

Abstract

GUERDAT, KATE GOOSSEN. An Exploratory Examination of the Relationship Between Learning Organization and the Perceived Ethical Climate. (Under the direction of Dr. Timothy Hatcher.)

Throughout the past decade, the increasing lack of ethical behavior in the workplace has manifested itself as creation of challenging ethical climates, stimulating the research on ethics in organizations. Higher education institutions are no exception, as colleges and universities are being scrutinized for how they handle ethical dilemmas (Campbell, 1995; Grunewald, 2008). The lack of systematic frameworks and forums for addressing ethical dilemmas challenges the values that underpin higher education institutions (Felicio & Pieniadz, 1999) as well as opportunities for engagement through outreach arms of higher education, specifically within Cooperative Extension. The concept of learning has been discussed in the literature as a tool to develop ethical climates (Verbos, Gerard, Forshey, Harding & Miller, 2007), however the relationship between the concepts of ethics and learning in organizations had not been empirically examined. The goal of this exploratory study was to determine whether or not there is a significant relationship between the two dimensions of a learning organization (an organization's connection to the environment and providing strategic leadership for learning) and the employees' perspectives of the organization's ethical climate. The objectives of the study: 1) to identify what types of ethical climates are perceived by the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) employees, 2) to determine if CES employees perceive two dimensions of a learning organization to be part of their organizational structure, and 3) to determine the predictive value of the learning organizations' dimensions on the perceived ethical climates.

Research findings show that while there was not a significant empirical relationship

between learning organization dimensions and ethical climates, the concepts of both ethical climate and learning in organizations are each individually perceived in Cooperative Extension. The results of this study have implications for not only higher education institutions but the field of Human Resource Development, reminding professionals that mission does not necessarily drive organizational culture. Results indicate that with the influential nature of the perceived ethical climates on organizational outcomes there is a need to consider the ethical climate when developing organizational systems for ongoing learning and strategic change. A foundation for future research has been provided as the relationship between ethics and learning needs to be further explored.

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An Exploratory Examination of the Relationship Between Learning Organization and the
Perceived Ethical Climate

by
Kate Goossen Guerdat

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APPROVED BY:

Dr. Julia Storberg-Walker

Dr. James Bartlett

Dr. Timothy Hatcher
Chair of Advisory Committee

Dr. Harriett Edwards

Dedication

To my loving family:

Near, far, and in-between

Biography

Education

June 1998	High School Diploma Fairfield High School Fairfield, CT
May 2002	Bachelor of Arts Fordham University New York, NY Psychology/ History
May 2005	Master of Science UNC Chapel Hill Recreation Administration & Business Management

Professional Experience

2000-2002	Project director National Aphasia Association New York, NY
2000-2002	Program Director Urban Dove, LLC New York, NY
2002-2003	Head Teacher Northside Center for Development New York, NY
2003-2004	Therapeutic Home Coordinator Carolina Choice, LLC Raleigh, NC
2005-Present	Extension Associate Dept. 4-H Youth Development North Carolina State University Raleigh, NC

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Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	ix
List of Figures.....	x
CHAPTER 1	1
Ethical climate	2
<i>The Ethical Climate of Cooperative Extension</i>	4
<i>Managing Ethical Dilemmas</i>	7
Learning in organizations	9
Relating ethical climate to learning organization	14
Statement of the Problem	16
Purpose and Objectives of the Study	17
Significance of the Study	17
Theoretical Frameworks	20
Ethical Climate Theory	20
Learning Organization	21
Conceptual Frameworks	22
Research Hypotheses	24
Limitations of the Research	27
Assumptions	27
Definitions of Terms.....	27
Summary.....	28
CHAPTER 2	29
Literature Review	29
Summary.....	77
CHAPTER 3	79
Research Design	79
Population & Sample Plan.....	79
Response Rate.....	81
Instrumentation and Measurement	81
Pilot & Pre- Data Analysis	85
Data Collection	87
Data Analysis.....	88
Summary.....	90
CHAPTER 4	91
Pilot Examination	91
Pre- Data Analysis	92
Hypothesis 1	96
Hypothesis 2	97
Hypotheses 3a, 3b, & 3c	98
Hypothesis 4-8	100
Summary.....	101
CHAPTER 5	103
Introduction	103

Hypothesis 1	104
Hypothesis 2	109
Hypothesis 3	113
Hypotheses 4-8	117
Summary:.....	119
References	121
APPENDICES	137
APPENDIX A.....	138
Permission for Ethical Climate Questionnaire	138
APPENDIX B.....	140
Permission for Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire.....	140
APPENDIX C.....	143
Ethics and Learning Survey.....	143
APPENDIX D.....	148
IRB Application.....	148
APPENDIX E	155
Informed Consent Letter.....	155
APPENDIX F	158
IRB Exempt Approval	158
APPENDIX G.....	160
Memorandum of Support to Extension Directors.....	160
APPENDIX H.....	162
Participation Solicitation E-mail	162
APPENDIX I	164
Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Learning Organization Dimensions.....	164
APPENDIX J	166
Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Ethical Climates.....	166

List of Tables

Table 1. Dimensions of Learning Organizations by Marsick and Watkins	11
Table 2. Identifying Ethical Firms	42
Table 3. Response Rate of Research Participants	79
Table 4. ECQ Items Included in Climate Factors	92
Table 5. ECQ Items not Included in Climate Factors	93
Table 6. Participant Characteristics.....	94
Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for Hypothesis 1	96
Table 8. Descriptive Statistics for Hypothesis 2	97
Table 9. Multiple Regression for Hypothesis 3.....	98

List of Figures

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Exploratory Relationship between Ethics and Learning in Organizations	24
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Throughout the past decade, the increasing lack of ethical behavior in the workplace has manifested itself as creation of challenging ethical climates, stimulating the research on ethics in organizations. The literature addressing ethical behavior in organizations has varied in approaches ranging from the establishment of ethical codes (Hayes & Allinson, 1998; Marnburg, 2000; Moore, 2006; Trevino & Weaver, 2003) to creating teachable lessons on ethics in the workplace (Callahan, 1980; Falkenberg & Woiceshyn, 2008; Jurkewicz, Giacalone, and Knouse, 2004; Shaw, 2008; Trevino & Nelson, 2007). Codes require employees to learn specific rules and guidelines, adhering to policy established by administration. With structured lessons, individuals are expected to study what is considered ethical and act accordingly. Within both of these scenarios, learning is presented as one of the underlying strategies for addressing ethical dilemmas within organizations.

While learning as a tool to sculpt ethical climates has been briefly referred to in the literature (Verbos, Gerard, Forshey, Harding & Miller, 2007), the relationship between the concepts of ethics and learning needs further examination. Each concept has been researched individually (Armstrong & Foley, 2003; Dodgson, 1993; Valentine & Fleischman, 2007; Zajac & Comfort, 1997), however there is a dearth of research on the relationship between learning and ethics, specifically the relationship between learning and ethics within organizations. With the growing interest in ethical issues within organizations the present study was developed to identify the relationship between the concept of the ethical climate and learning within organizations, defined in the present study as the learning

organization. Each concept is explored in the literature related to ethics and learning and then discussed in terms of a potential relationship between ethical climates and learning organizations.

Ethical climate

Ethical climates are best understood as a group of prescriptive climates reflecting the organizational procedures, policies, and practices which lead to moral consequences (Victor & Cullen, 1988). These climates arise when members of the organization firmly believe that certain forms of ethical reasoning or behavior are the expected standards or norms for decision making within the organization. Ethical climate can often be perceived as that which constitutes “right behavior”, and thus becomes a psychological mechanism through which ethical issues are managed. Through their research, Victor and Cullen (1998) concluded that organizations exhibit distinct ethical climate types which influence 1) managerial behavior, 2) how ethical conflicts are identified, and 3) the process by which the conflicts would be resolved (Forte, 2004).

In the present workplace, ethical climates are being challenged in a variety of context. Martin and Cullen (2006) reported that as the corporate landscape becomes characterized by unsurpassed growth, global expansion, and unprecedented change there is a greater emphasis on organizational ethics research for both theory and practice. The pattern of challenging an organization’s ethical climate is causing alarm in numerous corporations, as higher level executives’ and administrators’ ethical actions appear to be due more to mandates than to unwittingly biased information processing on their part (Hambrick, 2007). Organization administrations are making ethical decisions based on what someone believes

is standardized policy and written code rather than what organizational leadership deems ethically appropriate. Hood (2003) states that the growing lack of confidence in ethical practices coupled with the current emphasis on quality of life has resulted in increased focus on ethical behavior within organizational structures. Scandals in companies such as Enron, Tyco, and other businesses facilitated the enactment of the Sarbanes Oxley Act (Grunewald, 2008), requiring many organizations to develop and adhere to ethical reporting systems (Weber, 2006).

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are not exempt from ethical dilemmas, either. According to Kelley and Chang (2007), HEIs that have not experienced major ethical scandals tend to neglect the need for an established ethical culture and the need for promoting ethical initiatives. The ethical climates of non-profit organizations including colleges and universities are being scrutinized for how they are addressing ethical dilemmas, such as questionable accounting practices with public resources (Campbell, 1995), as well as selection and retention of university presidents (Grunewald, 2008). One of the gravest concerns with unethical issues within higher education is the nature of the deep and lasting values underpinning higher education institutions (Moore, 2006; CIHE, 2005). According to Moore, higher education is a public as well as a private good, and ethical awareness and practice does and should be reflected in everything institutions are and do. Essentially, Moore views the university as having a responsibility to portray a positive ethical climate because of its influential status in modern day society.

As discussed by Campbell (1995), “in a rapidly changing world, institutions of higher education serve as custodians of the intellectual capacity of humanity...they serve as

centers of innovation and change” (p. 34). Procario-Foley and Bean (2002) proposed that those institutions of higher education that model the ethics and values proclaimed in their mission statements are more likely to produce graduates who are highly valued and sought by ethical organizations. In its role as a transmitter of a society’s values, a higher education institution establishes the connection between higher education and economic growth, as well as social progress and a responsible citizenry. Land-grant universities were established with specific responsibilities that promote scholarship and engagement with their external environments (Boyer, 1996; Campbell, 1995). The Morrill Act of 1862, charged land grant universities with providing all members of the community with accessible public and practical education as well as teaching, research and public service (Mc Dowell, 2001; Iverson, 2008).

Within the land-grant university Cooperative Extension was developed as a result of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 in an effort to aid in disseminating useful and practical information on subjects related to agriculture and home economics and encouraging the application of knowledge learned. Over the past several decades, Cooperative Extension has become the major outreach component of the Land-grant University whose capacity have expanded beyond agricultural and home economics to community development and sustainability (Campbell, 1995; Iverson, 2008; Kellogg Foundation, 1999) and created a strong sense of human ecology through the interactions of humans and their local environments.

The Ethical Climate of Cooperative Extension

As the outreach component of the land-grant university, the mission of Cooperative

Extension is to promote learning through the extension of knowledge by focusing on the needs of the community to build knowledge and sustainability while also promoting growth (Retrieved from www.usda.gov). Cooperative Extension is a unique organization, as it operates with principles similar to the corporate world: it treats the community as the consumer, is classified as a federally supported organization through a major governmental agency (USDA), and it is attached to a higher education institution, more specifically the land-grant university. The organizational model of Cooperative Extension is grassroots oriented, with the needs of the community dictating the services developed and provided. However, even with a grassroots effort, organizational leadership plays a large role in Extension. Each state has an Extension Director who oversees the entirety of the state's Extension program. There are individual program areas such as 4-H, Family Consumer Sciences (FCS), and Agriculture, whose individual missions are driven by the community, despite mandates by federal level agencies. State-level professionals are responsible for interpreting the needs of the surrounding communities and developing resources for support. Each program area (i.e. 4-H, FCS, Agriculture) employs field faculty throughout the state to deliver programs to address area needs. Extension is responsible for ensuring that the needs communicated by the locality.

However with great responsibilities and transfer of information from state level administration to county operations often come conflicting values and viewpoints, creating potential ethical dilemmas. These ethical dilemmas are often magnified due to the community involvement on the county level. Just as stakeholders question the actions of corporate CEOs, in 1988 the public began to challenge the investment it was making in

higher education systems (Herzfeld, 2001). In response to the scrutiny being placed on the land-grant university system, Cooperative Extension adopted a model of educational program development developed by the USDA called Issues Programming. The model was an attempt to address issues that were being raised in conjunction with the philosophy, ethics, and accountability of Cooperative Extension (Herzfeld, 2001). Issues were defined as matters of extensive public concern arising out of complex human problems and were identified in an effort to assist with prioritizing Extension educational programs from internal academic disciplines to external public discourse (Dalgaard, Brazzel, Liles, Sanderson, & Taylor, 1988). Issues Programming was a result of an increase in demand for public accountability and sound ethical practices in the Extension service for receiving public resources, as historically CES had not received public resources as a public service.

Cooperative Extension re-examined its role in the community in 2002 as the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) produced the publication *The Extension System: A vision for the 21st Century* (Chesney, Samuel, & Fuller, 2009). The ECOP publication discussed the challenges the Extension system faced with adapting to a changing world. With major technology breakthroughs, increased integration, mergers, and demographic changes, Extension administration addressed how the organization was prepared to handle potential crises and ethical dilemmas. As a result, Extension programs were challenged to be more effective in engaging people and communities, ultimately advancing the interests of both the land-grant university and the community. The push for engagement has emerged out of a movement to re-emphasize the role of universities in communities in advancing the common good (Report of Scholarship and Engagement Task

Force, 2010). From a higher education institution, and more specifically a land-grant university perspective, the tenets of engagement aim to develop ethical and practical solutions to social, health, economic and other environmental issues. (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997; Keckes, 2006; Kellogg Commission, 1999).

As the land-grant university, and more specifically Cooperative Extension, pursues additional acts of engagement, there is greater potential for ethical dilemmas (Blewett, Keim, Leser, & Jones, 2008; Holland, 2001). As a strong component of the higher education system, Cooperative Extension's challenges impact the academic community, as well as the local, regional and national communities they serve.

Managing Ethical Dilemmas

Although the missions of colleges and universities do not necessarily include improving the bottom line, the goal of enhancing development of people and society results in ethical dilemmas very similar to those within the corporate sector (Moore, 2006).

Through a review of the literature, Moore found that corporate solutions to ethical dilemmas are just as applicable and transferable to higher education. Felicio and Pieniadz (1999) found there is a lack of systematic forums and frameworks for attempting to resolve ethical dilemmas in higher education. A review of the literature revealed that there have been no more recent researchers filling the gap that Felicio and Pieniadz described.

One of the few approaches to addressing ethical dilemmas in organizations is the use of codes of ethics. Ethical codes are historically one of the common strategies discussed in the literature as a way to address behaviors before they present themselves. For example, the J.C. Penney Company, a successful retailer that has been a household name for decades,

introduced a company code of ethics in the early 1900s (Trevino & Weaver, 2003). However while codes establish a set of expectations for an individual's behavior, there is no guarantee that individual's behavior will change. Despite established codes of ethics, the need for enforcing policies on ethical decision making is often overlooked until something undesirable happens. Marnburg (2000) tested the differences in ethical attitudes among employees in companies with and without a code of ethics. The study found that there is no significant difference, exhibiting that members of many organizations that have ethical codes still exhibit unethical behaviors.

In terms of the higher education institution, Moore (2006) proposed that an institution-wide ethical policy framework beyond the traditional focus on an ethical code and policy is required to embrace all of the institution's activities. In Schein's (2004) work on organizational culture, he found that institutional factors such as the environment, organizational culture and leadership have the potential to be as important, if not more important, in determining the ethical climate. A positive relationship between the organization and its environment is established when organizations systematically align their major organizational components (such as structure, technology, systems, people, and culture), with the external environment (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Nadler, 1987). Intentionally aligning organizational culture with the external environment is essential for organizations such as Land-grant Universities and ultimately Cooperative Extension, whose mission is ingrained in grassroots efforts.

Intentionally establishing an organization- environment relationship not only supports an ethical climate but also provides an opportunity for growth and change. Verbos,

Gerard, Forshey, Harding and Miller's (2007) theory of Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) provides a framework for that change that involves both learning and ethics. POS posits that ethical organizational identity emerges from the interaction of authentic leadership, aligned organizational processes, organizational learning, and an ethical organizational culture. Within their theory, Verbos et al. introduce the possibility that 'learning' has a role in the development of an ethical climate, as ethical climate is an essential component of the organizational culture. In order for growth and change to occur in the culture of Cooperative Extension, the perceived ethical climate needs to be understood and the learning in Extension's culture needs to be examined.

Learning in organizations

The literature surrounding learning in organizations recognizes that organizations learn when individual members or substantial fractions of them learn (Ortenblad, 2002; Agryris & Schon, 1996; Senge, 1990). Thus, learning in organizations is a complex concept (Tsang, 1997) as the nature of some organizations are considered to be socially constructed, blurring the lines between what is considered an individual phenomenon and what is organizational (Akgun, Lynn, & Byrne, 2003). Agryris and Schon (1996) capture the collective process of learning through their definition of organizational learning: the process of creating or capturing knowledge and then retaining it in a form that is useful to the organization. Generally speaking, an organization "learns" when it acquires new information (knowledge, understanding, technical skills). Agryris and Schon's definition is used within this study for its ability to capture the fluidity, while retaining the required structure, in an organization's learning processes. While there is flexibility in the way information is

learned, there is a prescriptive structure in which the learning occurs.

While organizational learning is viewed as the process involved in individual and collective learning inside organizations (Ortenblad, 2002), the learning organization is viewed as the tangible product that promotes the learning process. Marsick and Watkins (2003) frame the learning organization as the entity that possesses specific diagnostic and evaluative methodological tools which can help to identify, promote and measure the quality of the learning process inside the organization.

Within learning organizations, knowledge structures are developed through interactions. Organizational members are expected to communicate their knowledge to both the organizational and external community (Akgun, Lynn, & Byrne, 2003). As a result the learning experience becomes part of the organizational culture. Senge (1990) explains that a learning organization is one that facilitates the learning of all its members and where people continually expand their capacity to create desired results. Within the learning organization, new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, collective aspirations are set free, and people are continually learning how to learn together (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). The collective capacity to learn becomes an essential part of the process and enables the action orientation taken to diagnose and measure the learning processes.

Through literature reviews and research studies, Marsick and Watkins (2003) established the dimensions of learning organizations. Marsick and Watkins use the word “dimension” to refer to essential action steps an organization takes to support learning. The Learning Organization Dimensions were developed in an effort to measure the important shifts in an organization’s climate, culture, systems, and structures that combine to create a

learning organization. The dimensions were developed through a review of the literature on learning organizations that have the capacity to learn, adapt and change (Yang, Watkins, & Marsick, 2004). The dimensions include several perspectives including systems thinking (Senge, 1990), the learning perspective (Pedler, Burgoyne, & Boydell, 1991), and the strategic perspective (Garvin, 1993). The learning organization dimensions are Marsick and Watkins “integrative perspective”, proposing that learning organizations integrate two main organizational constituents: people and structure (Yang et al., 2004). Table 1.1 describes each of the seven dimensions of the learning organization as described by Marsick and Watkins.

The Dimensions of a Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ) was created to examine the theory of the learning organization and provides a framework for studying learning dimensions and their relations with other organizational performance variables (Yang, Marsick, & Watkins, 2004). The DLOQ was developed by Watkins and Marsick after a review of previously developed instruments and research.

Through a cross-disciplinary review of literature on learning organizations, Marsick and Watkins (2003) seven dimensions of the learning organization are strongly reflected throughout public Land Grant Universities, specifically Cooperative Extension. The dimensions of a learning organization are emulated through Extension’s deliberative democratic processes used to address diverse points of view as well as in the innovative approaches to organization and community collaboration (Blewett, Keim, Leesr, & Jones, 2008; Boyce, 2003; Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2001; Grabow, Hilliker, & Moskal, 2006). Despite the underlying tones of the dimensions in Extension, limited research has been

conducted on how Extension resembles a learning organization (Rowe, 2010).

Table 1

Dimensions of Learning Organizations by Marsick and Watkins (2003)

Create continuous learning opportunities	People have capability to learn on the job, opportunities for growth and ongoing education
Promote inquiry and dialogue	Culture supports questioning, feedback, and experimentation
Encourage collaboration and team learning	Groups are expected to learn together and work together; collaboration is valued by the culture and rewarded
Create systems to capture and share learning	Access is provided to systems to share learning and are integrated in to work, all systems are maintained
Empower people toward a collective vision	People are involved in setting, owning, and implementing a joint vision; responsibility is distributed close to decision making so people are motivated to learn towards accountability
Connect the organization to its environment	People scan the environment and use information to adjust work practices; organization is linked to its communities
Provide strategic leadership for learning	Leaders model, champion, and support learning; leadership uses learning strategically for business results

Examining Cooperative Extension as a learning organization

As discussed by Rowe (2010), with a rapidly changing environment Cooperative Extension must become more flexible by adopting the principles of a learning organization. Extension uses a variety of educational methods and tools in an effort to meet the needs of a constantly changing society. Two of the seven learning organization dimensions reflect the processes engrained in Cooperative Extensions mission; Connection to the environment and providing strategic leadership for learning. These two dimensions revealed strong similarities between the content of each dimension and the organizational model and

mission of Cooperative Extension.

Within the dimension of ‘connection to the environment’, organizational members are responsible for scanning the environment in an effort to promote organizational change (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). Environmental scanning, a common practice in Cooperative Extension, allows the organization to effectively align with local communities (Boyce, 2003; Campbell, 1995). As research has shown, active scanning of the internal and external environment allows for organizations to shape their responses (Senge, 1990), and change or transform (Cavaleri, 2004) enabling organizations such as Cooperative Extension to address community needs.

