWO:** You are employed by a company that is replacing many jobs with computerized systems. Even though you are not at risk, fellow employees in your department are losing their jobs. You discover that a good friend of yours is part of a group that is intentionally damaging the computer system in order to try to save jobs.

1. **Which of the following actions is closest to the action you would take?** Please place a check (✓) next to only one.

\_\_\_\_\_ Tell your friend to confess or you will inform management yourself.

\_\_\_\_\_ Tell management that sabotage is taking place, but without exposing your friend.

\_\_\_\_\_ Take steps to hide evidence of your friend's guilt.

\_\_\_\_\_ Do nothing

2. **Given what you know about this situation above, indicate below the statement that best describes the reason for your decision.** Please place a check (✓) next to only one.

\_\_\_\_\_ The decision would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people.

\_\_\_\_\_ This decision is what everyone should do in such a situation, regardless of the consequences.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would want to be treated this way if I broke the rules at work.

3. **Which of the following statements describes the decision you think most other members of your community would make in this case.** Please place a check (✓) next to only one.

\_\_\_\_\_ Tell your friend to confess or you will inform management yourself.

\_\_\_\_\_ Tell management that sabotage is taking place, but without exposing your friend.

\_\_\_\_\_ Take steps to hide evidence of your friend's guilt.

\_\_\_\_\_ Do nothing

**CASE THREE:** Earl, who is a senior employee in your department, is eventually going to lose his job, but no one has told him. When Earl is on a business trip, the department has you change Earl's voice mail, move everything out of his office, and change the name on the parking spot. The director tells you he will call Earl and let him know what has taken place. However, before that happens, Earl calls you. He can't get into his voicemail and wants you to tell him why.

1. **Which one of the following actions is closest to the one you would take?**

Please place a check (✓) next to only one.

\_\_\_\_\_ Tell Earl he has been fired

\_\_\_\_\_ Tell Earl nothing, as your boss told you

\_\_\_\_\_ Invent an explanation (lie) that will calm Earl without letting on that he has been fired.

2. **Given what you know about this situation, indicate below the statement that best describes the reason for your decision.** Please place a check (✓) next to only one.

\_\_\_\_\_ This decision would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people.

\_\_\_\_\_ This decision is what everyone should do in such a situation, regardless of the consequences.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would want to be treated this way if I were Earl.

3. **Which of the following statements describes the decision you think most of the other members of your community would make in this case?** Please place a check (✓) next to only one.

\_\_\_\_\_ Tell Earl he has been fired

\_\_\_\_\_ Tell Earl nothing, as your boss told you

\_\_\_\_\_ Invent an explanation (lie) that will calm Earl without letting on that he has been fired.

### PART III- PROFESSIONAL VALUES

The following 5 questions/statements are extremely personal. While we would really like you to answer each question, please feel free to choose “RNA” for Rather Not Answer” if you feel the questions are deemed too confidential.

**Please read the statements below and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the appropriate number. Please circle one choice for each statement.**

		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	
a. Ten years from now, if I were asked to choose my most important morals or values, my choices would probably be much different from today’s choices.	1	2	3	4	5		RNA
b. Community college students are very concerned about ethics.	1	2	3	4	5		RNA
c. The values of other administrators at my college have changed a lot since I first came here.	1	2	3	4	5		RNA
d. Most people’s values change over time in response to events in their lives.	1	2	3	4	5		RNA
e. Faculty members at my college know what is considered ethical behavior within and outside the college.	1	2	3	4	5		RNA
f. Other administrators at my college know what is considered ethical behavior within and outside the college.	1	2	3	4	5		RNA
g. My community college should play a role in educating the students about ethics.	1	2	3	4	5		RNA
h. My community college ought to help students develop values.	1	2	3	4	5		RNA
i. We should have yearly in service ethics trainings among administrators, faculty, and staff within my community college.	1	2	3	4	5		RNA

#### PART IV- ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

A transformational leader is one who is defined as a leader “who empowers workers to achieve and articulate the vision of the organization and its mission.” A transactional leader is a leader “who acts as an agent of change and focuses on rewarding productivity (Al-Mailam, 2004).”

**Based on these definitions, what type of leader would you consider yourself to be in your current profession?** Please place a check (√) next to only one.

\_\_\_\_\_ Transformational

\_\_\_\_\_ Transactional

\_\_\_\_\_ RNA

**PART V-BACKGROUND AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

Place a check (√) to the answer that best describes you. Please check only one answer for each.

1. **How many people including yourself are living in your home at present?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3-4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5-7
- \_\_\_\_\_ More than 7

2. **How many children do you have, regardless of whether or not they are living in your home at present?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3-4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5-7
- \_\_\_\_\_ More than 7

3. **How old are you?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 21-24
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25-30
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31-35
- \_\_\_\_\_ 36-40
- \_\_\_\_\_ 41-55
- \_\_\_\_\_ Older than 55

4. **What is your sex?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Female
- \_\_\_\_\_ Male

5. **What is your native country?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ USA
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other. Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

6. **Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ African American

- Asian
- Hispanic
- White

7. **What is the highest level of formal education have you have completed?**  
Please check (√) only one.

- Elementary (grades 1-8)
- Some high school
- High school diploma (including GED)
- Some college
- Community college certificate
- Community college associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Some graduate or professional training
- Master's degree
- Terminal graduate degree (phD, MD, EdD, etc)

8. **How many total ethics courses did you take in college?**

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3-4
- 5-7
- More than 7

9. **Would you describe yourself as being**

- Strongly religious?
- Moderately religious?
- Not very religious?
- Not at all religious?

10. **Are you**

- Married?
- Engaged?
- Single?
- Divorced?
- Legally Separated?

11. **What is your yearly household income (before taxes)?** Please check (✓) only one.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Less than \$40,000
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$40,001 to \$49,999
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$50,000 to \$59,999
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$60,000 to \$74,999
- \_\_\_\_\_ More than \$75,000

12. **How many years have you been employed in your current position?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 0
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3-4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5-7
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7-10
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10-13
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13-16
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16-20
- \_\_\_\_\_ More than 20

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY!

**Please return the survey in the self-addressed stamped envelope.**