The second dimension, provide strategic leadership for learning, suggests that leaders model, champion, and support learning throughout the organization (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). Within this dimension, learning is strategically designed to promote specific outcomes and results. Research has shown the influential nature of leaders throughout the learning process (Ford, 2006; Leith, Harrison, & Burgoyne, 1996; Ortenblad, 2004). Within the organizational model of Extension, leaders are responsible for enabling transference of information in the organization. From mission mandates to promoting scholarship and engagement amongst faculty, Extension leaders have the capacity to set the tone for learning throughout the internal and external environment.

For the purpose of this exploratory study the connection and leaders support dimensions were examined against the organization’s ethical climate in an effort to understand how learning and ethics in organizations could potentially be related. Through the learning organization concepts of connection to the environment and leaders supporting

learning, each dimension reflects the unique qualities of higher education institutions that have potential to support and shape the ethical climate within the organization.

Relating ethical climate to learning organization

The concepts of ethics and learning have been eluded in the literature through the process of organizational change. While organizational change is not a central tenet of this study, it is discussed as an example of how learning in organizations potentially shifts an organization's ethical climate. Hayes and Allinson's (1998) framework on organizational standards and learning implies that for ethical norms to completely shift within an organizational climate the organization on a whole needs to shift as well, ultimately creating organizational change. Boyce (2003) compares the process of organizational learning to that of organizational change. The collective vision of organizational members becomes responsible for diagnosing the organization's predicament (i.e. ethical dilemmas) ultimately integrating their perceptions into shared, learned mental models. The end result has the potential to establish a foundation for modifying and managing the ethical decisions that support the ethical climate.

In addition to the discussion on ethics and learning in the process of change, the dimensions of learning organizations are reflected in literature on managing ethics in organizations, specifically higher education institutions. Moore (2006) suggests that effectively managing ethics in Higher Education Institutions promotes a shift in the ethical culture. As found in the literature, it is difficult to have a shift in ethical culture without an impact on ethical culture (Denison, 1996; Dickson, Smith, Grojean, & Ehrhart, 2001), therefore by effectively managing ethics within Higher Education Institutions, the ethical

climate is effectively being managed as well. Relating Moore's model of managing ethics to Watkin and Marsick's dimensions of learning organizations illustrates possible connections between learning and ethics in organizations. For example, Marsick and Watkins (2003) state that the promotion of inquiry and dialogue is a key component of a learning organization. Moore's model of managing ethics in HEI supports open discourse through openly discussing and acknowledging ethical issues within the organization.

The potential relationship between ethics and learning expands beyond creating a learning and management system for managing ethical climates. From a theoretical foundation perspective, both concepts have similar grounding in disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and education and have been associated with theoretical frames such as Institutionalization theory as a way to sustain change (i.e. Boyce, 2003 for Learning in organizations and Foote and Ruona, 2008 for Ethical climates).

Through the lens of the practitioner, the learning organization has the potential to help scan the organizational environment (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999) for areas of ethical distress in hopes of promoting new knowledge. Within learning organizations the open process of sharing information, as well as open organizational systems (Konsthoghiores, Awbrey, & Feurig, 2005) has the potential to influence ethical climate perceptions as well. For example, Schneider's (1975) discussion on Functionalism embraces the concept of adaptation by organizational systems, essentially creating a homeostatic balance within the organizational environment. The open organizational systems that results from the creation of a learning organization also has the potential to influence the perceived climates regarding ethics.

Although despite the connections highlighted in the literature there is limited empirical support for ethical climates and learning organizations. In addition, both concepts of the learning organization and ethical climates have been explored individually within the context of higher education institutions, however the concepts have not been examined in relationship to each other within the Cooperative Extension environment. Due to the lack of empirical support for the overarching context of this study, the present study is an exploratory examination of how ethical climates are related to learning organization dimensions.

Statement of the Problem

As previously discussed, a significant gap in the literature emerges on prevention as well as intervention approaches to supporting positive ethical climates in organizations. Through a review of the literature, learning has surfaced as an underlying theme in addressing ethical dilemmas within organizations, however there is a lack of empirical support for the relationship between the concepts of ethical climate and learning.

As previously discussed, higher education institutions are not immune to the issues of organizational ethical distress and failure. With increasingly tight economic times and the regulation of new governmental policies, educational institutions and other governmental agencies are under intense scrutiny by citizenry (Grunewald, 2008, Campbell, 1995). With greater emphasis on engagement with the community and through support of the literature it appears that Extension professionals are more likely to interact with a broader and diverse set of stakeholders than their predecessors (Boyer, 1996; Herzfeld, 2001). The ethics of Cooperative Extension is often held accountable to the public to the degree that they

paternalistically change skills, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals for the predetermined individual's good or the public's good or both. Through CES educational programs there is an expectation that the public will develop democratically rather than advance predetermined community, state, or national goals for the common good (Blewett, Keim, Leser, & Jones, 2008). The greater diversity in audience served is likely to result in a wider range, and possibly conflicting sets of values and ethical assumptions regarding the utility of public institutions (Iverson, 2008).

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The goals of the proposed exploratory study are to determine whether or not there is a perceived significant relationship between two specific elements of a learning organization (per the DLOQ) and the organization's ethical climate. The objectives included in the study are to 1) determine what types of ethical climates are perceived by Southern Region Cooperative Extension Agents, 2) determine if Cooperative Extension Agents perceive two dimensions of a learning organization to be part of their organizational structure, and 3) determine the predictive value of the learning organizations' dimensions on the perceived ethical climate(s).

Significance of the Study

The results of this exploratory study have multiple implications for Higher Education Institutions, specifically land-grant universities, as well as the field of Human Resource Development as a whole.

The results of this study will provide empirical data examining the relationship between dimensions of the learning organization and the perceived ethical climates,

ultimately supporting the development of organizational learning strategies that may support ethical climates. HRD professionals will have a better understanding of the relationship between these two constructs and potentially use results to support the development of training programs, professional development opportunities, and effective assessments of ethical climates within the organization. HRD practitioners have an opportunity to develop, implement and sustain activities that align with the underlying ethical tenets of the organization (Foote & Ruona, 2008; Hatcher, 2002; White, 1990).

Building the organization's body of knowledge is another advantage that comes with the application of a learning organization. Through knowledge creation, the process of learning and change enables an organization to continuously transform itself (Leitch, Harrison, Burgoyne, & Blantern, 1996; Cavaleri, 2004). The knowledge development process provides the opportunity to create a clear vision and mission, promoting not only competitiveness in the corporate world, but will also promote development of employees, developing all staff to their full potential. Jones and Hendry (1992) found that an organization that has a reputation for knowledge building attracts some of the best employees, is known for exemplary human resource procedures, and is more adept at accommodating tensions and changes in policy.

On a macro-level scale the study provides the potential to strengthen the organizations' relationship to the external environment as it relates to issues of social responsibility and governing and/or ethical rules and guidelines. As discussed by Ruona and Gibson (2004), "the role, purpose and primary competencies of HRD are fundamentally related to facilitating and managing culture and change" (p.61). HRD can become a

stronger strategic partner in all forms of organizations by thoroughly understanding the significance of ethical theory and by emphasizing the importance of ethical practices and cultures through ethics training and education. Within the possible relationship between the learning organization and organizational ethics education, organizations such as CES have the opportunity to reinvent themselves through establishing dimensions of the learning organizations. HRD has the potential to help shape the organization's climate through understanding and appreciating the growing emphasis on ethics in professional organizations, higher education, and by shaping ethical corporations through training and development (Gedro, 2008). More importantly, HRD can help ethics education become an essential element of organizational learning.

From a practitioner's perspective, relating organizational ethics to the dimensions of learning organizations provides potential, teachable strategies to help strengthen ethical climates within organizations. In 2006, Ritter explored whether or not Business Ethics is a topic that is trainable, essentially questioning whether or not ethics education can be taught effectively. Callahan (1980) argues that not only can ethics be taught, but that it also stimulates moral imagination in students. Through innovative approaches to teaching ethics, future organizational leaders will gain skills to be able to recognize ethical issues, develop a stronger sense of moral obligation (Falkenberg & Woiceshyn, 2008), articulate their own ethical orientation and expand boundaries they place on acceptable behaviors (Jurkewicz, Giacalone, & Knouse, 2004; Shaw, 2008; Trevino & Nelson, 2007.) The ability to identify the related ethical climates and learning organization's dimensions would assist with prevention and intervention strategies for supporting positive ethical climates.

The results of this study will make valuable contributions to the HRD body of knowledge in relation to learning and ethics in organizations, providing insight into both theoretical and empirical relationships between the two concepts.

Theoretical Frameworks

For the purpose of this study, substantive theories are being used to establish the theoretical framework. According to Camp (2001), substantive theories offer explanations in a restricted setting and are limited in scope, often being expressed as propositions or hypotheses. Substantive theories begin with a supportable premise, extending that premise through a logical path of reported research (Creswell, 2003). Substantive theories are being used due to the exploratory nature of this study and the framework upon which the theoretical frames are constructed. The theoretical frameworks used to guide this study are ethical climate theory and organizational learning theory. Each of the following theories is further grounded in macro-level frameworks such as cognitive and behavior psychology, sociology and moral philosophies as discussed in the review of the literature.

Ethical Climate Theory

Ethical climate theory as developed and published by Victor and Cullen (1988) represents a descriptive map of ethical decision-making and actions within an organization (Martin & Cullen, 2006). Victor and Cullen's Ethical Climate theory expands on Kohlberg's (1984) theory of moral development, specifically the concept of 'moral atmosphere' and the 'just community'. The concept of moral atmosphere represents "the prevailing norms of a specific group and not only the individuals' level of moral development" (Victor & Cullen, 1988, p. 103). Victor and Cullen felt that Kohlberg's theory

was too narrow, as it did not address the context of the work climate. From Victor and Cullen's perspective, each climate is a type of work climate that is best comprehended as a collection of prescriptive climates reflecting organizational procedures, policies, and practices with moral consequences. Positive ethical climates arise when organizational members believe that certain forms of ethical reasoning or behavior are expected standards for addressing ethical dilemmas within the organization (Cullen, Parboteeah, & Victor, 2003).

Learning Organization

Watkins and Marsick's, (1993, 1996, 2004) concept of learning organizations (LO) served as the learning framework for this study, however it is grounded in the theoretical frame of organizational learning. Organizational learning theory states that an organization has the ability to create and capture knowledge (Agryis & Schon, 1996). Agryis and Schon believe that there must be a learning product, such as the learning organization. The learning organization is built on the premise that the organization has the capacity to learn, adapt, and change (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). Within the LO framework, different perspectives are included such as systems thinking, learning, and strategic and integrative perspectives. In addition to the multiple perspectives, the dimensions of learning organizations address the learning actions and strategies at each of four organizational levels: individual, team, organization, and global.

Watkins and Marsick's frame for learning organizations was chosen because it captures the principles of a learning organization while also establishing measurable, operational action steps for supporting a learning organization. As previously discussed, for

the purpose of the present study, the two of the seven dimensions will be used. The dimension of an organization's connection to the environment reflects the organizations environmental scan process used to address community needs while the dimension of organizational leaders' model and support learning .emulates Extension's leaders responsibility for enabling transference of information in the organization. The study is examining how often Extension agents perceive Extension as an organization supports the two chosen learning organization dimensions.

From the proposed theoretical frameworks, the following assumptions are posited:

- the organization's perceived ethical climate shapes the standard for ethical behaviors and decisions throughout the organization and it's environment
- through supporting dimensions of a learning organization the organization itself has the potential to adapt and influence change throughout
- despite those two assumptions, limited research has been conducted to examine the predictive relationship between learning and ethics.

The conceptual framework developed for this study is based on the need for research on the relationship between ethical climates and the learning organization.

Conceptual Frameworks

A conceptual framework is a model or representation, typically presented in graphic form, which depicts the relationship among the main concepts and variables involved in a study (Punch, 1998). In the conceptual framework used for the present study (see Figure 1 for an illustration of the conceptual framework) the independent variables are the two dimensions of the learning organization (connection to the environment and empowerment

towards a collective vision). As previously discussed, these two dimensions were chosen for the commonalities reflected in the sample organization (Cooperative Extension) and for the emphasis on the individual's perspective on organizational actions.

Watkins and Marsick's framework was chosen for its ability to examine both individual and organizational levels as well as its inclusive definition of the learning organization construct. The dependent variables are the following three types of ethical climates as developed by Victor and Cullen (1988); the egoistic perspective, the benevolent (utilitarian), and the deontological. The researcher theorized that two of the seven dimensions of a learning organization as proposed by Watkins and Marsick are positively related to the type of ethical climate perceived by employees of the organization. The ethical climate was chosen over culture to be measured as the climate is defined locally and is considered to influence which issues organization members consider to be ethically pertinent (Cullen, Victors, and Stephens, 1989; Dickson, Smith, Grojean, & Ehrhart, 2001) whereas culture is deeply embedded and is not as reactionary as climate (Denison, 1996).

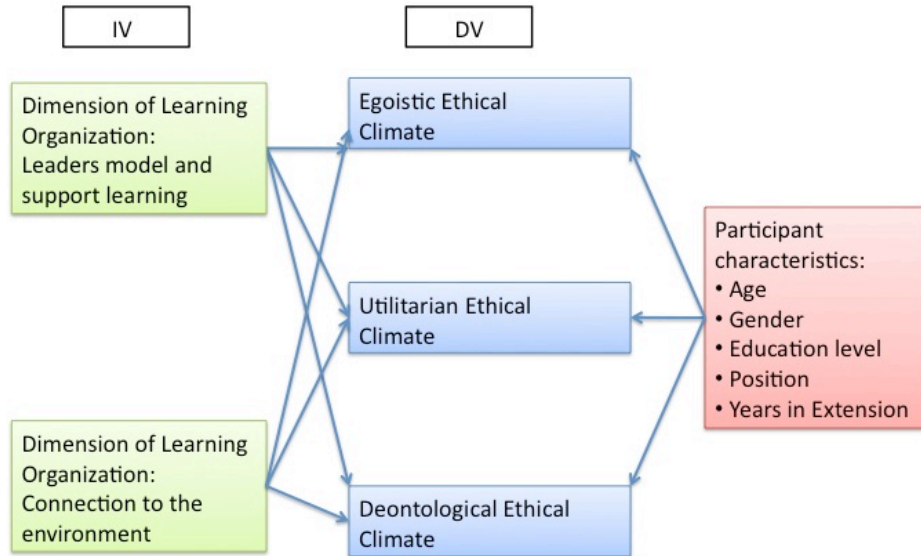


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Exploratory Relationship between Ethics and Learning in Organizations

Research Hypotheses

In order to understand the relationship between learning organization dimension and ethical climate research hypotheses are used to establish and describe the relationship and to guide the research.

The research hypotheses guiding this study are:

H₁: *Cooperative Extension Agents will perceive utilitarianism as the highest level of ethical climate within Cooperative Extension.*

H₀: *m egoistic = m utilitarian = m deontological*

As previously stated, the educational programs sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Service develops public outreach initiatives democratically rather than advance

predetermined community, state, or national goals for the common good (Herzfeld, 2001).

Although research is lacking on the perceived ethical climate of Cooperative Extension, its engagement with public citizenry supports the notion that the climate is structured for the good of the whole community.

H₂: *Cooperative Extension Agents will perceive their organization to support learning more often through the organization's connection to the environment than through providing strategic leadership for learning.*

H₀ :m Connection to their environment = m Empowerment towards a collective vision

Within Marsick and Watkin's dimension that connect the organization to its environment, organizational members are expected to scan the environment and use information to adjust work practices, linking the organization to the community. The stated CES mission, to promote learning through the Extension of knowledge by working through the needs of the community (retrieved from www.usda.gov), strongly aligns with the strategy of connecting the organization to its environment.

H_{3a}: *There is no predictive relationship between the learning organization predictor variables (connection to the environment and providing strategic leadership for learning) and egoistic ethical climates*

H_{3b}: *There is a predictive relationship between the learning organization predictor variables (connection to the environment and providing strategic leadership for learning) and utilitarian ethical climates.*

H_{3c}: *There is no predictive relationship between the learning organization predictor variables (connection to the environment and providing strategic leadership for learning) and deontological ethical climates.*

Due to the gap in empirical research on the relationship between learning organizations and ethical climates, there is limited support in the related literature for the constructed

hypothesis. However while there is a gap in research on the connection between ethical climates and learning in organizations, some studies have shown the importance of aligning organizational systems as they pertain to ethics and learning (Ford, 2006; Hayes & Allinson, 1998; Verbos, Gerard, Forshey, Harding & Miller, 2007). It is the goal of this exploratory research to determine the empirical significance of the relationship between concepts of ethical climates and learning organizations.

H₄: *Gender will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate.*

H₅: *Age will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate.*

H₆: *Level of formal education will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate.*

Previous studies on the influence of participant characteristics such as gender, age and education level on types of ethical climates have resulted in both significant (i.e. Parboteeah, Hoegl, & Cullen, 2008) and not significant results (i.e. Van Sandt, 2001). The present study examined the influence to determine potential moderating effects on the research population.

H₇: *Extension position will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate*

H₈: *Position tenure will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate*

There is a gap in the literature on the empirical significance of effect of Extension position and tenure on identified organizational ethical climate type. The context for the study and the responsibilities of the subject population would suggest potential relationships exist.

Limitations of the Research

- 1) Due to the difficulty in measuring actual ethical climates, participants' perceptions were measured. Victor and Cullen (1988) recognized that the various ethical climate types are dependent upon what is perceived by the members as ethical.
- 2) The research questionnaire was self-reporting; therefore no verification of responses were available.
- 3) The research was conducted as a one-shot study design; therefore only providing a snapshot of current perspectives.
- 4) The present study is considered exploratory since the relationship between ethical climate and learning organization had not been previously empirically established.
- 5) The sample population were all from one kind of organization (governmental non-profit) within one industry (higher education) therefore limiting the scope of application for results.

Assumptions

- 1) The theoretical frame being used provides perspectives on philosophical ideals and therefore may be difficult to accurately measure the existing ethical climate
- 2) Perceptions of the respondents are good indicators of the concepts being measured.
- 3) Respondents will answer the questions honestly and truthfully.

Definitions of Terms

Climate- Work climates are framed broadly in terms of organizational norms and conventions that are seen by organizational actors to exist within the structure and procedures of the organization (Martin & Cullen, 2006.)

Ethical Climate- a type of work climate that is best understood as a group of prescriptive climates reflecting the organizational procedures, policies, and practices with moral consequences (Victor & Cullen, 1988.) Positive climates such as these arise when members believe that certain forms of ethical reasoning or behavior are expected standards or norms for decision-making within the organization. The ethical climate is the perception of what constitutes right behavior- and thus becomes a psychological mechanism through which ethical issues are managed. A “poor” ethical climate suggests that ‘right behavior’ is less than ethical.

Learning Organization- an organization that learns continuously and transforms itself, as learning is a continuous, strategically used process- integrated with and turning parallel to work (Watkins and Marsick, 1997.)

Summary

This chapter aimed to describe the rationale and significance for the research study. The main concepts of the study, ethical climates and learning organizations were discussed, grounding each concept in the context of Cooperative Extension. The research hypotheses designed for the study were provided, as well as the conceptual framework developed for the guiding the study. Theoretical frames and definition of terms were briefly explained. The following chapter provides the literature base for each of the concepts as well as a foundation for the exploratory relationship between ethical climates and learning organizations.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

A cross-disciplinary approach has been taken to review and select literature for the support of this study. Sociology, business, education and psychology are a few of the areas of study that have been explored. Due to the extensive nature of each of the concepts, ethics and learning, a visual depiction has been provided as a guide for the context for literature support. Prior to explaining the literature base for the relationship between the two concepts, each framework will be presented independently in this chapter order to establish a strong research and literary body of knowledge.

In order to establish the frame for ethical climates within organizations, three bodies of literature were explored: within the ethics literature, organizational culture was examined, from which organizational climate was derived; organizational ethics are discussed as a component of organizational climate; and the ethical climate emerges from the examination of organizational ethics, and in turn, is established as an influential factor to the overall organizational culture

In framing the literature base for learning in organizations, the conversation began with organizational culture and within organizational culture, organizational learning is established as a contributing factor. Continuing from the tenets of organizational learning, the learning organization is established. Since the learning organization concept is often associated with organizational learning itself, the two are more specifically delineated to highlight their unique characteristics. The literature base on the relationship between ethical

climates and learning organizations is limited. A major goal of research is to contribute to the body of empirical research and support.

Ethics in organizations: Organizational culture

In establishing the literature base for ethics in organizations, one of the strongest conceptual roots lies within the realm of organizational culture. Organizational culture has often been regarded as the primary influence upon corporate behavior (Weber, 1993) and is often defined as the social or normative glue holding the organization together.

Organizational theorists posit that it influences all aspects of operations within an organization, including ethics, and it often provides the collective norm about what is and what is not appropriate action (Trevino, 1990). Although the terms “climate” and “culture” have been used interchangeably (Weber, 1993), the literature about culture gives more emphasis to the organization as a whole and does not emphasize strongly enough the influence of the individual’s perspective on the organization’s overall culture. Denison (1996) articulated the value of organization organizational culture:

Organizational culture refers to the deep structure of organizations, which is rooted in the values, beliefs, and assumptions held by organizational members. Meaning is established through socialization to a variety of identity groups that converge in the workplace.

Interaction reproduces a symbolic world that gives culture both a great stability and a certain precarious and fragile nature rooted in the dependence of the system on individual cognition and action (p. 624).

Organizational theorists share common language when defining “culture” within the organizational context. Becker and Geer’s (1970) early definition conceptualizes culture as a

set of common understandings that are expressed in language (Rousseau, 1990). Thompson and Luthans (1990) portrayed organizational culture as a complex part of the organizational environment with no standard definition. The only commonality is the perspective that organizational culture is considered a pattern of shared basic assumptions. Schein argued that the assumptions are learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration; these assumptions have worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the culture of the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1983; Schein, 2004).

From a theoretical standpoint, Thompson and Luthans (1990) point out that there are two perspectives from which to define organizational culture; the behavioral and the cognitive. The behaviorist approach is grounded in behavioral psychology (Bandura, 1977; Davis & Luthans, 1980; Skinner, 1983), where behavior is a function of consequences and is strongly associated with learning. The cognitive approach is system of shared knowledge or beliefs, in which culture is generated by the human mind. (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Rossi & O'Higgins, 1980; Smircich, 1983). Schein (1984, 2004) combined the cognitive and behavioral perspective within his approach to organizational culture. He proposed that there are three levels of organizational culture that progress from the unconscious to the visible. The first level includes the underlying assumptions that are often taken for granted at the affective level of cognition. The second level contains the beliefs and values that are reflected in organizational strategies, goals, and philosophies. The third and final level involves the artifacts that are recognizable at the organization's surface, but difficult to decipher, including stories, myths, and even the organizational climate.

When applied to Extension, Schien's three levels move from the underlying assumption that the organization is built upon democratic principles (Blewett, Keim, Leser, & Jones, 2008), to the organizational mission to extend knowledge throughout the organization and its surrounding communities (Campbell, 1995), to the traditional program efforts that brands Extension as community-based, grassroots organization (Herzfeld, 2001). Schein's holistic approach to organizational culture provides a foundation for understanding the influence of culture on organizational members and ultimately the climate that they perceive.

Ethics in organizations: Organizational climate

As suggested by Denison (1996), organizational climate is highly subjective in nature, as it depends on the description of forms and styles of behaviors in organizations.

Organizational environments are rooted in the organization's value system, but tend to present social environments in static terms, describing them in terms of a fixed set of dimensions. Thus climate is often considered as relatively temporary, subject to direct control, and largely limited to those aspects of the social environment that are consciously perceived by organizational members (p. 624).

Three major theoretical foundations were commonly attributed as being foundational in the literature: Gestalt theory (Murphy, 1950), Functionalism (Schneider, 1975), and Lewin's (1951) field theory. Although there are differences in content, each theory originates in the field of psychology. The Gestalt theoretical foundation of climate, which is rooted in social psychology, places emphasis on the perception of the organization. Focus should be placed on the organization as a "whole," as simply examining parts of the whole is not sufficient

(Schneider, 1975). Gestalt theory states that it is the role of the perceiver to instill order, especially in a situation that has a direct implication for behavior. Organizations have no choice but to create and apprehend order as there are cues that dictate responsive behaviors, resulting in the tendency of individuals to behave in a meaningful way.

A second common theory applied to organizational climate is based on the tenets of Functionalism. Schneider (1975) explains that Functionalism requires order to be apprehended and created so that people can function adaptively in their world, with a great deal of emphasis placed on the act of adaptation. Adaptation often occurs by organizational systems adapting to be in homeostatic balance with their environment with the hope that as people adapt to their environment, they perceive, explore, and think about their environment.

A third theoretical foundation discussed in the organizational climate literature is Kurt Lewin's (1951) field theory. Lewin's basic concept lies in the relationship between individuals and their social environments and is represented in the equation $B=f(P,E)$ in which B is behavior, E is environment, and P represents the person (Denison, 1996). According to Lewin's theory, within the organizational climate the ones who create the climate is often physically separated from the environment, but they do have some connection to it. Lewin uses the example of management, in that management promotes a work climate without being the one who is directly impacted by the environment being created. The subordinates of the organization work within the climate but do not create it. As a result, Lewin postulates that the behavior that manifests in an organizational climate is a result of an interaction between the environment and those who are not directly impacted by

it.

In empirical research, the impact of the organizational climate on attitudes or behaviors has been explored.(Fleischman, 1953; Fredericksen, Jensen, & Beaton, 1972; Schneider, 1975). Fleishman's (1953) research is an example of early empirical research on organizational climates. Fleischman explored how foremen adapted their behavior to the prevailing climate in a factory by behaving not as they were taught in a human relations program but in a style that fit their work climate, i.e., the way their supervisors behaved. Similar findings exist in research on aspects of organizational ethics: researchers (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005; Song, Kim, & Kolb, 2009) have found that ethical leadership influences the behavior of subordinates.

Fredericksen, Jensen, and Beaton's (1972) study examined how supervisory styles in specific organizational climates influenced employees' performance. Individuals who worked within a "rules" climate tended to look to supervisors for support while those who were included in the "innovative" conditions took novel approaches and used assistance from their peers. By manipulating administrative procedures and supervisory styles under which people worked, Fredericksen, et al. (1972) created experimental climates, resulting in defined consistent and inconsistent climates with depictions of patterns of performance, as well.

Despite previous empirical research on organizational climate, the ability to accurately "measure" climate has been debated (Forte, 2004). Litwin and Stringer (1986) developed an instrument to capture individuals' perceptions of the organization's climate.. Climate, according to Litwin and Stringer, influences organizational decisions by creating

certain kinds of beliefs about what kind of consequences will follow from various actions. From their research, Litwin and Stringer concluded that organizational climate properties can be perceived by members of an organization and reported on when given an appropriate questionnaire. Their work supports the belief that individuals' perceptions are often accurate portrayals of the organizational climate

Organizational climate & organizational culture

Within the literature there is an overlap between the constructs of organizational climate and organizational culture (Denison, 1996; Dickson, Smith, Grojean, & Ehrhart, 2001). Both concepts attempt to explain the process by which formal and informal rules develop to guide and govern behavior in organizations“” Empirical studies have also blurred the lines between the concepts of organizational culture and climate. Dennison (1996) provides the example of Chatman's (1991) research, which asked questions about risk taking as an organizational trait, framing the research in organizational culture; Litwin and Stringer (1968) asked similar questions with regard to risk taking, labeling their study within the context of organizational climate. The interchangeable use of terms makes it difficult to ascertain a specific path for empirical and theoretical growth for organizational culture, as many of the early studies were rooted in organizational climate. However, the difficulty with distinction of the two terms was not always the case. As stated by Schwartz and Davis (1981), a good way to understand what culture is, is to understand what culture is not.

Organizational culture and organizational climate hold similarities in that they are multi-layered, have a global application, and are rooted in the organizational systems of

beliefs, values, and assumptions (Denison, 1996). It is within the theoretical foundations of each that the most significant differences can be found. Despite both concepts being ingrained in the social sciences, the climate literature is heavily grounded in the field theory of Kurt Lewin (1951), while the culture literature is strongly identified with theories of symbolic interaction and social construction (Denison, 1996; Schein, 1984). More specifically, culture literature focuses on how social contexts develop as a result of social interactions and behavior adaptations within organizations, while the climate literature focuses on the perception of social contexts and their impacts on the organization.

A review of the literature revealed that organizational culture researchers were more concerned with the evolution of social systems (Schein, 1984; Smircich, 1983), while climate researchers were concerned with the impact of organizational systems on groups and individuals (Dickson, Smith, Grojean, & Ehrhart, 2001; Schneider, 1975). Culture researchers sought to explain the deeper understanding of underlying assumptions, individual meanings, and insider's points of view, while climate researchers emphasized the perceptions of observable practices and perceptions, organizing and defining them into individual organizational climate dimensions. Despite the research that has been conducted on the influential nature of organizational culture and organizational climate within the work environment, culture and climate only set the stage for the individual's behavior within the organization (Froelich & Kottke, 1991). Even though the organization supports the climate for ethical and unethical behavior, the organizational ethics are what ultimately impact and manifest in individual's behaviors.

Organizational ethics

“The term “ethics” evokes multiple interpretations. Ethics is commonly referred to as a philosophical term; it is derived from the Greek word “ethos,” meaning character or custom (Sims, 2003). In addition to the common theoretical frame for organizational ethics, there are two common approaches to ethics within organizations as well: the normative and the empirical. The normative approach draws from philosophy, theology, and political and social theory, requiring prescription, description, and analysis of the ethical situation. The empirical approach to ethics is strongly rooted in the Functionalist paradigm, emphasizing objective epistemology and the use of metaphysics. The normative approach focuses on what “ought to be” rather than “what is”.

According to Trevino and Weaver (2003), ethics in the organizational context has been strongly centered around the normative approach, focusing on ethically proper practices rather than solely relying upon the empirical or philosophical realms. Within research on business organizations, taking a strictly empirical approach would result in definable, measurable, and concrete strategies; the results are forced into categories, which does not allow much room for assumptions or interpretations. While a normative approach to ethical organization studies prescribe what is considered ideal by providing morally better alternatives, those alternatives are simply suggestions without empirical support and so may not provide effective management strategies.

In an effort to address both the approach of using a moral ideal and of using prescriptive managerial strategies, Trevino and Wilson discussed how a normative approach married with the empirical is commonly used in organizational ethics. There are a number of

relationships that have been constructed in order to explain how the two approaches interact (i.e., parallel relationships, symbiotic relationships); however, it is the theoretical integration of normative and empirical ethics that will provide a structure for this study. In order to frame the approach to business ethics used here, which demonstrates the duality of its structure, this study used an applied approach to ethics through the support of Giddens “structuration theory”. The duality is that, although structure supports intentional and meaningful actions, organizations also feel constrained by circumstantial factors.

From the structuration viewpoint, empirical theorizing must recognize that there is a mutual influence between agency and structure so that any relationship discovered could be different under a normatively different social and cognitive order. In turn, normative theorizing must recognize that its applicability may be limited, although it is possible for social and cognitive orders to be restructured to enhance applicability and feasibility of a particular normative ideal.

The notion of structure does not only involve framing the approach to business ethics; structure also influences how ethics are viewed as they are carried out within the organization. Over the past two decades, factors such as leadership development and formalized systems have built the structural view of ethics being implemented within organizations. Depending on the context and source, the foundation of ethics in the workplace can range from the leader who role models desired behaviors to the formalization of ethics through codes of conduct, whistle-blowing mechanisms, and compliance-based accountability measures (Foote & Ruona, 2008.) Although the focus for ethics in organizational development has often been preferred as a measure of prevention rather than

intervention, organizations are more often likely to treat ethical issues as they arise. Scholars and practitioners are supporting the notion that organizations need to move past complacency and maintaining the status quo for compliance and instead focus on developing ethics that will be sustained in the organizations. Research suggests that by aligning the culture, climate, and ethics of organization chances of sustainability are improved (Verbos et al, 2007).

The clearest definition of organizational ethics comes from the individual, in that Trevino, Weaver, and Brown (2008) found that the perceptions of organizations vary depending upon the level in an organization. While their research did not have a specific theoretical foundation for organizational ethics, Trevino et al. used social structural theories of identity (identity theory and social identity theory) to highlight the influence on perceptions of identity provided by a person's position in a social structure.

Grounding much of the literature on ethical theory is Kohlberg's theory of cognitive moral development (Forte, 2004; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Trevino, 1986; Trevino, Butterfield, & McCabe, 1998; Victor & Cullen, 1988). Kohlberg's theory addresses how the cognitive or reasoning processes of moral development becomes more complex and sophisticated over time (Kohlberg, 1969; Trevino & Weaver, 2003). Kohlberg's theoretical framework for moral development proposes that individuals sequentially pass through stages in a uni-directional progression from lower to higher levels of moral development (Forte, 2004; Kohlberg, 1969; Kohlberg, 1984). At the highest level of moral development, individuals are capable of using abstract, universal principles for moral reasoning.

While some organizational ethics theorists refer to frameworks such as Kohlberg's to

explain organizational ethics, some theorists emphasize components of an organization's ethical identity. In discussing an organization's ethics, Verbos, Gerard, Forshey, Harding, and Miller (2007) identify the components of an organization that create the its ethical identity as the organization's leaders, formal and informal organizational processes, and the organizational culture, which includes the ethical climate. Verbos et al.'s (2007) posits that organizational identity emerges from the multiplicative interaction of authentic leadership, aligned organizational processes, and ethical organizational culture. As a result of the positive development of organizational ethics, ethical practices are modeled and promoted through leaders, infused through a positive organizational context in formal and informal structures, and the ethical practices are sustained in the organizational culture.

As discussed previously, the organizational culture and organizational climate set the stage for the ethical behaviors (Froelich & Kottke, 1991). Behavioral aspects of the organizational ethics are expected to align with the cognitive and affective aspects of organizational culture. The relationship between organizational culture and organization's ethics becomes apparent as there is a heightened sense of ethical awareness within the organization and there is a positive ethical climate.

For the purpose of this study, employee's perspectives of their organization's ethical climate will be analyzed rather than the ethical culture in an effort to capture the "local" approach to ethical decisions, as described by Dickson et al. (2001). As discussed by Schneider (1975), through relying upon individual's perceptions, a sense of ownership is created. "If homeostasis is important and if people strive for homeostasis with their environment through perception then one may hypothesize that 1) it would be very difficult

for people to resist going along with a climate they perceive and 2) changing climate perceptions and changing behavior should be very difficult tasks” (Schneider, 1975, p.453). The reluctance to change suggests that people need some form of reference to maintain and that climate perceptions are functional simply because they provide that frame of reference.

Ethical climate

Ethical climate is a type of work climate that is best understood as a group of prescriptive climates reflecting the organizational procedures, policies, and practices with moral consequences (Victor and Cullen, 1988). Work climates are framed broadly in terms of organizational norms and conventions that are seen by organizational members to exist within the structure and procedures of the organization.

Ethical climates arise when organizational members believe that certain forms of ethical reasoning or behavior are expected standards for decision-making within the firm (Cullen, Parboteeah, & Victor, 2003). Essentially, the ethical climate is what is perceived as the right behavior with an individual’s actions being rooted in his or her own psychological mechanisms. Within all climates, ethical decision making is a complex process that is often influenced by a multitude of individual, organizational, situational, and external environmental factors (Jose & Thibodeaux, 1999).

Institutionalization theory is often applied to ethical climate as it explains and supports the systematic nature of ethical climates within organizations. Purcell and Weber originally discussed the concept of institutionalization of ethics within business in a corporate case study in 1979 (Weber, 1993). According to Weber, to institutionalize ethics

is to integrate ethics into all daily decisions making and work practices for all employees. Weber's multi-component model to Institutionalize Ethics in business suggests how ethics can infiltrate an organization, becoming an innate part of the entire organizational system.

The model has gradually built its reputation from the theory's ability to explain the degree to which an organization explicitly and implicitly incorporates ethics into its decision-making process (Foote & Ruona, 2008; Scott, 1995). By implicitly incorporating ethics, the presence of ethical behavior within an organization's culture is implied. While the behavior is not directly expressed, the impact of the behavior is understood as crucial. Explicitly incorporating ethics involves ethical behavior that is formally expressed without vagueness and is more apparent within the organization (Singhapakdi & Vitell, 2007). Both forms of incorporating ethics require influence from organizational leaders as well as possibly behavior change on part of the organizational members.

The Institutional Ethics Audit is a practical application of the Institutionalization of Ethics theory. The audit demonstrates how the institutionalization of ethics must be more than creating a written code of ethics. Each organization has a form of ethical climate embedded within its programs, however the organization might not know what that climate entails or the extent to which it impacts the organization (Jose & Thibodeaux, 1999). The Audit is designed to assess the firm's location on a continuum, providing insight as to how the firm can progress towards becoming an integrity firm (Whitehead & Novak, 2003). Three components of the organization are audited in order for the organization to be placed on the continuum: the ethical culture, the ethics policy and procedure, and the ethics training provided by the firm. The continuum establishes a gauge by which firms are determined to

be 1) aethical firms, 2) compliance firms, 3) emerging ethical firms, or 4) integrity firms (See table 2).

Table 2.

Identifying Ethical Firms

Aethical Firms	Generally ignore the need to institutionalize ethics into the daily decision-making processes of their employees. Due to either a lack of attention or a lack of effort to institutionalize their ethical business behaviors, aethical firms are highly vulnerable to unethical practices by their employees. This is because of the lack of fear of legal or social reprisal for unethical practices.
Compliance Firms	Motivated by fear of legal or social reprisal and have recognized the need to institutionalize ethics to some degree within the organization. Free from either of these reprisals, however, compliance firms may revert to the position of aethical firms.
Emerging Ethical Firms	Attempt to create an ethical work environment. This may be due to internal pressures, fear of increased government regulations, observations of competitors' unethical actions, or rank-and-file directives that go beyond what is legally required for ethics compliance.
Integrity Firms	Recognize the importance of ethical decision-making and ethical behaviors in pursuing their economical goals. Integrity firms fully understand and embrace the concepts embedded in the phrase "institutionalize ethics into the business organization." The integrity firm is at the pinnacle level that all firms are attempting to reach.

The continuum provides a framework for organizations to assess and understand the ethical climate, providing a structure for organizations to build upon (Weber, 1993). Despite its contribution to the ethical climates, the institutionalization of ethics does not go without challenges. A common difficulty in measuring an organization's ethical climate is the reliance upon individual's perception of his/her organization's ethics. Victor and Cullen

(1988) recognize that the various ethical climate types are dependent upon what is perceived by the members as ethical. Therefore in order to accurately measure the ethical climate, one must also be able to accurately measure individuals' perceptions.

According to Martin and Cullen (2006), there are three common factors that influence perceptions of an ethical climate; External organization context, organizational form, and strategic and managerial orientations. While each factor has been shown to strengthen and build the ethical climates within the organization, each factor also has implications for challenging the sustainability of the climates as well. The challenges within external environment and strategic and managerial orientation are explored in greater detail.

The external environment is currently impacting the development of organizational climates within organizations. The socio-economic trends of society are a strong factor stemming from the external environment. Cohen (1995) states that the "isolationism and pioneering mentality that have historically pervaded American industry are no longer appropriate for a nation that has moved well beyond the frontier into an urbanized social environment and global economy which demand a stronger emphasis on collective concerns" (p.15). In many of our profit-driven corporations, collective voices are often ignored, and as a result the sustainability of ethical climates decline.

As previously discussed, the non-profit sector's ethical climates are being challenged as well. The current issues specifically within Cooperative Extension raised the question of how the organization's ethical climate was perceived by Extension employees, with the larger question being how the ethical climate could be supported. Most of the existing literature on ethics and education focuses on ethical situations faced by educators within the

educational setting (ethics in education) rather than the ethics of education (Herzfeld, 2001). Research regarding ethics in and of Extension often falls into two types: 1) a small number of doctoral dissertations, surveys, or descriptive studies regarding values and 2) Extension organizational or institutional efforts to better understand learners and stakeholders and their views of Extension service.

Patton (1988) was one of the few individuals to examine of the underlying ethics of the Extension service. Patton referred to the institutional tensions as resulting from four broad themes he found in Extension work: 1) technology transfer to increase productivity; 2) education through the provisioning of information so people can make their own decisions; 3) helping people solve problems; and 4) building human capacity for long term development (p.481). Each of the themes represents different identities, values, and public ethics found throughout the Cooperative Extension system. With an exception of Patton's research, there is currently a limited amount of research on strategies that influence the ethical climate within Cooperative Extension. Within the proposed study, Ethical climate theory was chosen in an effort to determine 1) how the current ethical climate is perceived by local Extension faculty and 2) determine potential variables that can support a positive ethical climate.

Ethical Climate Theory

Ethical Climate Theory is being used to support this study for it's ability to effectively capture the complex relationships that exist between levels of analysis (individual perceptions, organizational structures, and external societal factors) and provides

an efficient theoretical frame from which to measure ethical climate perceptions. Ethical climate theory (ECT), as developed by Victor and Cullen (1988), represents a descriptive map of the ethical decisions and actions that shape the ethical climate within an organization, based on philosophical and sociological theory (see figure 3) (Martin and Cullen, 2006). ECT has been grounded and used in multiple disciplines, such as psychology, organizational behavior, and sociology.

Ethical climate theory posits that individuals adapt to their environment by learning the appropriate expected behavior through climate perceptions (Victor & Cullen, 1988). Victor and Cullen apply their theory to an assessment of ethical climate against the assumption that 1) each company or subunit has its own moral character, (2) group members know what this character is, and (3) group members can tell an outsider about their organization's moral character in an objective way (Victor, Cullen, & Stephens 1989, Weber, 1993).

Victor and Cullen's ethical climate theory shares a common philosophical ancestry with the ethical constructs of Kohlberg's theory of moral development. The theory hypothesizes that individuals move sequentially from state to stage in a uni-directional progression from lower to higher levels of morality (Kohlberg, 1984). Although Kohlberg's theory emphasizes the individual's moral development, both theories acknowledge the prevailing norms of the group, not only focusing on the individual's developmental process. Kohlberg found that the majority of individuals do not reach the highest level of moral development, but instead function at lower levels of their peers and legally supported expectations.

Victor and Cullen assumed that corporate ethical climates evolved in a similar dimension. They concluded that corporations have distinct ethical types, that climate types influence what ethical conflicts are considered and the process by which the conflicts would be resolved, and that climate influences managerial behavior (Forte, 2004; Victor & Cullen, 1988). The climate type ultimately prescribes the decisions and actions that are taken to address ethical dilemmas within the organization.

Victor and Cullen use three loci of analysis to explain the influence of individual, organizational and societal factors on ethical climate in organizations. The individual level, the local, and the cosmopolitan are cross-dimensionally compared to the philosophical approaches. The concept of cross-dimensionally examining the philosophical ethical foundations with the locus of analysis originated in sociological theory as it related to organizational development (Martin & Cullen, 2006) and provides insight into how individual's perceive their organization makes ethical decisions. The individual locus refers to where the organizational member makes decisions alone. The local locus refers to the organization itself, while all entities, issues, and subjects external to the organization are classified as the cosmopolitan locus.

The philosophical approaches of used within ECT are the guidelines by which ethical decisions are framed (Martin & Cullen, 2006). Each construct is based in philosophical underpinnings of ethics; Egoism, benevolence (utilitarianism), and principle (deontology) dimensions. The first construct, egoism, applies to behaviors that are concerned first and foremost with self-interest and self-interest maximizing behavior. The two other constructs are not as focused on the individual and are instead concerned with the

well-being of others. Utilitarianism applies to the basis of decisions and actions that arrive at the greatest good outcome for the greatest number of people. The third construct, deontology, classifies the behaviors that are guided by principle, rules, law, codes, and procedures, of which specify decisions and actions for the good of others.

Each philosophical theory differs in terms of the basic criteria used in moral reasoning, reflecting the aforementioned similarities between moral development and ethical reasoning. Each theory is further discussed to establish the contextual differences and the implications each has for ethical decision making within organizations.

Egoism

The egoistic philosophical paradigm has commonly been grounded in the disciplinary field of psychology and attributed to the philosophical teachings of Thomas Hobbes (Bowie, 1991). Ethical egoism posits that it is an individual's moral obligation to do what promotes his own good or welfare (Kagan, 1998). Egoism is primarily based upon "the maximization of self-interest" (Martin & Cullen, 2006; Cullen, Parboteeah, & Victor, 2003). The initiative to make the decision comes directly from the individual, ignoring the needs or the interests of others. Within the egoistic climate the prevailing interests of the individual has the capacity to dictate the course of action the organization may take. The egoistic ethical climate implies that employees perceive that the organization generally promotes self-interested decisions at the expense of other stakeholders.

In a 2003 study, Cullen et al. found that egoistical ethical climates are negatively related to organizational commitment. "If individuals perceive an egoistic or self-interested climate, they believe they are encouraged by the organization to promote their own self-

interest and probably also view other employees as self-interested (p.12).” Employees may feel that it is ‘in their best interest’ to reward themselves for their hard work by taking an extra hour at lunch time, or skimming a few dollars off the top of a budget line item for their compensation. Egoistic climates are less likely to form cohesive groups, another antecedent Cullen et al. found to organizational commitment.

Utilitarianism

The utilitarian approach to ethics (also referenced in the works of consequentialism) is grounded in the philosophical teachings of John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham. Utilitarianism focuses on bringing the greatest amount of good to the greatest number of individuals (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1994; Mill, 1965). From the utilitarian perspective, it does not matter to whom the benefit or the burden falls as a result of the ethical decision as greater importance is placed on the magnitude of the benefit or the burden (Copp, 2006). The decision-maker seeks the alternative that maximizes all of the interests involved, even if it means a lesser satisfaction for a particular individual’s needs (Cullen et al., 2003). Those organizational members of the utilitarian ethical perspective see their organization as having a vested interest in the well-being of others.

The Utilitarian climate, also referred to as the benevolent climate, carries the expectation that each organizational member is concerned with the well being of each other internal and external to the organization (Victor & Cullen, 1988). Common characteristics of professionals within the utilitarian climate are cooperation, mutual respect, and positive feelings about tasks. As the communitarian aspects of utilitarianism are instilled in the organizational climate, so is the support for group cohesiveness among organizational

members. In their 2003 study, Cullen et al. found that organizational commitment is positively related to utilitarian ethical climates.

Deontology

Deontology is grounded in the philosophical teachings of Immanuel Kant (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1994; Kagan, 1998). Within the deontological ethical climate perspective, there are set principles by which policy, procedures and behaviors are managed. A common approach to deontological ethics in business is the development of a code of ethics (Weber, 1993). Too often ethical codes are equated with the instillation of an ethical environment. After decades of political and corporate scandals, ethical codes were used to publicize virtues and create positive impressions with stakeholders (Stevens, 2008). Critics argued that codes were simply tools for Public Relations while others genuinely believed it could influence ethical behavior in organizations. Historically, ethical codes:

- 1) were originally referred to as creeds or credos, more recently referred to as written documents which attempt to state major philosophical principles and articulate values embraced by the organization.
- 2) articulate ethical parameters of organizations.
- 3) policy documents defining responsibilities of the organization to stakeholders and articulate conduct expectation of employees.
- 4) instruments to enhance social responsibility, clarify norms and values organizations seeks to uphold. (Stevens, 2008)

As previously mentioned, a common misperception is that an ethical code equals an ethical climate within an organization. Research has shown that there is an inconsistent link

between ethical codes and ethical behavior (Matthews, 1987; Weeks & Nantel, 1992) and that additional processes and systems need to be in place. Formal ethical programs generally include the following key elements: written standards of conduct that are communicated and disseminated to all employees, ethics training, ethics advice lines and offices, and systems for anonymous reporting of misconduct (Trevino & Brown, 2004). The research surrounding these codes often tends to emphasize a practitioner's "how-to" approach to ethics.

Ethical Climate Questionnaire

In an effort to effectively measure the ethical climate of an organization, Victor and Cullen developed the Ethical Climate Questionnaire. By measuring an organization's ethical climate, the organization as well as its constituents gain heightened importance for the application of ethics within their institution (Martin & Cullen, 2006). The measured ethical climate not only influences which issues are considered ethically pertinent, but also determines the moral criteria members use to understand, weigh, and resolve such issues (Cullen, Victor, & Stephens, 1989).

The ECQ is designed to collect individual's perceptions of the ethical norms of his/her organization, based on the assumption that ethical climates in organizations are divided similarly to Kohlberg's ethical standards (Cullen, Victor, & Bronson, 1993). The instrument was created to analyze the respondents' perceptions of how the members of the organization typically make decisions regarding various events, practices and procedures that require ethical criteria (Victor & Cullen, 1987; Cullen et al., 1993). Questionnaire responses have

indicated the multidimensional nature of ethical climates and therefore are able to substantiate the presence of hypothesized climates. The ECQ was developed on the assumption that individuals can act as objective organizational observers of climates within their organizations. As a result, the instrument places emphasis on the observers reporting of the perceived ethical climate rather than an evaluation of the climate.

The use of Victor and Cullen's Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ) has been wide spread over the past two decades. Studies have examined variables such as elements of organizational design (Weber, 1995), employees' attitudes and behaviors (Trevino, Butterfield, & McCabe, 1998), organizational commitment and innovation (Cullen, Parboteeah, & Victor, 2003; Ruppel & Harrington, 2000), and ethical leadership (Forte, 2004). While these examples of research are only a few of the studies which used the ECQ, each of these studies has contributed to the validity of the ECQ as well as the body of literature that surrounds ethical climates.

Weber (1995) used the instrument to analyze the influence of departmental tasks and stakeholder relationships (elements of organizational design) on the perceived ethical decision-making framework used by employees that ultimately resulted in ethical sub-climates. By analyzing the linkage between the differences in elements of organizational design and ethical climates, Weber hypothesized that ethical behavior could be influenced by the ethical decisions being made. Through his research, Weber found that the strength of the influence of departmental tasks and stakeholder relationships ultimately impacted the ethical sub-climates.

Trevino, Butterfield, and McCabe's (1998) study explored the similarities and

differences between ethical culture and climates while also gaining a better understanding of the relationship between the ethical organizational context and employees attitudes and behaviors. Significant relationships were revealed between several factors and ethical climates and ethical culture, upholding the study's proposed theory that the ethical context of the organization is associated with employee attitudes and behaviors. Employee-focused and community-focused climates were the most consistent climate dimensions to be associated with commitment. Research results reinforce the fact that climates that focus on self-interest promotes unethical conduct as well as has a negative influence on organizational commitment. Despite Trevino et al.'s (1998) prediction that ethical cultures would more strongly associate with ethical conduct, results showed that ethical climates emerged as better predictors in non-code organizations. The overall research results are further validated by Cullen, Parboteeah, and Victor's (2003) study on ethical climates and organizational commitment.

The ECQ has also been used to assess organizational levels of innovation and commitment (Cullen et al, 2003; Ruppel & Harrington, 2000). The popular press has suggested that the corporate climate and manager's sense of trust impact the adoption of some technological innovations (Ruppel & Harrington, 2000). Ruppel and Harrington suggest that a corporate climate oriented around either extreme, management self-interests or extended stakeholder interests, is a manifestation of managerial actions over time that have or have not been 'right', 'just', or 'fair'. Hosmer's (1994) has hypothesized that managements 'right', 'just', or 'fair' treatment of employees leads to commitment and innovation. From their research, Ruppel and Harrington found that individuals who argue

moral management and promote trust amongst organizational constituents have the potential to improve rates of individual's organizational commitment.

Forte's (2004) study attempted to determine the relationship between managers' locus of control and their moral reasoning ability. The study considered three independent variables; reported organizational ethical climate, locus of control, and selected demographic and institutional variables. Research was grounded in Kohlberg's theory of moral development, Victor and Cullens ethical climate theory, and Rotter's theory of internal-external locus of control.

Despite a number of studies that have been conducted on ethical climate and other organizational factors (i.e. job satisfaction, commitment, innovation) limited empirical research has been conducted on learning as an influential variable on ethical climate. Within the proposed study, the ECQ will be used to examine the predictive relationship between ethical climates and the learning organization. However prior to exploring the potential relationship between the two concepts of learning and ethics, the literature surrounding the learning organization is explored.

Learning in organizations: Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is a broad term that has many components; ethics has previously been discussed as one component (Schein, 2004; Trevino, 1990). Organizational culture incorporates essential elements organizational learning as the culture of an organization has the capacity to manifest itself in a multitude of ideologies and patterns of behavior (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Schein, 1983). From this perspective, culture is made up of

shared beliefs and norms that influences organizational action, behavior, and identity. During times of change, learning in organizations is required, often resulting in a restructuring of norms and belief systems (Argyris & Schon, 1978). A current trend in the literature in regards to change in organizations is identified as organizational learning (Armstrong & Foley, 2003). Organizational learning emphasizes the interaction processes between an individual and an organization with a schema that includes the combination of informational content, a learning product, and most importantly the learning process (Argyris & Schon, 2001). In order for an organizational culture to reflect organizational learning, three conditions need to be established: change in cognition, change in potential behavior, and change in actual behavior (Tsang, 1997). As an impetus for change in organizational culture, the process of organizational learning has implications for the ethical climate within the organizational culture. Organizational learning is further discussed in an effort to demonstrate the relationship between the concepts of ethics and learning in organizations.

Organizational learning

Organizational learning has been depicted into perspectives, criteria, even themes,. Organizational learning as defined by Argyris and Schon (1996) is the process of creating or capturing knowledge and then retaining it in a useful form. Generally speaking, an organization may be considered learning when it acquires new information (knowledge, understanding, know-how, technical skills) of whatever kind and by whatever means. While there is flexibility in the forms of information, there is a prescriptive structure to which the learning occurs. According to Argyris and Schon, there must be a learning product, a

learning process, and a learner. Adhering to a specified routine increases the chance of reaching the intended outcome of the learning experience.

The notion of organizational learning has received criticism since its inception. When Argyris and Schon (1996) began their research on the subject in the early 1970s, social scientists balked at their notion that an organization, not just an individual, could learn. In response to the skepticism, Argyris and Schon suggested that critics should 1) adopt the stance of a detached or distant spectator so that the organizational unit or sub-unit can be seen as a monolithic entity and 2) treat that entity as an impersonal agent. (Argyris & Schon, 1996, p 5). The portrayal of an organization as an impersonal agent allows stakeholders and alike to view the organization as accepting tasks as individual or team of individuals. Agents are able to compete against one another, be assigned certain tasks or skills, impact social environments, and even learn new information. From this perspective, the organization is able to take on life-like characteristics, linking organizational learning to the practitioners' thoughts and actions.

The literature surrounding organizational learning has often included terms and themes such as change, learning and adaptation, with an expected outcome being the organization adjusting to their environment (Yang, Watkins, & Marsick, 2004). Fiol and Lyles (1985) clarified the distinction between organizational learning and organizational adaptation, emphasizing the fact that adaptation does not necessarily imply learning. In order for change to occur, learning must be captured and embedded in ongoing systems, practices, and structures so that it can be shared and regularly used to intentionally improve changes in knowledge performance (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). In addition, learning must

be facilitated amongst all organizational members and must continuously transform itself in order to meet its strategic goals (Pedler & Burgoyne, 1991). The collaborative effort of embedding the learning in organizational systems and engaging all members of the organization in the learning process, effectively supports learning on the organizational level.

Collaborative effort: Learning on the organizational level

As discussed by Watkins and Marsick, for learning to occur efficiently, change must occur at every level of learning. The resulting changes must become new practices that enable and support the ability to use learning to improve performance. Learning by individuals is necessary for the organization to change but is not sufficient. When individuals increase their capacity to learn, they can (collectively) enhance the overall capacity of the organization to learn as long as the organization is receptive to their efforts to use their learning and puts in place appropriate mechanisms to enable, support, and reward the use of what is learned.

Within the learning process of organizational learning, the learning organization is created. With the creation of the learning organization, the organizational entity not only becomes adaptive but also develops a “generative” capacity, creating the possibility for change and an alternative future (Senge, 1990). As the product of the organizational learning process, the learning organization has the ability to scan its environment for information, independently create information, and promote individuals to transform information into new knowledge (Song, Joo, & Chermack, 2009). In relation to the previous

discussion on ethical climates, the learning organization has the potential to help scan the organizational environment for areas of ethical distress in hopes of promoting new knowledge. The concept of the learning organization is further discussed in an effort to continue to build the conceptual relationship between ethics and learning. However prior to exploring the implications for the learning organization, the relationship between the concepts of organizational learning and the learning organization is further explained.

Organizational learning versus the learning organization

It is essential that one understand the relationship between organizational learning and a learning organization. The two terms are often used interchangeably despite distinct differences. In addition, much of the foundational research for the learning organization stems from organizational learning. Armstrong and Foley (2003) delineate between the two concepts positing that one is more of a means (learning organization) to an end (organizational learning). Organizational learning is viewed as the process involved in individual and collective learning inside organizations while the learning organization literature has an action orientation, geared toward using specific diagnostic and evaluative methodological tools that can help to identify, promote and evaluate the quality of the learning process inside organizations. From a research perspective, the learning organization is more commonly associated with individual and group outcomes, including techniques such as system analysis.

A causal relationship is supported in the literature proposing that the learning organization is the tangible product from a systemic process called organizational learning. Calvert, Mobley, and Marshall (1994) conducted focus groups made up of HRD

professionals to understand the nature of learning organizations and the impact they have on the field of HRD. Focus group participants were asked how they delineate between the terms 'learning organization' and 'organizational learning'. The consensus was that the learning organization is one that excels at the act of advanced, systematic, collective learning while organizational learning refers to the method of collective learning.

Armstrong and Foley (2003) concluded that organizational learning emphasizes the interaction processes between an individual and an organization while the learning organization is the action orientation taken to diagnose and measure the processes. From a similar viewpoint, Agrygis and Schon (1996) determined that the general schema of organizational learning includes the combination of informational content, a learning product, and most importantly the learning process..

In addition to the causal relationships discussed in the literature, there is also the perspective that one concept is a component of the other, i.e. organizational learning is a component within the learning organization. The role that organizational learning plays within the learning organization also varies. In some capacities, organizational learning highlights the structural issues while the learning organization focus on the necessary skills and knowledge within the structure (Leitch, Harrison, Burgoyne, & Blanter, 1996). Ford (2006) discerned that the learning organization evolved from the concept of organizational learning, Ortenblad (2002) created a typology of the idea of a learning organization, suggesting that there are four perspectives of the learning organization; old organizational learning, learning at work, learning climate, and learning structure. Ortenblad identifies organizational learning as one aspect of a learning organization.

Aside from the various relationship perspectives on organizational learning and the learning organization, there are also differences in the literature base for each concept. The literature on organizational learning emerged from academic inquiry while literature on the learning organization developed primarily from practice (Easterby-Smith, 1997; Konthoghiores, Awbrey, & Feurig, 2005). The literature also suggests that while learning takes place naturally within organizational learning, the steps involved in creating a learning organization create opportunity for successes (advantages) as well as challenges (disadvantages) (Dodgson, 1993).

For the purpose of this literature review, the review was framed from the perspective that the learning organization is the product of the organizational learning process. A large part of the conceptual frame for this study seeks to understand how Cooperative Extension emulates specific dimensions of a learning organization. The concept of learning organization was chosen for its ability to be measured against other organizational concepts, such as ethical climates. Prior to discussing the types of measurement associated with the learning organization, a discussion on the literature surrounding the learning organization is provided.

The learning organization

Although each study reviewed interpreted the concept of the learning organization differently, several common themes emerged. The definition used in the present study was based upon a combination of the themes, defining a learning organization as one that facilitates learning with all of its members and continuously transforms itself in order to meet the organization's strategic goals (Pedler, Burgoyne, & Boydell, 1991) and where

people continually expand their capacity to create results they truly desire (Senge, 1990).

Although there are positive applications associated with the learning organization, some professionals are still skeptical of the concept (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999). Garvin (1993) classifies the criticisms and disadvantages associated with the learning organization into the three M's; meaning, measurement, and management. Critics acclaim that the concept of learning organization lacks a well-grounded definition that is actionable and easy to apply, as it has been considered as highly philosophic in nature (Easterby-Smith et al., 1999). In relation to the weak sense of 'meaning', the learning organization has been regarded as difficult to measure, challenging the development of tools for assessing an organization's rate of learning. The third m, management, claims that the learning organization lacks clear guidelines for practice for managers. With the fluid nature of the learning organization, managers question how they will know when their companies have become a learning organizations and what concrete changes in behavior are required.

However despite the occasional criticism, the advantages of a learning organization have shown to enhance more often than hinder organizational development (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999). The practical application of a learning organization allows for the creation of innovative strategies, open organizational systems, knowledge development, and improved performance. Garvin's three Ms are discussed throughout the discussion on learning organizations, not in order to highlight the criticisms but to instead provide insight into the benefits of the learning organization. The benefits are discussed in an effort to establish the premise for Cooperative Extension as a learning organization.

Benefits of learning organizations

Although Garvin (1993) argued that one of the greatest criticisms of the learning organization concept was a lack of meaning, a review of the literature would argue otherwise. While various theorists and practitioners have their own interpretation of the meaning of a learning organization (i.e. Agryris & Schon, 1996; Ortenblad, 2002; Yang, Marsick & Watkins, 2004), the underlying themes were similar. Senge (1990) explains that a learning organization is one that facilitates the learning of all of its members and where people continually expand their capacity to create results they truly desire. Within the learning organization, new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, collective aspirations are set free, and people are continually learning how to learn together (Senge, 1990). The collective capacity to learn becomes a product rather than a process, providing support for innovation, adaptation and improved performance (Cavaleri, 2004; Konthoghiores, Awbrey, & Feurig, 2005).

The application of a learning organization has been shown to enhance overall innovation as well as create open communication systems and strategies (Ford, 2006). Ford found that the development of a learning organization is an effective way of creating innovative strategy in which space for new communication interaction is created and gives voice to decision-making processes. The creation of the open process of sharing information creates an environment that is conducive to learning. When employees feel that when a conversation or learning experience is not dominated by one individual, the information disclosed is more accurate and willingly shared. The ability to freely participate without the fear of retribution encourages openness and risk-taking on part of the individual. A practical

implication of the employee's act of engaging in the organization could potentially impact the level of employee retention and commitment to the organization as a whole, as well as promote a positive environment (Ford, 2006).

Open organizational systems that result from a learning organization also promote a positive environment and enables an organizations to create change. Konthoghiores, Awbrey, & Feurig (2005) use the term 'holographic entities' to describe the open systems process required for the learning organization to adapt and change rapidly (p 14). In a recent study Konthoghiores et al. found that the organizational interventions that take a systems approach (structural, cultural and communication) are more likely to produce increased levels of performance, change adaptation, and innovation than those interventions focused solely on learning. The open-system component of the learning organization becomes a strong predictor of the organization's ability to change rapidly.

Within the context of this study, the open process of sharing information (as well as open organizational systems (Konthoghiores, Awbrey, & Feurig (2005) has the potential to influence climate perceptions as well. For example, Schneider's (1975) discussion on Functionalism embraces the concept of adaptation by organizational systems, essentially creating a homeostatic balance within the organizational environment. The open organizational systems that results from the creation of a learning organization also has the potential to influence the perceived climates regarding ethics. However in order for the open-organizational system to be sustained, the management of the learning organization needs to support the learning organization.

From a management perspective, in order for organizations to adopt the continual

learning component of a learning organization and promote innovation and change, power structures must be flexible (Ortenblad, 2004). Power must be shared through the daily collaborative practices that facilitate learning, engaging support for change across all levels within the organization (Watkins & Marsick, 2003). Ortenblad proposed that learning must happen at three levels, two of which are based upon Argyris and Schon's (2002) loop learning theory. With single-loop learning, organizations must continually improve the way of doing things while with double-loop learning, organizations question their course of action, and ultimately become aware of how they single and double-loop learn (deutero learning). With the multi-level (single and double loop) approach to learning within the organization, innovative strategies have a greater chance of being implemented and change becomes possible.

Building the organization's body of knowledge is another fervent advantage that comes with the application of a learning organization. Through knowledge creation, the process of learning and change enables an organization to continuously transform itself (Cavaleri, 2004; Leitch, Harrison, Burgoyne, & Blanton, 1996). The knowledge development process provides the opportunity to create a clear vision and mission, promoting not only competitiveness in the corporate world, but will also promote development of employees, developing all staff to their full potential. Jones and Hendry (1992) found that an organization that has a reputation for knowledge building attracts some of the best employees, is known for exemplary human resource procedures, and is more adept at accommodating tensions and changes in policy (Jones & Hendry, 1992).

However knowledge building may not be enough of an incentive for organizations to

shift culture or operating procedures. One of the incentives most often discussed in the learning organization literature is improved performance. Jashapara (2003) found that organizations that continually question their underlying assumptions and change as a result of what they learn are more likely to show signs of improved performance, ultimately achieving competitive advantages. Ellinger, Ellinger, Yang, and Howton (2003) found there were definitive links between aspects of the learning organization and organizational performance. The presence of several learning organization dimensions (continuous learning, empowerment, and dialogue and inquiry) explained significant levels of variance in an organization's financial performance.

It is imperative that learning be measured, captured and embedded in ongoing systems, practices, and structures so that it can be shared and regularly used to intentionally improve changes in performance (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). However one of the challenges associated with the learning organization is that it is difficult to measure (Yang, Watkins, & Marsick, 2004). Whether the incentive is knowledge building or improved performance, the impact on the organization is difficult to determine. Garvin (1993) attributes the difficulty with measurement to aspects of the learning organization itself, stating that the tendency for companies to focus on price and output variables suggests that the 'driver' of the learning experience is heavily based on production rather than valuing quality or innovation. According to Garvin, (1993) the meaning derived from the learning organization becomes lost in the quest for radical change while the influential incremental changes that occur go unnoticed or lost. The research on measuring the learning organizations would suggest otherwise. A discussion of the research on the learning

organization follows, providing theoretical and empirical research support for examining Cooperative Extension as a learning organization, as well as the relationship with ethical climates.

Measuring the learning organization

The research surrounding learning organizations has been examined from both the positivist and interpretivist paradigm; providing the concept with theoretical, empirical, and practical support. From a review of the literature, a great deal of early learning organization studies adopted a qualitative approach with a research design promoting grounded theory, also commonly referred to as theory building. The theory-building studies provided literature support to a field that was early in the stages of development. A literature review on the measurement qualities of learning organizations revealed that many qualitative studies are referenced in quantitative studies, providing theoretical frameworks for research hypothesis and questions.

The strategies used within qualitative approaches to research have expanded over the past few decades. Methods of inquiry such as case studies, ethnographies, and grounded theory building requires the researcher to collect open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from research results (Creswell, 2003). Many of the initial studies on learning organizations sought to create patterns and theories from social, historical, and individual experience and meanings.

Cangelosi and Dill (1965) is an example of one of the early studies that examined the learning organization from the context of experiences within organizational development.

Observation and interviews were taken from team learning experiences during a management exercise in an effort to determine how the teams learn. As a result of their research, Cangelosi and Dill found that the process of organizational learning within the learning organization must be viewed as a series of interactions between adaptation at the individual or subgroup level and at the organizational level. The adaptations are a result of interactions between three types of stress; discomfort, performance, and disjunctive. Although the study made contributions to the organizational learning and learning organizational research base, the question still remains whether or not organizational learning is individual learning in organizations, or if it was possible for the entire organization to learn (Prange, 1999). Easterby-Smith and Araujo (1999) reference Cangelosi and Dill's study as one of the preliminary studies to provide a framework for understanding the role of the individual in the learning organization.

As previously discussed, much of the qualitative research focused on theory building for support of the learning organization. Current studies show that the theory-building trend has not changed. Ford (2006) conducted a study focused on how to sustain the power structure in learning organizations while supporting the possibility of change through organizational learning. The research design enabled multiple perspectives to be collected, identifying the concept that shared power across all levels is necessary to sustain a learning organization, ultimately promoting change and creating flexible boundaries.

While flexible boundaries enables one to interpret research findings to fit specific purposes, flexibility also creates questionable credibility of results. In addition, much of the data used was collected several years prior to Ford's study. The use of 'older' data

sometimes weakens the richness of the data, as the richness of the action was not observed (Ford, 2006). Despite the slight flaws in design, Ford's theory on sustaining power within the learning organization provides foundational support for future power structure and change research in learning organizations. In many studies, the perspective from only one paradigm is not enough to capture or interpret the outcomes. In an effort to holistically examine and measure a research problem, a mixed-methods approach is taken. Several studies on learning organizations used a mixed-methods approach, providing researchers with both subjective and objective information. While much of the early qualitative research focused on theory development, a number of mixed-methods studies have aimed at instrument development.

Leitch, Harrison, Burgoyne, and Blanter (1996) conducted a study as an attempt to establish the relationship between learning organization characteristics and organizational performance. Within a case study, Leitch et al. used an action research design to create a questionnaire to assess learning organizations along a set continuum of performance measures. The action research approach allowed for organizational members and constituents to take a participatory role in the study, while learning about their role with the organization as well.

Easterby-Smith and Araujo commented in 1999 that there had been a shortage of empirical work on learning organizations and believed the pattern was destined not to change. However trends in recent research suggests differently. One of the common research objectives in the quantitative studies reviewed was the goal of establishing a relationship between the concept of the learning organization and indicators of organizational

performance.

Ellinger, Ellinger, Yang , and Howton (2003) specifically focused on the relationship between the learning organization and a firm's financial performance. Ellinger et al. proposed that the improved financial performance associated with the dimensions of a learning organization provides justification for the time and effort it takes to implement initiatives associated with learning organizations. Results emphasize the importance of creating a learning organization to reluctant senior managers and business leaders, as they may view performance enhancement as an incentive to change. Research results showed that are beneficial gains for organizations that adopt practices and strategies associated with the learning organization.

While a number of quantitative studies have focused on identifying the factors that correlate with the learning organization, the literature review revealed there have also been a number of attempts to measure the learning organization itself. A great deal of the research surrounding the learning organization concept has attempted to place the organization on a continuum or assign a statistical value to the learning mechanisms within the organization. A number of studies have been conducted in an effort to create an instrument that would measure the essential elements of the learning organization (Marsick & Watkins, 2003; Song, Joo, & Chermack, 2009; Yang, Marsick & Watkins,). One of the greatest contributions of the research on measuring the learning organization was the development of the Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ) by Marsick and Watkins (2003). The support for the DLOQ follows, along with the justification for the use of the instrument within the present study.

The Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire

In an effort to measure the important shifts in an organization's climate, culture, systems, and structures that influence whether individuals learn, Marsick and Watkins (2003) created the Dimensions of Learning Organizations Questionnaire (DLOQ). The seven-factor structure (see Table 1, page 16) provides a framework for studying learning dimensions and their relations with other organizational performance variables. In a 2004 validation study, Yang, Marsick and Watkins designed a study to strengthen the construct validity of the DLOQ. Reliability testing included Cronbach's alpha for internal validity as well as a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for construct validity. Structural equation modeling was used to assess the relationship between the learning organization dimensions and organizational performance measures. Although the sample was not very expansive and diverse, the research design and methodology strengthened the existing instruments credibility and validity.

Other researchers have picked up where Marsick, Yang, and Watkins left off and have validated the instrument in a variety of context. A recent study conducted by Song, Joo, and Chermack (2009) validated the DLOQ in a Korean industry context. The research methodology was inclusive of the techniques for a instrument validation study (Cronbach's alpha, factor analysis, structural equation modeling), however lacked a measure for the organizational cultural factors. Other researchers in the realm of learning organizations have tested the purpose of Watkins and Marsick questionnaire. Ellinger, Ellinger, Yang and Howton (2003) used the DLOQ to measure the relationship between the learning organization and a firm's financial performance. Research results showed that there

beneficial gains for organizations that adopt practices and strategies consistent with the learning organization literature.

Current review of the literature revealed that there are currently no studies within the context of higher education that have used the DLOQ. Boyce (2003) discusses organizational learning as an essential method of achieving and sustaining change in higher education. Through the support of organizational learning colleges and universities are able to develop coherence among their parts. The strategic dimensions of the learning organization are then employed to build connectedness between the institutional members and the constituents of the organization. The proposed study has been designed to determine what level of learning Cooperative Extension employees perceive their organization to support.

For the purpose of this study, two of Watkins and Marsick seven dimensions of a learning organization were chosen for the strong reflection of the organizational level mission of Cooperative Extension, as well as the Land Grant University. As the major outreach component of higher education institutions, Cooperative Extension is charged with engagement with local communities. At the time of Cooperative Extensions inception in 1914, the term 'Cooperative' was assigned to the organization in reference to the partnership between the federal, state, and county governments that support the extension program (Mc Dowell, 2003). Cooperative Extension was built on the premise of extending agricultural knowledge and practices to farmers that contributed to a large amount of the crop production in the early twentieth century (Campell, 1995). Currently Cooperative Extension extends it's reach from farmers to all members of the community, addressing societal issues such as

health, the economy, and education.

The organizational level dimensions from Watkins and Marsick's DLOQ, connection to the environment and leaders support and model learning, resemble the organizational mission and structure of Cooperative Extension and therefore were chosen to relate to the organization's ethical climate. Each dimension reflects the unique qualities higher education institutions possess as well as potential to help shape the ethical climate within the organization.

The DLOQ dimension 'Connection to the environment' strongly reflects the mission of Land-grant institutions is the organization's connection to its environment. As discussed by Jackson:

Universities should never think of themselves as agencies of government or departments of state, no matter how worthy the purposes of government may be thought to be. They should understand themselves above all as social institutions: as an essential part of the fabric of a vigorous and dynamic civil society, both contributing to the wider life of that society and at the same time open to the impulses and energies flowing from that wider life (p, 105).

Within Jackson's principle, the inference for the land-grant university is even more detrimental, as within LGU's there is a strong amount of engagement and outreach within the community. In the late 19th century the need for educational reform resulted in the creation of the land grant university (Campbell, 1995). The premise of the land grant university, service to the public, requires a high level of public support. The Land-Grant University initiated revolutionary change in the history of higher education. Mc Dowell

(2003) cites three ways in which the LGU effectively connected with the surrounding environment:

- 1) Classrooms and degrees were accessible to the working classes
- 2) The agenda of scholarship considered no subject beneath its purview
- 3) Access was provided to new knowledge to those who would never qualify, nor want, to be in class rooms (p 35)

Through teaching, research, and public-service programs, land grant universities have contributed to the overall growth, productivity, and efficiency of the U.S. economy (Campbell, 1995). As the outreach component of the LGUs, Cooperative Extension's programs become intertwined with the surrounding environment, reflecting the essential components of the 'Connection the Environment' DLOQ dimension. Within Watkins and Marsick's connection to the environment dimension, organizational members are responsible for scanning the environment in an effort to adjust work practices so they align with local communities. The connection enables a stronger transference of information, as well as more accurately assessed community needs.

The second DLOQ chosen for this study was the organizational leaders ability to model and support learning. Within Watkins and Marsick and Watkins (2003) framework, leaders model, champion, and support learning; using learning strategies to optimize results in service. As discussed by Patton (1986), Extension's offers a broad scope of informal, community-based education initiatives that are centered on the interests of the people served by Extension. Extensions 'bottom-up' program development process is unique to the higher education system. Knowledge transfer begins in the local communities and feeds into the

university, resulting in targeted programs. However, in order for the needs to be effectively assessed and programs developed, organizational leaders must ensure field faculty possesses the capacity to meet those needs as well as the leader possessing the knowledge as well.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the organizational model of Cooperative Extension heavily relies upon the local environments expressing a need, the state level interprets and developing resources to address the local needs, field faculty are trained on the resources and deliver the appropriate curriculum. Weldy (2009) suggests that the learning organization and the transfer of training are both essential tools for learning and managing knowledge within organizations.

The Extension organizational model is contingent upon a system in which is knowledge is easily transferred and is fluid enough for continuous learning to occur. In a learning organization the role of the organizational leader is an essential, shared vision about what is needed (Bass, 2000), a collective approach that reflects the mission of Cooperative Extension.

Ethical climate in relation to the learning organization

As the literature review of ethical climates and learning organizations revealed, there have been great strides in research that can positively influence organizational development as well as the field of human resource development. Both concepts have similar theoretical grounding in disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and education and have been associated with theoretical frames such as Institutionalization theory as a way to sustain change (i.e. Boyce, 2003 for Learning in organizations and Foote and Ruona, 2008 for Ethical climates). One of the strongest theoretical relationships identified in the literature is

discussed within the frame of Positive Organizational Scholarship.

Positive organizational scholarship (POS) is an example of an ethical climate theory that addresses a potential relationship with the learning organization. POS provides the theoretical perspectives proposed to explain corporate ethical principles such as: stakeholder theory, stockholder theory, relativism, social contract theory, volitionism, and post-conventional corporate moral responsibility (Verbos, Gerard, Forshey, Harding, & Miller, 2007). POS model posits that ethical organizational identity emerges from the multiplicative interaction of authentic leadership, aligned organizational processes and ethical organizational culture. POS uses positive psychology, and shifts emphasis to positive dynamics and outcomes. Within their theory, Verbos et al. acknowledge four contributors within the business ethics literature: Model of living code of ethics, multiple levels of identity theory (organizational and individual), authentic leadership theory, and organizational learning. The intersection of these four bodies of literature provides a definition of organizational identity: the central distinctive and enduring characteristics of an organization. The identity is derived from it's member's shared beliefs, answering the question "who are we?" Under the auspices of organizational learning, all members of the organization should be the one answering that question, and ultimately should be the ones responsible for creating a living code of ethics.

A living code of ethics is the cognitive, affective, and behavioral manifestation of an ethical organizational identity within a positive ethical organization (Verbos et al., 2007.) It is the responsibility of the authentic leadership to weave 5 key organizational processes throughout the organization with ethical practices: (1) Attraction-selection-attrition (2)

Socialization (3) Reward System (4) Decision making, (5) Organizational learning.

Throughout the adaptation process, the leader needs to continually assess the P-O Fit (person-organization fit), focusing on individuals who match organizational values, culture, and needs. Organizational learning's role in the POS theoretical framework is ensuring that the dynamic nature of organizations and their members command an open system in which the learning derives from interactions with the environment and informs moral reasoning throughout. By ensuring that opportunities for interactions and reasoning on organizational ethics occur throughout the organization, there is a better chance that learning is occurring along with the adaptation to the environment.

While POS provides the theoretical framework for the relationship between learning organizations and ethical climates, there are practical implications for the relationship as well. From a practical perspective, strategies for instilling and sustaining ethical climate are needed as much as theoretical and empirical support. As suggested by Hatcher (2002), "as business has grown, so has the need to for structures and functions to develop employees and improve processes to add instrumental and economic value" (p. 156). Despite the presence of challenges, human resource development (HRD) professionals are proposing multiple approaches to addressing the challenges, and hopefully increasing the sustainability of ethical climates.

As a 'preventative' approach to ethical dilemmas within organizations, emphasis needs to be placed on the development of future organizational leaders. The development of employees is hot topic in business schools across the globe place great importance on teaching business students about ethical dilemmas. There is a need to go beyond case

studies in order to help students articulate their own ethical orientation and expand boundaries they place on acceptable behaviors (Jurkewicz, Giacalone, & Knouse, 2004.) An inadequacy exists in business education in preparing leaders to manage real world value conflicts and ethical dilemmas. With empirical support from the proposed study, dimensions of the learning organization that are associated with positive ethical climates have the potential to become teachable constructs for the future organizational leaders.

The improved process that Hatcher (2002) refers to in an effort to ‘add instrumental and economic value’ comes from not only preventative strategies, but from intervention approaches as well. Sims (2009) conducted research on how organizations combat previous ethical dilemmas, minor as well as major incidents that impacted the organization’s ethical reputation. Through the implementation of the learning organizations dimensions such as empowering constituents towards a collective vision, systems such as crisis-communication and management programs can be created. However despite the underlying theoretical and practical applications, there is a gap in empirical support for the relationship between ethical climates and learning organizations.

Summary

The literature reviewed and discussed in this chapter is a result of a cross-disciplinary review, including disciplines such as sociology, business, education and psychology. Within the ethics literature, organizational culture was examined, from which organizational climate was derived. Organizational ethics was discussed as a component of organizational climate. The ethical climate literature was reviewed through the context of organizational ethics. In framing the literature base for learning in organizations, the

conversation also began with organizational culture. Within organizational culture, organizational learning was discussed in order to establish the dimensions of learning organizations. Due to the fact that the learning organization concept is often associated with organizational learning, the two were delineated, emphasizing their unique characteristics.

Theoretical and empirical support was provided for ethical climates and learning organizations in an effort to demonstrate potential relationships between the organizational culture components. However as demonstrated in chapter 2, the literature base on the relationship between ethical climates and learning organizations is limited. A major goal of research is to contribute to the body of empirical research and support.

CHAPTER 3

This chapter address the following topics related to the methods employed for this study: Research design, population and sample, measures and instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

A non-experimental, ex post facto survey design was used. In an effort to establish inferences about the larger population, a cross-sectional research-design was chosen (Creswell, 2003). This exploratory research described Cooperative Extension employees' perception of the organization's ethical climate (dependent variable) as it relates to dimensions of a learning organization (independent variable) within their organization. The research design allowed the researcher to examine the level of predictability of learning organization dimensions on the perceived ethical climate.

Population & Sample Plan

The population for the present study included a convenient sample of County Cooperative Extension Agents within the Southern region of the United States from land-grant university supported Cooperative Extension programs in the areas of: 4-H, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Agriculture. The sample population was chosen due to the large number of 4-H, FCS, and Agriculture programs in Extension. The population was defined as field professionals that have the responsibility of managing one of the three the local Cooperative Extension programs. County Extension Agents were chosen due to their

position descriptions, as agents are responsible for interacting directly with the local audiences on a regular basis while working with resources and mandates from state level specialists.

Contact information for the sample was obtained through state Extension Directors' databases. In an effort to solicit research subjects a memorandum from the primary researcher with a support letter from a state Extension Program was sent with the survey link. Confidentiality for the sample was maintained through the use of a generic list serve address for contacting participants. The initial sampling frame consisted of 13 states, with each state being invited to voluntarily participate in the study. Out of the 13 States invited to participate in the study, 9 States volunteered to participate (see Table 3).

Table 3

Research Participants: Southern Region County Cooperative Extension Agents

State	FCS	4-H	Agriculture	Total Field
Alabama	28	27	39	94
Louisiana	41	100	76	217
Texas	183	84	247	514
Tennessee	95	95	95	285
South Carolina	8	30	11	49
North Carolina	85	100	100	285
Virginia	45	88	100	233
Mississippi	75	75	75	225
Puerto Rico	1	1	1	3
Total Agents	561	600	743	1905

Response Rate

The survey yielded a total of 680 responses, representing an approximate 36% response rate. A total of 87 surveys were removed due to missing data, resulting in a total of 593 completed and useable responses for a final response rate of 31%. Late respondents were compared to early respondents to determine if there was a difference. Early respondents (n=607) were grouped as responses collected between July 14, 2010 and August 10, 2010, while late respondents (n=73) were responses collected between August 11, 2010 and August 18, 2010. An independent samples t-test was conducted comparing the two groups of respondents. No statistical difference was found between the responses of the early and late respondents.

Instrumentation and Measurement

Research subjects were sent e-mails containing a link to a three-part, 55-item Ethics and Learning survey via Survey Monkey (See Appendix C, for Ethics and Learning survey). The first section requested for participant's demographic information including; gender, employment position, years with Extension, and age. Section two measured the two dimensions of the learning organization consisting of 12 questions, with 6 questions per dimension. The third section was made up of 36 questions and focused on employee's perceptions of their organization's ethical climate

Section one included 8 questions pertaining to participant characteristics. While all characteristic information was collected in order to describe the sample, only age, gender, education level, position and number of years in position were used to examine the effect on

the dependent variables (egoistic, utilitarian, and deontological ethical climates).

Respondents were asked to provide information regarding their age (open-ended response), gender, education level, Extension position, number of years in Extension, number of years in current Extension position, and the state they are currently employed in. Respondents were also asked if they currently had any supervisory responsibilities within their current position.

Previous studies on the influence of variables such as gender, age and education level on types of ethical climates have shown that both significant (i.e. Parboteeah, Hoegl, & Cullen, 2008) and insignificant (i.e. Van Sandt, 2001) results are possible when examining ethical climate. As previously discussed, there is a gap in the literature on the empirical significance of effect of Extension position and number of years in position on identified organizational ethical climate type. These variables were chosen due to the context of the study.

Section two consisted of items from two dimensions from Watkins and Marsick's Dimensions of Learning Organizations Questionnaire (DLOQ). The DLOQ in its entirety is comprised of 55 items in order to measure the seven dimensions of the learning organization. Using a Likert scale format, the dimensions of the DLOQ asks participants to determine how often the organization demonstrates specific dimensions of a learning organization. The Likert scale ranged from 1 to 6, with 1 representing "Almost Never" to 6 representing "Almost Always", allowing participants to assign value to ratings 2- 5. Sample items from DLOQ include statements such as "My organization helps employees balance work and family" and "In my organization, leaders mentor and coach those they lead". See

Instrument in Appendix C.

For the present study the two dimensions of ‘connection to the environment’ and ‘leaders model and support learning’ were used. Other studies have also used dimensions of the DLOQ in an effort to focus on specific elements of the learning organization (Song, Joo, & Chermack, 2009; Yang, Marsick, & Watkins, 2004). The two dimensions were selected due to their face validity. Face validity is considered an operational conception of validity (Freeman, 1966), and is determined by the person measuring a construct (Anastasi, 1954). Face validity was assessed by relating the content of the two dimensions to the mission statements of the sample organization. The DLOQ dimensions were chosen because of their ability to demonstrate how organizations with similar missions (a large portion of higher education institutions) are able to 1) measure the perceived learning environment and 2) determine potential relationships between ethical climates and the selected dimensions, support and foster specific types of ethical climates.

According to Marsick and Watkins (2003) there are three levels of organizational learning; individual, team, and organizational. The individual level is composed of two dimensions of organizational learning: continuous learning and dialogue and inquiry. The second level is the team or group level and is demonstrated through team learning and collaboration. The final level is the organizational level, which has four dimensions of organizational learning: embedded systems, system connections, empowerment, and providing leadership for learning. The two dimensions chosen for this study, ‘leaders model and support learning’ and ‘connection to the environment’, are within the organizational level of Marsick and Watkins framework for learning organizations.

Section three is comprised of 36 items from Victor and Cullen's (1988) Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ). The ECQ is a practical application of how Victor and Cullen extended Kohlberg's theory of moral development to organizations, as the ECS attempts to measure the perceived process of how ethical decisions in organizations are made. Through the classification of organizations into categories of distinct ethical climates (Forte, 2004), the ECQ emphasizes "the description of, rather than feelings about, the work setting" (Victor & Cullen, 1988, p 58). The instrument does not measure whether or not the subjects believe he or she behaves ethically nor does it emphasize whether the respondent views the ethical climate as good or bad, rather it provides insight into the ethical climate in which ethical decisions are made.

The Ethical Climate Questionnaire is a series of thirty-six items, with items assigned for each ethical climate; egoistic, utilitarian, and deontological. Within each of the climates, the ECQ measures perceptions from the individual, local (organizational) and cosmopolitan (societal) level. Through the use of a Likert-scale format, the instrument is designed to elicit the perceived ethical climate within the subject's organization. Participants rate how valid a statement is regarding their organization, using the ratings: "Completely False"= 1, "Mostly False"=2, "Somewhat False"=3, "Somewhat True"=4, "Mostly True"=5, "Completely True"=6. Sample items from the questionnaire are "In this organization, people are expected to follow their own personal and moral beliefs" and "In this organization, people are mostly out for themselves." See instrument in Appendix B.

Pilot & Pre- Data Analysis

A pilot test was conducted to support instrument reliability, readability, usability and content validity (Creswell, 2003). Pilot participants were asked to comment on the readability of the instrument as well as relevance of subject matter on planned participants.

Pre-analysis of data was completed in order to account for non-response bias, missing data and extreme values (outliers) as observed through the use of histograms (Mertler & Vanatta, 2005). Data was also screened for fit assumptions such as normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. In addition, tests were conducted to examine the validity and reliability of the instruments.

Validity

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to further examine the validity of the constructs being used under the three conditions: 1) measurement of the instrument has been developed on a theoretical basis, 2) verification is required of the adequacy of the item-to-factor associations, and 3) construct validity is being established of the theoretically proposed measurement (Song, Joo, & Chermack, 2009; Thompson, 2004; Thompson & Daniel, 1996; Yang, Marsick, & Watkins, 2004). Construct validity is the extent to which a construct measures what it purports to measure (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996.) Emergent factors resulting from factor analysis of the ECQ and DLOQ responses were used to construct scales for discriminant analysis.

Reliability

Internal reliability is the degree to which survey results are free from random error and consistent with surveyed populations (Alreck & Settle, 1995). In order for a survey to be

considered usable over time it must be reliable, defining reliability as having assurance that people will consistently answer the same questions in the same way regardless of the number of times they are asked. Due to the challenges of test-retest possibilities, responses are only collected once, therefore requiring empirical support for the reliability of the results (Creswell, 2003).

To test for internal consistency of the instrument, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for each study factor. Internal consistency measures how well a set of variables or items measures a single, uni-dimensional latent construct, computing test score reliability (Agresti and Finlay, 1996; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1996, Yang, Marsick, & Watkins, 2004). The resulting statistic is an indication of the extent to which test takers who answer a test item one way will respond to another related item in the same way over time. A minimum Cronbach's alpha of .50 was used, as a reliability level of .50 is suggested "in early stages of research in a domain when determining its dimensions" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1996, p.226).

The measures used in the present study were previously examined for internal reliability. For Victor and Cullen's Ethical Climate Questionnaire, Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0.72 to 0.91 (Cullen, Parboteeah, & Victor, 2003; Trevino, Butterfield, and McCabe, 1998; Victor and Cullen, 1993, Victor and Cullen, 1988; Weber, 1995). Watkins and Marsick's DLOQ coefficient alphas ranged from .71 to .91 in previous studies (Ellinger, Ellinger, Yang, & Howton, 2002; Kontoghiores, Awbrey, & Feurig, 2005; Song, Kim, & Kolb, 2009; Song, Joo, & Chermack, 2009; Watkins & Marsick, 2003; Yang, Marsick, & Watkins, 2004). Further reliability testing on the collective instrument was conducted during pre-analysis.

The present study was approved through the North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board. Dr. Joseph Zublena, Interim Extension Director for North Carolina Cooperative Extension was also consulted and approved the study to be conducted from the university (See Appendix D-H for IRB documentation).

Data Collection

Data were collected with an on-line survey. The instrument site was located at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JY82DTR>, which linked respondents to the 3-section instrument hosted on the Survey Money server. Cooperative Extension Directors within the Southern Region of the United States received an email requesting their support and participation in the research study. The e-mail contained a memorandum of support letter from the North Carolina State Leader for 4-H and Family and Consumer Sciences. See Appendix B for Director solicitation e-mail. If willing to participate, Extension Directors were asked to forward their respective 4-H, FCS, and Agriculture Agents an e-mail which included a cover letter soliciting participation, a description of the research along with the survey link, and a letter of informed consent stating that completion of survey indicated consent. The initial e-mail to Extension Directors was sent with the survey link on July 14, 2010. A follow-up, final reminder was sent on August 4, 2010, and the survey site was closed on August 18, 2010. Confidentiality was maintained, as the researcher did not have individual e-mail contacts. A general list-serve was used within each state. Once collected, the data was kept on a password-protected computer with only the research and doctoral committee members having access to the data.

Data Analysis

Each research question is discussed with a description of the chosen data analysis method used. All data was calculated using SPSS Version 18.0.

H₁: *Cooperative Extension Agents will perceive utilitarianism as the highest level of ethical climate within Cooperative Extension.*

H₀: *m egoistic = m utilitarian = m deontological*

Frequencies, means and standards deviations were used to determine the measure of central tendency as well as the average distance of scores away from the mean. An ANOVA was used to further analyze the means between and within the three types of ethical climate (egoistic, utilitarian, and deontological). An ANOVA is commonly used as an inferential statistic used as a test of statistical significance, resulting in an F-value. Depending upon the nature of the design, two or more f-values can that can be generated from a single analysis of variance” (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 355). A Wilks Lambda test of significance was used as a post-hoc test. Wilks was chosen as it is commonly used for it’s ability to strongly demonstrate robustness in statistical significance.

H₂: *Cooperative Extension Agents will perceive their organization to support learning more often through the organization’s connection to the environment than through providing strategic leadership for learning*

H₀: *m Connection to their environment = m Empowerment towards a collective vision*

Frequencies, means and standards deviations will be used to determine the measure of central tendency as well as the average distance of scores away from the mean.

H_{3a}: *There is not a predictive relationship between the learning organization predictor variables (connection to the environment and leaders model and support learning) and egoistic ethical climates*

H_{3b}: *There is a predictive relationship between the learning organization predictor variables (connection to the environment and leaders model and support learning) and utilitarian*

ethical climates.

H_{3c}: *There is not a predictive relationship between the learning organization predictor variables (connection to the environment and leaders model and support learning) and deontological ethical climates.*

A multiple regression was used to demonstrate the predictive value of the learning organization dimensions on the type of perceived ethical climate. Multiple regression is an Extension of simple linear regression, as more than one independent variable, or predictor variable, is involved (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). Standardized multiple regression coefficients were reviewed to assess the direction and relative importance of the two variables in the prediction of the individual ethical climates.

H₄: *Gender will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate.*

H₅: *Age will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate.*

H₆: *Level of formal education will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate.*

H₇: *Extension position will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate*

H₈: *Position tenure will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate*

Multiple regression was used to determine the amount of significance in relationship between participant demographics and the perceived ethical climate. Standardized multiple regression coefficients were also reviewed to assess the direction and relative importance of the characteristics in the prediction of the individual ethical climates.

Summary

The chapter on methodology discussed the research design used to test the research hypothesis. The population and sample plan was reviewed in order to provide the final response rate for the study. The components of the instrument were described as well as sample items were provided. The pilot and pre-data analysis plan was shared to demonstrate the preliminary review of the instrument and raw data results. The data analysis process was discussed in order to identify the statistical methods used to address each of the research hypotheses. The following section will provide the statistical results of the completed research study.

CHAPTER 4

This chapter reports the findings of the present study. The findings are reported in the following order: results of the pilot test, pre-data analysis findings, a description of the population and the sample, the perceived ethical climate of Cooperative Extension participants, the perceived learning organization dimension(s), the relationship between the learning organization dimension(s) and the perceived ethical climates, and the relationship between participant demographic characteristics and ethical climate. There were 680 participants with approximately 593 usable surveys. The remaining 87 responses were not used due to missing data. Participants with 6 or more missing responses were excluded from the study.

Pilot Examination

A pilot test was conducted to support instrument reliability, readability, usability and content validity (Creswell, 2003). Twenty-eight individuals with faculty or staff appointments were selected to serve as the pilot-test group. The group represented thirteen Extension Associates and 15 Extension Specialists. This group was different than the groups used with the sample population and was not part of the actual study population. Pilot participants were asked to comment on the readability of the instrument as well as relevance of subject matter on planned participants. Pilot participants provided feedback on survey design such as “many questions seem redundant” and provided an approximate amount of time required to complete the survey in entirety, approximately 15-20 minutes. Of the 28 individuals in the pilot study, 12 or 43% responded.

Pre- Data Analysis

All data were coded, entered, and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Pre-analysis of data was completed in order to account for non-response bias, missing data and extreme values (outliers) as observed through the use of histograms (Mertler & Vanatta, 2005). Data was screened for fit assumptions such as normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity.

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to further examine the construct validity of the constructs being used under the three conditions: 1) measurement of the instrument has been developed on a theoretical basis, 2) verification is required of the adequacy of the item-to-factor associations, and 3) construct validity is being established of the theoretically proposed measurement (Song, Joo, & Chermack, 2009; Thompson, 2004; Thompson and Daniel, 1996; Yang, Marsick, & Watkins, 2004). Emergent factors resulting from factor analysis of the ECQ and DLOQ responses were used to construct scales for discriminant analysis.

The confirmatory factor analysis on the independent variable, the dimensions of a learning organization, revealed good reliability amongst individual factors however identified the 2 chosen learning organization dimensions as only 1 component. The eigenvalues resulting from the confirmatory factor analysis are provided in Appendix I. Each dimension was analyzed individually with the dependent variable due to the high reliability of each individual factor. The 'leaders model and support learning' factor had a reliability alpha of .904. 'Connection to the environment produced a Cronbach's alpha of

.826.

The initial confirmatory factor analysis conducted on the Ethical Climate questionnaire combined two of the three factors; egoistic ethical climate and utilitarian ethical climate. In an effort to improve reliability and establish the 3 factors (egoistic, utilitarian, and deontological) several items were omitted. The eigenvalues resulting from the confirmatory factor analysis are provided in Appendix J. Table 4 demonstrates the items that were included in the final factor analysis while Table 5 indicates which items were removed. The resulting Cronbach's alpha for each of the ethical climates were as follows: Egoistic, $\alpha=.766$, Deontological, $\alpha=.837$ and Utilitarian $\alpha=.857$.

Table 4

Ethical Climate Questionnaire Items included in Each Climate Factor

Egoistic	
E 1	In this organization, people are out for themselves
E 4	People are expected to further the company's interest
E 6	There is no room for one's own personal morals or ethics in this organization
E 8	Work is considered sub-standard only when it hurts the organization's interests
E 10	In this organization, people protect their own interest above other considerations
E 17	People are concerned with the organization's interest
E 29	Decisions are primarily viewed in terms of contribution to profit
E 33	People in this organization are very concerned about what is best for themselves
Deontological	
D 7	It is very important to follow strictly the organization's rules and procedures here
D 13	The first consideration is whether a decision violates any law
D 14	People are expected to comply with the law and professional standards over and above other considerations
D 15	Everyone is expected to stick by organization rules and procedures
D 18	Successful people in this organization go by the book

Table 4 Continued

D 20	In this organization, people are expected to strictly follow legal or professional standards
D 23	Successful people in this organization strictly obey the organization policies
D 24	In this organization, the law or ethical code of theft profession is the major consideration
Utilitarian	
U 5	In this organization, people look out for each other's good
U 12	The most important concern in this organization is each person's sense of right and wrong
U 16	In this organization, our major concern is always what is best for the other person
U 21	Our major consideration is what is best for everyone in this company
U 26	It is expected that you will always do what is right for the customer and public
U 31	People are very concerned about what is generally best for employees in the company
U 32	What is best for each individual is a primary concern for this organization
U 34	The effect of decisions on the customer and the public are a primary concern in this organization

Table 5

Ethical Climate Questionnaire Items Removed to Improve Reliability

E 35	It is expected that each individual is cared for when making decisions here
E 36	Efficient solutions to problems are always sought here
E 27	People in this organization view team spirit as important
E 25	In this organization, each person is expected, above all, to work efficiently
E 19	The most efficient way is always the right way, in this organization
E 2	The major responsibility for people in this organization is to consider efficiency first
D 9	Each person in this organization decides for him or herself what is right and wrong
D 22	In this organization, people are guided by their own personal ethics
D 3	In this organization, people are expected to follow their own personal and moral beliefs
D 11	The most important consideration in this organization is each person's sense of right and wrong
U 30	People in this organization are actively concerned about the customer's and the public's interest

Table 5 continued

U 34	The effect of decisions on the customer and the public are a primary concern in this organization
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Table 6 summarizes the participant demographic characteristics including gender, age, Extension position, education level, and number of years in Extension. Of the 584 participants that reported gender, approximately 59% of the population was male (351) and 39% was female (233). A total of 580 participants reported their age, ranging from 23 years as the youngest to 69 as the oldest. The mean age was 44 with a median age of 45. A total of 582 people reported their education level ranging from High School to Doctoral degrees. Of the reported education levels, 6 participants had a high school degree, 6 hold Associates degrees, 131 hold Bachelors degrees, 419 have Masters degrees, and 20 hold Doctoral degrees.

Of the 593 Extension professionals that participated in the study, 179 were Family Consumer Sciences Agents, 156 were 4-H agents, 194 were Agriculture agents, 22 were County Extension Directors with interim positions, 67 were County Extension Directors with dual appointments. 25 participants indicated dual agent appointments. No statistical difference was found between those who did and those who did not have supervisory experience. The number of years with Extension ranged from 6 months to 40 years with a mean of 13.4 and a median of 12.

The participant characteristics were used to describe the population as well as examine possible effects on types of perceived ethical climates. Results depicting potential relationships are further discussed in Hypothesis 4 – 8 below.

Table 6

Participant Characteristics of Southern Region Cooperative Extension Agents

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>S.D.</u>
Gender	584					
Male		351	59.2			
Female		233	39.3			
Age	580			44	45	10.9
Education	582					
High School/GED		6	1.0			
Associates		6	1.0			
Bachelors		131	22.1			
Masters		419	70.7			
Doctorate		20	3.4			
Position	593					
FCS		179	30.2			
4-H		156	26.3			
Agriculture		194	32.7			
CED-Interim		22	3.7			
CED- Dual		67	11.3			
Years in Extension	593			13.4	12	

Hypothesis 1

H₁: *Cooperative Extension Agents will perceive utilitarianism as the highest level of ethical climate within Cooperative Extension.*

H₀: *m egoistic = m utilitarian = m deontological*

Table 7 illustrates the frequency, mean, and standard deviation of the perceived ethical climate by Cooperative Extension Employees. All three factors were examined as the

factor analysis indicated three distinct climates. An ANOVA between-subjects test was conducted and showed that there is a statistical significant difference between the three ethical climate groups (Wilks Lambda $f= 20010.523$, $p < .001$).

Of the three ethical climates measured, 74.5% of participants (442) perceived Extension as supporting a deontological ethical climate. As a result the hypothesis is rejected. The summated mean for deontological climate was 36.6 with a standard deviation of 5.8. Utilitarian ethical climate was perceived by 12.1% (72) and had a summate mean of 31.4 and standard deviation of 6.3. The egoistic ethical climate was reported by 9.9% (59) and had a summated mean of 25.6 and a standard deviation of 6.0.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Hypothesis 1

<i>Ethical Climate</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Mean(SD)</i>
Deontological	442	74.5	36.6 (5.8)
Utilitarian	72	12.1	31.4 (6.3)
Egoistic	59	9.9	25.6 (6.0)

Hypothesis 2

H₂: *Cooperative Extension Agents will perceive their organization to support learning more often through the organization's connection to the environment than providing strategic leadership for learning*

H₀ : *m* Connection to their environment = *m* Leaders support and model learning

Table 8 demonstrates the most often perceived learning organization dimension

within Cooperative Extension by 4-H, FCS, and Agriculture Agents in the Southern Region of the United States. Of the 7 factors within the Dimensions of Learning Organizations questionnaire, the 2 factors chosen, connection to the environment and leaders model and support learning, were used due to the high amount of face validity with the context of the study. The 2 factors were examined separately for frequency and mean since the reliability of each factor was strong, connection to the environment (0.862) and leaders model and support learning (0.904)). 51.6% of agents (306) perceived the leaders model and support learning most often, with a mean summated score of 24.3 and standard deviation of 6.4. Connection to the environment was perceived by 37.3% of agents (221) with a mean summated score of 23.8 and a standard deviation of 5.5.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Hypothesis 2

<i>Learning Organization Dimension</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Leaders Model and Support Learning	306	51.6	24.3(6.4)
Connection to the Environment	221	37.3	23.8(5.5)

Hypotheses 3a, 3b, & 3c

H_{3a} : *There is no predictive relationship between the learning organization predictor variables (connection to the environment and leaders model and support learning) and egoistic ethical climates*

H_{3b}: *There is a predictive relationship between the learning organization predictor variables (connection to the environment and leaders model and support learning) and utilitarian ethical climates.*

H_{3c}: *There is not a predictive relationship between the learning organization predictor variables (connection to the environment and leaders model and support learning) and deontological ethical climates.*

Table 9 summarizes the relationships between the dimensions of the learning organization and perceived ethical climates. Examination of the stepwise regression indicates there are low to moderately low predictive relationships between the learning organization dimensions and the perceived ethical climate. With the egoistic climate, 23% of the variance was explained by the learning organization dimension ($r^2 = .231$). Data analysis revealed that 51% of the variance with the perceived utilitarian climate was accounted for by the learning organization dimensions ($r^2 = .514$). 31% of the variance with the deontological climate was explained by the learning organization dimensions ($r^2 = .309$).

The one-way ANOVA, (Egoistic $F(2, 88)$, Deontological $F(2, 132)$, and Utilitarian $F(2, 312)$), demonstrated statistically significant differences between the groups. The deontological and utilitarian ethical climates positively correlated with both of the learning organization dimensions: Deontological with leaders support ($b = .403$), deontological with connection ($b = .179$), utilitarian with leaders support ($b = .473$), and utilitarian with connection ($b = .282$). The egoistic climate negatively correlated with both of the learning organization dimensions: Egoistic with leaders support ($b = -.346$) and egoistic with

connection ($b = -.157$).

Table 9

Multiple Regression for Hypothesis 3

<u>Ethical Climate</u>						
	<u>Egoistic</u>		<u>Deontological</u>		<u>Utilitarian</u>	
Predictor	R ²	b	R ²	b	R ²	b
Leaders model/ support learning	.222	-.346	.297	.403	.484	.473
Connection to environment	-.157		.159		.282	
Total R ²	.231		.309		.514	
<i>n</i>	593		593		593	

Note. Due to multicollinearity between the 2 learning organization dimensions, a single r^2 was produced for connection to the environment and a total r^2 for both learning organization dimensions analyzed.

Hypothesis 4-8

H₄: *Gender will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate.*

H₅: *Age will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate.*

H₆: *Level of formal education will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate.*

H₇: *Extension position will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate*

H₈: *Position tenure will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate*

All 4 hypotheses have been rejected due to the insignificant effects found. Data analysis revealed that there are a limited number of participant characteristics that explain

the variance on the perceived ethical climate. The Agriculture and Family and Consumer Sciences position indicated an extremely low level of variance explained in the deontological ethical climate; $R^2 = .032$. The 4-H Agent position also indicated an extremely low level of variance explained in the utilitarian ethical climate; $R^2 = .01$. The 4-H Agent position also indicated an extremely low level of variance in the egoistic ethical climate, $R^2 = .005$.

Summary

This chapter discussed the results of the pre-data and data analysis conducted in an effort to test the research hypothesis. The pilot test revealed that the survey was user-friendly, easy to read, and could be complete in approximately 20 minutes. Of the 680 surveys collected, 593 were used for data analysis. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted for both ethical climates and learning organization dimensions. The resulting Cronbach's alpha for each of the ethical climates were as follows: Egoistic, $\alpha = .766$, Deontological, $\alpha = .837$ and Utilitarian $\alpha = .857$. The learning organization dimensions of 'leaders model and support learning' factor had a reliability alpha of .904. 'Connection to the environment produced a Cronbach's alpha of .826.

Descriptive statistics of participant characteristics are provided in Table 6, page 96. The participant characteristics were used to describe the population as well as examine possible effects on types of perceived ethical climates. Of the three ethical climates measured, 74.5% of participants (442) reported that the deontological ethical climate is most commonly used to make ethical decisions. 51.6% of agents (306) perceived the leaders model and support learning most often, with a mean summated score of 24.3 and standard

deviation of 6.4.

Examination of the stepwise regression indicated there are low to moderately low predictive relationships between the learning organization dimensions and the perceived ethical climate. With the egositic climate, 23% of the variance was explained by the learning organization dimension ($r^2 = .231$). Data analysis revealed that 51% of of the variance with the perceived utilitarian climate was accounted for by the learning organization dimensions ($r^2 = .514$). 31% of the variance with the deontological climate was explained by the learning organization dimensions ($r^2 = .309$). Data analysis revealed that there are a limited number of participant characteristics that explain the variance on the perceived ethical climate. The results will be discussed in relation to the study's theoretical framewoek in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

This chapter addresses the following: Introduction, summary of research response, hypothesis conclusions and discussion, implications for research and practice, and recommendations for the discipline of human resource development.

Introduction

A cross-disciplinary review of the literature revealed that the concepts of ethics and learning have not been extensively examined as related constructs. With current societal trends such as economic distress and continual ethical dilemmas, examining potential strategies for supporting positive ethical climates is more essential than ever. In organizations such as land grant university and more specifically Cooperative Extension, whose directive is to pursue increasing acts of engagement, there is greater potential for ethical dilemmas (Blewett, Keim, Leser, & Jones, 2008; Holland, 2001, Iverson, 2008). Within an organization such as Extension based on the principle of expanding knowledge from the higher education system to the community, it is essential that the knowledge transferred is done so in an ethical manner. In an organization that readily supports learning, it would be beneficial to see that the learning dimensions of an organization would help support and sustain a positive ethical climate.

As previously discussed, learning, specifically learning organizations, surfaced in the literature as potentially supporting the development of positive ethical climates (Verbos, Gerard, Forshey, Harding & Miller, 2007). This exploratory study was conducted on the premise that through identifying potential relationships between organizational ethics and

organizational learning, the field of Human Resource Development can begin to establish foundations for future research with the hope of building strategies to support positive ethical climates in learning organizations.

The conceptual framework that guided the study explored the relationships among Extension agents' perceptions of Extension's ethical climate (Egoistic, Utilitarian, and Deontological) (Victor & Cullen, 1988) and two specific learning organization dimensions (leaders' model and support learning, connection to the environment) (Watkins & Marsick, 1997). The study was an exploratory, survey research design aimed at establishing inferences about county-level Cooperative Extension agents from three major programs within the Southern Region of the US; 4-H, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Agriculture. The survey contained three sections: Section one gathered information on participant characteristics such as age, gender, tenure, and Extension position. Section two collected participants' perspectives on the learning dimensions of Cooperative Extension. Section three collected participants' perspectives on the ethical climate of Cooperative Extension. Data was collected via online surveys. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18.0 was used to analyze the data. Results of the study are shared below and discuss the multitude of implications for Human Resource Development professionals within Cooperative Extension as well as the field of HRD as a whole.

Hypothesis 1

H₁: *Cooperative Extension Agents will perceive utilitarianism as the highest level of ethical climate within Cooperative Extension.*

Conclusions and discussions:

As supported by the confirmatory factor analysis, the Ethical Climate Questionnaire measured three individual ethical climates; the egoistic, the deontological, and the utilitarian. Of the three ethical climates, 442 of 593 participants identified the deontological climate as the most prevalent climate by which Cooperative Extension as an organization guides its actions and decisions. Within the framework of deontological ethical climates, ethical decisions are guided by rule, code, policy and procedure (Victor and Cullen, 1988). Deontological principles state that ethical decisions are based on universal principles of right versus wrong (Ferrell & Fraedrich, 1997).

Victor and Cullen (1988) revealed in their preliminary studies of ethical climate that organizational form is a strong predictor of ethical climate perceptions. Victor and Cullen credit Ouchi's (1980) categories of transactional organizational forms as influencing the existence of different climate. In relation to this study, Ouchi's bureaucratic organizational form strongly resembles the organizational structure of Cooperative Extension, as it is an organization that is governed by norms, reciprocity, and accepted rule structures. While Extension is a grassroots organization, Extension is also attached to a formalized, state-funded, educational Land Grant institution with mandated objectives and goals. Field faculty perceptions have the potential to be influenced by the central organizational structure, traditions, and multiple levels of administration under which they operate. Previous research has shown that within deontological ethical climates, organizational members' ethical perceptions are strongly influenced by the policies and practices of the central organization (Martin & Cullen, 2006; Victor & Cullen, 1988; Wimbush & Shepard, 1994). Barnett and

Schubert, (2002) also found that the presence of a deontological climate supports a covenantal relationship between employers and employees, a relationship that is based on mutual commitment to shared values (Graham & Organ, 1993).

In addition to organizational form, the Attraction- Selection- Attrition (ASA) model can also explain the highly perceived deontological ethical climate. ASA, as described by Schneider (1987), posits that individuals do not randomly choose the organizations to which they wish to belong; individuals are attracted to organizations in which they believe they fit. As a result, organization members tend to be similar to each other and interpret experiences in similar ways. Dickson, Smith, Ehrhart, and Grojean (2001) propose that “the high degree of homogeneity impacts the strength of the shared perceptions of the organization’s climate” (p. 203).

As with many organizations today, the current economic climate has impacted Cooperative Extension’s workforce. Within North Carolina alone, there has been 70 county-based retirements in the Cooperative Extension system in the last year. Early retirements incentives have primarily been a result of organizational budget cuts and cost-saving methods. As discussed in the limitations of this study, the current economic stressors throughout the southern region of the United States impacted the response rate for this study. Many states were unable to accurately identify the exact number of current agents in the field, as field faculty are being asked to take on multiple responsibilities to cover vacancies. Human Resource departments from each Cooperative Extension system provided the most accurate number of current agents possible.

In addition to the difficulty with individual responses rates within each state, there

were several states that refused to participate as they felt the nature of the study, specifically in reference to the ethical climate, was inappropriate in the context of Extension. Extension Directors from several states stated that they did not feel comfortable sending the survey to their field faculty as the Directors felt the research topic was not appropriate for Extension. The non-response of these Directors fuels the need for further discussion on the topic ethics in Cooperative Extension. However the states that did participate provided a strong perspective of the ethical climate of Cooperative Extension, a perspective that should be looked into with greater detail in future studies.

Implications for research:

1) Future research should be conducted on the types of ethical climates perceived in various organizational models such as governmental agencies, for-profit corporations, and non profits. As previously discussed, Cooperative Extension is a very specific type of organizational model, steeped in tradition and outreach initiatives. Martin and Cullen's (2006) meta-analysis of ethical climate theory addresses the need for continuing to understand how shifts in organizational form impacts the management of ethical climate by decision makers. From an organizational culture perspective the congruent actions ultimately create a work group with homogeneous values (Schein, 1984; Schein, 2004), explaining why the majority of the workplace perceive a common type of ethical climate (Victor and Cullen, 1988). In terms of ethical climate, when compared against for-profit and other not-for profit organizations, the culture of Cooperative Extension may not be as unique as assumed.

2) Additional studies should include multiple levels of personnel from within Extension. The framework of this study should be replicated with Extension state level staff perceptions as they are closely tied to the mission mandates of the program areas. During the replication of the study, states from all regions should be included in an effort to capture the multitude of organizational models within Extension, as some states such as Maine have dual level positions with county, regional, and state level responsibilities. The perception of state level professionals should be compared to county perspectives to determine if ethical behaviors are transferred as part of a larger ethical culture. Previous studies have shown that the administrative levels of organizations have significant impact on organizational climate and behavior, especially in terms of ethical behavior (Forte, 2004; Koh & Boo, 2001; Trevino, Weaver, & Brown, 2008; Wimbush & Shepard, 1994).

3) Further research should be conducted in an effort to better understand the benefits and challenges associated with a strong deontological ethical climate, as the current study did not identify specific outcomes with the deontological climate. Martin and Cullen (2006), found that while principles of the deontological climate have been tied to control mechanisms and reduced unethical behaviors, the deontological climate does not necessarily reduce a connection to the organizational environment. Future research is needed to examine what types of quality indicators are associated with deontological ethical climates in organizations.

Implications for practice

On a county level, field agents are expected to fill positions with specific roles and

responsibilities. Hatcher (2002) states that organizational leaders need to understand that ‘ethical behaviors are less a shift in values than a reaction to organizational and environmental factors ‘ (p 56). One of the environmental factors Extension leaders should consider is the scripted nature of the Extension Agent position. From an HRD approach, the professional development structure within supports the perspective that upper levels of the organization establishes the ‘rules’ and ‘guidelines’ that are expected to be followed. In many situations, agents are provided specific curriculum with guidelines to implement within the community. Training is often a top-down design in which the state level, subject-matter professionals create training guidelines and curriculum. The state professionals provide training to county level professionals.

With a strongly perceived deontological ethical climate, there should be a strong sense of ethical standards with which to adhere. HRD within Cooperative Extension should continue to assist organizational members with moving beyond acting out of mandate (Hambrick, 2007) and expand their understanding of their own ethical perspectives. As earlier discussed, as Cooperative Extension engages in innovated program efforts, professionals will need to build capacity to work directly with diverse audiences. Most importantly, the HRD profession needs to work with organizational leaders to ensure that the laws, codes, policies and procedures that are universally being supported are relevant to the populations the organization is serving and the context in which a program is being delivered.

Hypothesis 2

H₂: *Cooperative Extension Agents will perceive their organization to support learning more*

often through the organization's connection to the environment than leaders support and model learning.

Conclusions and discussion:

As previously discussed in Chapter 4, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis combined the two learning organization dimensions as one factor indicating strong similarities in content. Despite the combined factor, strong reliability indicated by Cronbach's Alpha allowed for each dimension to be analyzed and described as individual factors; connection to the environment $\alpha = 0.862$ and leaders model and support learning $\alpha = 0.904$. Both dimensions were strongly perceived as 306 Extension agents (51.6%) perceived leaders model and support learning as a learning organization dimension in Cooperative Extension while 221 agents (37.3%) identified Connection to the environment. The closeness in results is supported by similarities as indicated by the factor analysis.

According to the majority of participants, the learning organization most reflected in Extension is leaders who model and support learning throughout the organization. Early research on learning organizations demonstrated how interactions between the individual and upper levels of the organization shape the organizational learning experience (Cangelosi and Dill, 1965). The organizational model and mission of Extension as previously described (grassroots combined with a top-down approach) provides an explanation of these results as well. In organizations that are based out of a learning institution and whose mission is to extend knowledge, leaders need to promote learning as well as take part in the learning process. Rowe (2010) emphasized the importance of Extensions ability to change with society, with learning being a large part of organizational change. Rowe's finding suggest

that organizations that are led by leaders who are more apt to support learning, organizations are more likely to successfully adapt and flex with societal needs.

Implications for research:

1) In a review of the literature, there was only 1 study found that examined Extension as a learning organization. Rowe (2010) conducted an examination of Cooperative Extension state level staff's perception of Marsick and Watkins dimensions of a learning organization in an effort to identify strengths as well as challenges for Extension as a learning organization. Rowe found that 76% of Extension employees perceived Extension to promote Inquiry and dialogue. While results were significant, the study only observed one state in a specific region of the United States and participation was limited to state level professionals (n= 63). However Rowe's study included all seven dimensions, providing a stronger picture of how Extension operates as a learning organization.

1) Future research should observe how all seven dimensions of the learning organization all levels of Extension employees perceive. Results would highlight the similarities and differences throughout the organization, providing Extension leaders with a better understanding of how strongly Extension is perceived as a learning organization. As previously discussed, by emulating the dimensions of a learning organization, an organization is more apt to meet the changing needs of society (Cavaleri, 2004; Ortenblad, 2002; Rowe, 2010). As previously discussed in the literature, within Extension, the ability to address the diverse needs of communities served is not only a benefit it is essential (Chesney, Samuel, & Fuller, 2009; Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997; Keckes, 2006; Kellogg Commission, 1999).

2) Further studies should empirically examine how the dimensions of the learning organization influence the promotion of scholarship and engagement within higher education institutions, both private and public. Extension programs are consistently being challenged to be more effective in engaging people and communities, ultimately advancing the interests of both the land-grant university and the community (Chesney, Samuel, & Fuller, 2009; Report of Scholarship and Engagement Task Force, 2010). With the promotion of scholarship and engagement and as the major outreach component within the higher education system, Cooperative Extension has the potential to connect theory to practice in local communities.

As Extension's capacity continues to expand beyond agricultural and home economics to community development and sustainability (Campbell, 1995; Iverson, 2008; Kellogg Foundation, 1999), the capacity for learning will need to increase as well. Additional studies on the dimensions of learning organizations within higher education institutions engagement would indicate which dimensions most commonly correlate with increased acts of engagement.

3) There have been a number of studies that examine how elements of leadership styles, relate to learning in organizations (Bass, 2000; Ford, 2006; Vara & Crossan, 2004). To build upon the current studies findings on Extension leaders who model and support learning, further research should focus on the leadership in Cooperative Extension and the dimensions of learning organization supported within their organizations. Results would begin to indicate what forms of leadership promote the strongest support for Extension as a learning organization.

Implications for practice:

Built on the premise that the dimensions of learning organizations are a practitioner-oriented framework (Senge, 1990; Tsang, 1997), there are a number of implications for practice. The role of the leader within Cooperative Extension needs to be continually examined and enhanced in relation to learning. Once individuals attain a leadership role, the amount of professional development they engage in often decreases. In an effort to remain competitive and engaged, leaders must commit to modeling learning by adopting practices in continuous learning, including professional development opportunities, additional research opportunities, as well as increased efforts of scholarship and engagement. As discussed by Rowe (2010), “leadership of the organization must enhance efforts to expand the dimensions where strength is needed and to foster an environment where barriers are minimized (p 6)”. With the field professionals’ perception that Extension’s leaders model and support learning, leaders need to ensure that the lessons they are teaching are not only the right ones, but that they are also effective.

Hypothesis 3

H_{3a}: *There is not a predictive relationship between the learning organization predictor variables (connection to the environment and leaders model and support learning) and egoistic ethical climates*

H_{3b}: *There is a predictive relationship between the learning organization predictor variables (connection to the environment and leaders model and support learning) and utilitarian ethical climates.*

H_{3c} : *There is not a predictive relationship between the learning organization predictor variables (connection to the environment and leaders model and support learning) and deontological ethical climates.*

Conclusions and discussions

As previously discussed, there has been a lack of empirical research on the relationship between ethics and learning in organizations. The results of this study support that while there is not a strong empirical relationship between ethical climates and learning in organizations, the literature supports aligning organizational systems as they pertain to ethics and learning (Ford, 2006; Hayes & Allinson, 1998; Verbos, Gerard, Forshey, Harding & Miller, 2007). With the exploratory nature of this study further examination is need to understand the implications for potential relationships.

Of the three ethical climates examined, Utilitarian had the highest predictive relationship (0.51), (although not a strong predictor) and is supported by the context of Cooperative Extension's mission. With a moderate relationship between the learning organization dimensions and the Utilitarian ethical climate, results support Extensions 1) emphasis on the engagement of the organization and it's leaders with its surroundings, 2) the consideration of the internal and external environments, and 3) the overall organizational capacity to learn. Verbos, Gerard, Forshey, Harding, and Miller's (2007) model of Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) provides a frame for the relationship between the learning organization dimensions and the ethical climate within the context of Cooperative Extension. The POS framework, as discussed in Chapter 2, highlights Extension's dynamic nature that allows for learning to occur in an open system through increasingly diverse

interactions with the environment.

The low predictive relationship between the learning organization dimensions and egoistic climate ($r = 0.231$) and deontological climate ($r = 0.309$) is further explained by the context of Extension's organizational model. Egoistic climates are centered on organizational gains (Victor & Cullen, 1988) which contrasts the holistic approach of the learning organization (Ortenblad, 2004; Senge, 1990; Watkins & Marsick, 1997) and the community-focused objectives of Cooperative Extension (Campbell, 1995; Herzfeld, 2001). The rigid reputation of Deontological climates (Martin & Cullen, 2006) contrasts the fluid structure of the learning organization (Armstrong & Foley, 2003; Dodgson, 1993; Ortenblad, 2004) as well as the flexible nature of Cooperative Extension's organizational model.

Results indicate that participants who perceived the ethical climate of Cooperative Extension as deontological, (leaders support $b = .403$; connection $b = .179$), or utilitarian, (leaders support $b = .473$; connection $b = .282$), perceive that Cooperative Extension possesses dimensions of a learning organization. Those who perceived an egoistic ethical climate (leaders support $b = -.346$; connection $b = -.157$) do not perceive Cooperative Extension to promote learning organization dimensions. Results suggest that while Utilitarian and deontological climates support the learning organization dimensions, the egoistic climate potentially challenges them. Furthermore, the mission of Cooperative Extension is not aimed at profit and organizational gain, which are underpinning tenets of the egoistic ethical climate.

Implications for research

- 1) Due to the exploratory nature of this study and the homogenous sample

organization, a replication of the present study should be conducted with all seven learning organization dimensions and as well as all previously discussed ethical climates. Results should provide a better understanding of which dimensions of learning organizations best support each of the ethical climates.

2) Future studies should examine the relationship between ethics and learning in different forms of organizations, such as for-profit corporations. Additional studies should examine how the organizational model impacts the relationship between the concepts of ethics and learning to determine if there are practical implications for organizational development.

Implications for practice

Research results suggest that organization administration should be cautious about assumptions of organizational perceptions and norms, and should not assume that mission drives culture. Within the realm of HRD, future business leaders need to understand that while mission may impact culture, it does not necessarily shape the organizational members' perceptions. Emphasis needs to be placed on future organizational leaders and how they understand the concepts of ethics and learning within their organizations. From the ethical climate perspective, future HRD researchers and practitioners should take an in-depth look at how the ethical climate relates to the organizational model prior to adopting strategies to strengthen the organizational culture.

As indicated in the results of this study, Cooperative Extension employees perceived that organizational leaders provide strategic leadership for learning. As earlier discussed, leaders

who continue to build capacity in their own skill development in an effort to recognize ethical issues ultimately develop a stronger sense of moral obligation (Falkenberg & Woiceshyn, 2008), are able to articulate their own ethical orientation (Shaw, 2008; Trevino & Nelson, 2007), and expand the boundaries they place on acceptable behaviors within their organizations (Jurkewicz, Giacalone, & Knouse, 2004). From a HRD perspective, Higher Education Institutions need to continue to provide learning opportunities for Extension leaders to foster their sense of moral obligation for both personal and organizational growth.

Hypotheses 4-8

H₄: *Gender will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate.*

H₅: *Age will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate.*

H₆: *Level of formal education will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate.*

Conclusions and Discussion:

As previously shared, studies have shown variables such as gender, age and education level have both a significant (i.e. Parboteeah, Hoegl, & Cullen, 2008) and insignificant (i.e. Van Sandt, 2001) effect on perceived types of ethical climates. Research results from this study showed that there are no significant relationships between the personal characteristics of gender, age, and education level with perceived ethical climates.

H₇: *Extension position will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate*

H₈: *Position tenure will exhibit a significant effect on the type of organizational ethical climate*

Conclusions and Discussion:

A review of the literature indicated there is a lack of empirical studies on the level of significance associated with Extension position and number of years in Extension, and perceived organizational ethical climate types. Research results showed that while there was no significant relationship between number of years in Extension and ethical climate type, there was an extremely low predictive relationship between Extension position and perceived ethical climate.

The Agriculture and Family Consumer Sciences (FCS) agent position when combined explained approximately 3% of the variance in deontological climate. The 4-H Agent position also indicated an extremely low level of variance, explaining approximately 1% of variance in the Utilitarian climate and approximately 0.05% in the egotistic climate. With the extremely low variance explained, conclusions can not reliably be drawn on the relationship. Victor and Cullen (1988) found that since organizational positions are exposed to a variety of factors (i.e. selection of employees, attrition), it is highly unlikely that there would be homogeneous climates across subunits, specific jobs, and tenure levels.

Implications for research:

1) Future research involving ethical climate and personal characteristics of Extension employees should include an examination of the correlational relationship instead of predictive. Different empirical tests may highlight areas of significance a regression was unable to identify.

Summary:

While the empirical results of the overall study did not provide strong empirical support for the relationship between ethics and learning, there were a number of implications for both research and practice in the field of HRD. As discussed throughout the study, ethics and learning in organizations are complex concepts. One of the greatest challenges within the study was the attempt to bridge theory and practice through the use of a philosophical concept such as ethics and measure it against a very practice-oriented instrument such as the Dimensions of a Learning Organization Questionnaire. While ethics is grounded in philosophy with few concrete defining structures associated with it, although fluid in nature the concept of learning can be practical and outcome oriented.

As stated by Martin and Cullen (2006), ethical climate preceptions have demonstrated to be powerful in facilitating both positive and negative organizational outcomes (p 191). With a better understanding of the perceived organization's ethical climate, organizational leaders have the potential to improve the level of organizational commitment (Cullen, Parboteeah, & Victor, 2003; Sims & Kroeck, 1994), increase job satisfaction (Deshpande, 1996), or potentially deter acts of incivility and unethical behavior (Trevino, Butterfield, & McCabe, 1998). As organizational leaders develop strategies to address how the organization's ethical climate influences outcomes such as commitment and job satisfaction, learning needs to be considered as part of the equation. As discussed by Swanson and Holton (2001), emergent strategies within successful organizations need to include a system for creating ongoing learning and systems thinking throughout the strategic planning process

(p 356).

Although the concepts of ethics and learning did not result in significant results combined, results within the observation of each individual concept provided insight on essential components of the organization. With the awareness that employee' perceive the ethical cliamte to be strongly deontological, research should be conducted to determine the benefits of the climate, enabling HRD professionals to strenghten ethical practices through education and training. With the awareness that Extension employees feel organizational leaders model and support learning, research should continue to explore the relationship between learning and ethics in organizations in order for HRD professionals to build opportunities for leaders and their constituents to optimize their learning together.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Permission for Ethical Climate Questionnaire

Copyright Permission for ECQ
Received 9/8/08

Hello:

Please feel free to use the questionnaire.

You can get the ECQ in a Psy Reports article we did in 93...slightly updated from the ASQ version. You have our permission to use it.

You can get most of my pubs on ethical climate including a recent meta-analysis at:
www.cb.wsu.edu/~cullenj/articles/article_index.htm

You might want to check out the following for more validation work:

Stone, R. W., & Henry, J. W. (2003). Identifying and developing measures of information technology ethical work climates. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 46(4), 337-350.

Peterson, D. K. (2002). The relationship between unethical behavior and the dimensions of the ethical climate questionnaire. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 41(4), 313-326.

Good luck and let us know what you find.

John Cullen

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

From: Kate Guerdat [mailto:kate_guerdat@ncsu.edu]

Sent: Monday, September 08, 2008 11:25 AM

To: Cullen, John Brooks

Subject: Ethical Climate Survey

Dr. Cullen -

I am a doctoral student at NC State University in Raleigh, NC- who has finally narrowed down her dissertation topic on the presence of ethical climates in learning organizations (does one necessarily equal the other).

If possible, I would love permission to use the Ethical Climate Questionnaire. Please let me know what additional information is needed and cost that may be associated with using the tool. I would not be changing of the concepts or items, possibly only adding a few of my own.

I look forward to hearing from you and hope all is well.

Best,

Kate Guerdat

APPENDIX B

Permission for Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire

Copyright permission for use of DLOQ

Received 7/31/08

Hello Tim and Kate,

Missed seeing you too-- Hope to be in D.C. Though. Budget cuts of travel funds are making everything interesting here.

We would be delighted to have Ms. Guerdat use the DLOQ in her dissertation research. I do need a little clarification though. When you say "some items" I get a little concerned since these items are each anchored to a construct.

It would be essential that the item was used in a way that is consistent with that construct for your survey to yield valid results.

Kate, we ask that you cite us on the instrument as you will see the cite at the bottom of the first page of the DLOQ -- and that you clarify how you will use the items. Finally, we always love to hear what you learned when you use the DLOQ and hope that you will share your findings with us at least as they relate to this questionnaire once you complete your study.

Best wishes to you in your research-- and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,

Karen

-- Karen E. Watkins Associate Dean for Research and External Affairs College of Education
The University of Georgia G10 Aderhold Hall Athens, GA 30602 W 706-542-4355 F 706-542-8125 <http://www.coe.uga.edu/adresearch/>

>> From: Timothy Hatcher <tim_hatcher@ncsu.edu>

>> Date: Wed, 30 Jul 2008 18:48:41 -0400

>> To: Victoria Marsick <marsick@tc.columbia.edu>, Karen Watkins

>> <kwatkins@uga.edu>

>> Cc: <kate_guerdat@ncsu.edu>

>> Subject: Favor to use your DLOQ

>>

Karen & Victoria,

I hope this summer has been restful and you found time to have some fun. I have a favor to ask. I have a doc student wanting to use some items from your DLOQ in her dissertation.

Would you mind? If not could you please give her permission and point her towards a copy of the instrument? Her name is Kate

Guerdat. Email is kate_guerdat@ncsu.edu
Many Thanks, Tim

APPENDIX C

Ethics and Learning Survey

Section 1: Participant Characteristics

1. Age _____
2. Gender: Male/ Female
3. Highest Level of Education completed:
 - High School
 - Associates Degree
 - Bachelor's Degree
 - Masters Degree
 - Doctoral Degree
4. Extension position
 - 4-H
 - Family and Consumer Science Agent
 - Agriculture Agent
 - Other
5. Number of years employed with Cooperative Extension
6. Number of years in current position
7. Do you have any supervisory responsibilities?
8. What state are you employed in?

Section 2: Dimensions of a Learning Organization Questionnaire

Learning organizations proactively use learning in an integrated way to support and catalyze growth for individual workers, teams and other groups, entire organizations, and (at times) the institutions and communities with which they are linked.

In this questionnaire, you are asked to think about how your organization supports and uses learning at an individual, team and organizational level. From this data, you and your organization will be able to identify the strengths you can continue to build upon and the areas of greatest strategic leverage for development toward becoming a learning organization.

Please respond to each of the following items. For each item, determine the degree to which this is something that is or is not true of your organization. If the item refers to a practice which rarely or never occurs, score it a one [1]. If it is almost always true of your department or work group, score the item a six [6].

Question	Almost Never				Almos t Alway s	
	1	2	3	4	5	6

- 1. My organization helps employees balance work and family.
- 2. My organization encourages people to think from a global perspective.

3. My organization encourages everyone to bring the customers' views into the decision making process.
4. My organization considers the impact of decisions on employee morale.
5. My organization works together with the outside community to meet mutual needs.
6. My organization encourages people to get answers from across the organization when solving problems.
7. In my organization, leaders generally support requests for learning opportunities and training.
8. In my organization, leaders share up to date information with employees about competitors, industry trends, and organizational directions.
9. In my organization, leaders empower others to help carry out the organization's vision.
10. In my organization, leaders mentor and coach those they lead.
11. In my organization, leaders continually look for opportunities to learn.
12. In my organization, leaders ensure that the organization's actions are consistent with its values.

Section 3: Ethical Climate Questionnaire

Directions:

The following questions will ask you about the general climate of your organization. Please answer the following questions about how it really is in your organization, not how you would prefer it would be. Please be as candid as possible, as all responses will be strictly anonymous. Please indicate the extent to which you feel the following statements are true about your organization.

Completely False 1	Mostly False 2	Somewhat False 3	Somewhat True 4	Mostly True 5	Completely True 6
-----------------------------------	-------------------------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------------	------------------------------	----------------------------------

1. In this organization, people are mostly out for themselves.
2. The major responsibility for people in this organization is to consider efficiency first.
3. In this organization, people are expected to follow their own personal and moral beliefs.

4. People are expected to do anything to further the organization's interest.
5. In this organization, people look out for each other's good.
6. There is no room for one's own personal morals or ethics in this organization.
7. It is very important to follow strictly the organizations rules and procedures here.
8. Work is considered sub-standard only when it hurts the organization's interest.
9. Each person in this organization decides for himself what is right and wrong.
10. In this organization, people protect their own interests above other considerations.
11. The most important consideration in this organization is each person's sense of right and wrong.
12. The most important concern is the good of all the people in the organization.
13. The first consideration is whether a decision violates any law.
14. People are expected to comply with the law and professional standards over and above other considerations.
15. Everyone is expected to stick by company rules and procedures
16. In this organization our major concern is always what is best for the other person
17. People are concerned with the company's interest to the exclusion of
18. Successful people in this organization go by the book.
19. The most efficient way is always the right way, in this organization.
20. In this organization, people are expected to strictly follow legal or professional standards.
21. Our major consideration is what is best for everyone in this organization.
22. In this organization, people are guided by their own personal ethics.
23. Successful people in this organization strictly obey the organization policies.
24. In this organization, the law or ethical code of their profession is the major consideration.
25. In this organization, each person is expected, above all, to work efficiently.
26. It is expected that you will always do what is right for the consumer and public.
27. People in this organization view team spirit as important
28. People in this organization have a strong sense of responsibility to the outside community
29. Decisions here are primarily viewed in terms of contributions to profit.
30. People in this organization are actively concerned about the consumer and the public's interest.
31. People are very concerned about what is generally best for employees in this organization.
32. What is best for each individual is the primary concern in this organization.
33. People in this company are very concerned about what is best for themselves.
34. The effect of decisions on the customer and the public are a primary concern in this organization.
35. It is expected that each individual is cared for when making decisions here.
36. Efficient solutions to problems are always sought here.

APPENDIX D

IRB Application

IRB#

North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
REQUEST FOR EXEMPTION (Administrative Review)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Date Submitted: <u>May 17, 2010</u>
Title of Project: <u>An Examination of the relationship between learning organizations and ethical climate</u>
Principal Investigator: <u>Kate Guerdat</u>
Department: <u>Leadership, Policy, and Adult and Higher Education</u>
Campus Box Number: <u>7801</u>
Email: <u>kate_guerdat@ncsu.edu</u>
Phone Number: <u>(919)515-9568</u>
Fax Number: <u>(919)515-7812</u>
Faculty Sponsor Name and Email Address if Student Submission: <u>Dr. Tim Hatcher, timothy_hatcher@ncsu.edu</u>
0. Source of Funding? (required information): <u>N/A</u>
1. Is this research receiving federal funding?: <u>No</u>
2. If Externally funded, include sponsor name and university account number: <u>N/A</u>
3. RANK: <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student: <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate; <input type="checkbox"/> Masters; or <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): _____

As the principal investigator, my signature testifies that I have read and understood the University Policy and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research. I assure the Committee that all procedures performed under this project will be conducted exactly as outlined in the Proposal Narrative and that any modification to this protocol will be submitted to the Committee in the form of an amendment for its approval prior to implementation.

Principal Investigator:

Kate G. Guerdat

(typed/printed name)

 *
 (signature)

 (date)

As the faculty sponsor, my signature testifies that I have reviewed this application thoroughly and will oversee the research in its entirety. I hereby acknowledge my role as the principal investigator of record.

Faculty Sponsor:Timothy Hatcher

(typed/printed name)

_____*

(signature)

(date)***Electronic submissions to the IRB are considered signed via an electronic signature***PLEASE COMPLETE AND DELIVER TO:***(carol_mickelson@ncsu.edu) or Institutional Review Board, Box 7514, NCSU Campus
(Administrative Services III, Room 245)*******

For SPARCS office use only

Regulatory Compliance Office Disposition

☐ Exemption Granted ☐ Not Exempt, Submit a full protocol
Exempt Under: ☐ b.1 ☐ b.2 ☐ b.3 ☐ b.4 ☐ b.6_____
IRB Office Representative_____
Date**Project Description:** *Describe your project by providing a summary and answering the requests for information below.*

1. Project Summary. Please make sure to include the purpose and rationale for your study as well as a brief overview of your study.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between dimensions of learning organizations and how individuals perceive the ethical climate of their organization. The objectives of the study are to:

- 1) Determine what types of ethical climates are perceived by the Cooperative Extension Service employees
- 2) Determine if CES employees perceive two dimensions of a learning organizations to be part of their organizational structure
- 3) Determine the predictive value of the learning organizations dimensions on the perceived ethical climates.

The rationale supporting this study is to build upon gaps in the current body of literature in ethics and learning. Currently research has not examined the two variables together. In addition, findings will provide a tool for organizations develop strategies to address unethical issues in their organization, which could aid in reducing unethical organizational behavior. Findings support the development of assessment and training of ethical behaviors in organizations. This study provides support for future research to examine both ethics and

learning in relation to organizational development.

2. Description of participant population, including age range, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and any vulnerable populations that will be targeted for enrollment.

Targeted participant population will be made up of approximately 4200 Cooperative Extension Agents within 13 states in Southern Region of United States. Ages will range from 22 years and higher. Participants must be employed by Cooperative Extension as an Extension Agent in the program areas of 4-H, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Agriculture. Participants are only being examined within these three programs as they are historically the strongest programs within Cooperative Extension.

3. Description of how potential participants will be approached about the research and how informed consent will be obtained. Alternatively, provide an explanation of why informed consent will not be obtained. Include a copy of recruitment materials, such as, scripts, letters of introduction, emails, etc. with your submission.

Extension directors within each state will be asked to send the survey link to potential participants. The link will be accompanied by an e-mail requesting participation from the researcher. A sample e-mail is included with application. Extension Directors will only be sending survey links to Cooperative Extension Agents within the three program areas (4-H, Family & Consumer Sciences, and Agriculture). A letter of consent will be attached to the e-mail; participants will be told that their participation in the survey is completely voluntary, that there are no individual indentifying variables, and that by completing the survey their consent is implied. A sample of the e-mail for recruitment purposes is attached.

4. Description of how identifying information will be recorded and associated with data (e.g. code numbers used that are linked via a master list to subjects' names). Alternatively, provide details on how study data will be collected and stored anonymously ("anonymously" means that there is no link whatsoever between participant identities and data). Describe management of data: security, storage, access, and final disposition.

Code numbers will be used to identify responses, however names and individual forms of identifying information will not be collected. Only the researcher and supporting faculty advisor will have access to the data. All data will be kept within a password protected system. Any printed materials will be kept in a locked box, again only the researcher and supporting faculty advisor will have access to the data.

5. Provide a detailed (step-by-step) description of all study procedures, including descriptions of what the participants will experience. Include topics, materials, procedures,

for use of assessments (interviews, surveys, questionnaires, testing methods, observations, etc.).

A quantitative research design will be used for this study. Participants include individuals in one organization with multiple locations (13 states in the Southern Region of the United States). A web-based survey collected data on basic demographics, ethical climate perceptions, and perceived learning organization dimensions using the Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ), the Dimensions of a Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ), and basic demographic questions.

The ECQ by Victor and Cullen (1988) consists of 36 items and implements a 5-point Likert scale with a reported reliability of .72 to .91 (Victor and Cullen, 1993). A portion of the DLOQ will be used, including 12 items and implements a 5 point Likert scale with a reported reliability of .71 to .91 (Yang, Marsick, and Watkins, 2004). For this specific study, only a portion of the DLOQ is being used rather than the entire instrument as the research objectives only examines the organizational level components of the instrument. An email with an embedded link to the survey will be sent to Extension Directors in each of the 13 Southern Region states. Extension Directors will be forwarding the e-mail request to list serves in each of the 3 program areas. SurveyMonkey will be used to disseminate and collect data for the survey. Initial data will be explored for non-response bias by comparing early and late respondents. Both scales will be examined for reliability. Multiple regression will explore the relationship between the perceived ethical climate and perceived dimensions of a learning organization, as well as the moderating effect of the demographic variables on perceived ethical climate.

6. Will minors (participants under the age of 18) be recruited for this study:

NO

7. Is this study funded? NO If yes, please provide the grant proposal or any other supporting documents.

NO

8. Is this study receiving federal funding? _____

9. Do you have a significant financial interest or other conflict of interest in the sponsor of this project?

NO

10. Does your current conflicts of interest management plan include this relationship and is it being properly followed? N/A

11. HUMAN SUBJECT ETHICS TRAINING

*Please consider taking the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), a free, comprehensive ethics training program for researchers conducting research with human

subjects. Just click on the underlined link.

12. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- a) If a questionnaire, survey or interview instrument is to be used, attach a copy to this proposal.
- b) Attach a copy of the informed consent form to this proposal. See the IRB website for a Sample Consent Form and Informed Consent Checklist
<http://www.ncsu.edu/sparcs/irb/forms.html>
- c) Please provide any additional materials (i.e., recruitment materials, such as “flyers”, recruitment scripts, etc.) that may aid the IRB in making its decision.

**If a survey instrument or other documents such as a consent form that will be used in the study are available, attach them to this request. If informed consent is not necessary, an information or fact sheet should be considered in order to provide subjects with information about the study. The informed consent form template on the IRB website could be modified into an information or fact sheet.*

The Following are categories the IRB office uses to determine if your project qualifies for exemption (*a review of the categories below may provide guidance about what sort of information is necessary for the IRB office to verify that your research is exempt*):

Exemption Category: (*Choose only one of the following that specifically matches the characteristics of your study that make this project exempt*)

1. Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

X 2. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

***Please Note- this exemption for research involving survey or interview procedures or observations of public behavior does not apply to research conducted with minors, except for research that involves observation of public behavior when the investigator(s) do not participate in the activities being observed.**

3. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.

4. Research, involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available, or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

5. Not applicable

6. Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed, or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration, or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency, or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Letter

North Carolina State University

INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Examination of relationship between learning organizations and ethical climates

Kate Guerdat and Dr. Timothy Hatcher

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a relationship between learning organizations and the perceived ethical climate of the overall organization. The overarching goal of the research is to determine what form of relationship exists and if elements of learning organizations can influence types of ethical climates in organizations.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey that will take between 15-30 minutes. You will be asked to provide minimal demographic information, such as age, number of years on the job, and geographical location. All answers will be kept confidential and no names will be associated with the data. Participation in the study is not a requirement of your position in your organization and your participation or lack thereof, will have no impact on your employment.

Risks

The survey questions will ask you to assess your work environment, therefore there could be professional risk from your responses. To prevent harm to you, your identity will not be associated with your responses. You should not complete the survey while at work and if you must leave the survey while completing it make sure to close your web browser.

Benefits

While there may be no direct benefit to the individual participant, the information gathered in this study will enable organizations to examine the role ethical perceptions play in the amount of incivility that exists in their organizations. Results of the study will add a great deal to the existing body of knowledge and will allow for further research on preventative methods for uncivil workplace behaviors.

Confidentiality

The data being collected will not be linked to individual responses, therefore all responses will

be kept anonymous during data collection, analysis, and reporting. The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. Data will be stored securely in a locked drawer, with limited access granted only to the principal investigators involved in the research. All electronic data will be kept in password-protected databases. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study. You will NOT be asked to write your name on any study materials so that no one can match your identity to the answers that you provide.

Compensation

You will not receive anything for participating.

What if you have questions about this study?

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Kate Guerdat, at North Carolina State University, Campus Box 7606, Raleigh, NC, 27695, or at (919) 515-9568.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, IRB Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

Consent To Participate

If you have read the above information and agree to participate with the understanding that participation is voluntary and you may change your mind at any time without penalty, please click the link below to go the online survey. If you complete and submit the online survey, that will indicate your willingness to participate.

APPENDIX F

IRB Exempt Approval

North Carolina State University is a land-
grant university and a constituent institution
of The University of North Carolina

**Office of Research
and Graduate Studies**

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Sponsored Programs and
Regulatory Compliance
Campus Box 7514
2701 Sullivan Drive
Raleigh, NC 27695-7514

919.515.2444
919.515.7721 (fax)

From: Debra Paxton, IRB Administrator
North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board

Date: June 11, 2010

Project Title: An Examination of the Relationship Between Learning Organizations and Ethical
Climate

IRB#: 1500-10-6

Dear Ms. Guerdat:

The research proposal named above has received administrative review and has been approved as exempt from the policy as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations (Exemption: 46.101. b.2). Provided that the only participation of the subjects is as described in the proposal narrative, this project is exempt from further review.

NOTE:

1. This committee complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU projects, the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429.
2. Any changes to the research must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
3. If any unanticipated problems occur, they must be reported to the IRB office within 5 business days.

Please provide your faculty advisor with a copy of this letter. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Debra Paxton
NCSU IRB

APPENDIX G

Memorandum of Support to Extension Directors

Memorandum of support

Extension Colleagues,

Kate Guerdat, a junior member of our faculty, is in the process of completing her doctoral research on how the elements of a learning organization may relate to the ethical climate of an organization. Her research will help her complete her degree in Human Resource Development and she has chosen Cooperative Extension Agents of the Southern Region as her study population.

In an effort to support her research, we are asking for your assistance by forwarding the information below to your 4-H, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Agriculture agents. Kate would appreciate being copied on the e-mail sent to field faculty. Her e-mail address is: Kate_guerdat@ncsu.edu. If you would be more comfortable having Kate send the e-mail, please send a list serve directly to her e-mail address. A reminder follow-up e-mail will be sent in two weeks in an effort to encourage participation.

Thank you in advance for your time and efforts. Kate will be sharing her results upon completion of her degree and will be happy to share state specific findings if requested.

Marshall Stewart, Ed.D
Associate Director, NC Cooperative Extension Service
Head and State Program Leader
Department of 4-H Youth Development and Family & Consumer Sciences
NC State University, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
512 Brickhaven
Box 7606
Raleigh, NC 27695
Phone: 919.515.1681
Fax: 919.515.7812
Email: marshall_stewart@ncsu.edu

APPENDIX H

Participation Solicitation E-mail

Participation Solicitation E-mail

Greetings Extension colleagues!

As a doctoral student and a fellow Extension professional, I am requesting your assistance with my current research on the relationship between ethics and learning in Cooperative Extension. Cooperative Extension is known for its roots in public service and in a time when there is increased pressure for innovative outreach initiatives, some of our underlying values are being challenged. With the increased emphasis on outreach and engagement with our communities comes a greater volume of diverse perspectives. Increased diversity also results in increased potential for ethical dilemmas.

My research aims to determine if the 'learning' component of Cooperative Extension has any relationship with the ethical climate within the Extension organization. The survey requests your perspective on 1) how our organization supports learning from an organizational level and 2) what type of ethical climates you perceive the organization promote

Your participation with this study is completely voluntary and does not impact your position in any form. All responses will be kept strictly confidential. Attached is an informed consent letter stating your rights as a research subject. By completing the survey your consent to participate is implied.

I realize that I am adding to an already busy schedule in asking for your participation during one of our busiest seasons, but circumstances beyond my control pushed data collection into the summer months. As fellow researcher and students, I know many of you can appreciate the importance of participating. The study will take less than 20 minutes from start to finish and you'll be able to personally celebrate your contribution to helping this student achieve an important goal!

Thank you in advance for your time and efforts with my study. The survey will be open until the second week of August. Please let me know if you have any additional questions regarding my research at Kate_guerdat@ncsu.edu or (919) 515-9568.

Best, Kate Guerdat

Link to Survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JY82DTR>

APPENDIX I

Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Learning Organization Dimensions

Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Learning Organization Dimensions

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
SMEAN(emp32)	1.000	.363
SMEAN(emp33)	1.000	.395
SMEAN(emp34)	1.000	.442
SMEAN(emp35)	1.000	.545
SMEAN(emp36)	1.000	.550
SMEAN(emp37)	1.000	.513
SMEAN(con38)	1.000	.462
SMEAN(con39)	1.000	.587
SMEAN(con40)	1.000	.689
SMEAN(con41)	1.000	.665
SMEAN(con42)	1.000	.647
SMEAN(con43)	1.000	.697

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

APPENDIX J

Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Ethical Climates

Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Ethical Climates

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component		
	1	2	3
SMEAN(d20)	.801	.108	-.151
SMEAN(d15)	.797	.126	-.069
SMEAN(d14)	.695	.181	-.077
SMEAN(d23)	.656	.322	-.186
SMEAN(d7)	.650	-.064	.067
SMEAN(d24)	.567	.318	-.136
SMEAN(u18)	.540	.388	-.098
SMEAN(d13)	.537	.141	.070
SMEAN(u32)	.105	.782	-.003
SMEAN(u31)	.207	.757	-.146
SMEAN(u21)	.224	.749	-.239
SMEAN(u12)	.215	.730	-.268
SMEAN(u16)	.138	.666	-.039
SMEAN(u5)	.297	.522	-.468
SMEAN(e10)	-.171	-.350	.662
SMEAN(e33)	-.049	-.229	.652
SMEAN(e1)	-.207	-.393	.646
SMEAN(e4)	.056	-.131	.618
SMEAN(e29)	.000	.076	.602
SMEAN(e17)	.039	.150	.589
SMEAN(e8)	-.032	-.090	.479
SMEAN(e6)	-.176	-.202	.474

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser

Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.