ETHICAL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP THROUGH ACTS OF VIRTUE: A PHENOMENOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Paul Willis, Advisor

This study addressed the lack of emphasis and understanding related to the benefits of the practice of ethical principal leadership. The purpose of this study, to address the noted problem, was to explore the practice of principal ethical leadership through acts of virtue and was viewed through the Framework of Foundational Virtues of Educational Leadership: consisting of the virtues of responsibility, authenticity, and presence (Starratt, 2004). This phenomenological study consisted of interviewing six principals in Northwest Ohio. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and written personal codes of ethics. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed in conjunction with other noted forms of data. This data produced the essence of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue via the following five themes: the virtue of responsibility, the virtue of authenticity, the virtue of presence, the virtue of perseverance, and student centrality. The identified essence and themes of the study provide a greater understanding of, and benefits related to, the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue. Also, this study expands the literature related to ethical leadership and principal leadership by identifying practical and theoretical implications that impact both areas of leadership.
This dissertation is dedicated to all
leaders seeking to inspire others
through their actions
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All of the pages I have written along my doctoral journey, including those within this dissertation, this one page I’m finding to be the most difficult of all to write. To express the amount of gratitude I have for those who have assisted me along the journey is no easy task. What I feel I can give in words cannot match what others have given me over the past four years in their patience, support, guidance, motivation, and understanding. These individuals include my committee members, leadership studies professors, cohort, research participants, and family.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

C.S. Lewis (1947) saw the necessity of ethics and morality and shared how a society's "drive" to keep pushing for bigger and better could potentially lead to individuals lacking morality, when not provided opportunities to act ethically. His thoughts are in some ways prophetic, considering where k-12 education currently finds itself, in a state of expansive accountability and measurement, where "bigger" and "better" is the ultimate end. Lewis illustrated his fear of this many years ago, eloquently stating, “In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise” (p. 6). In a simple quote from Lewis’ Men Without Chests he illustrates the potential for schooling to lead students down a path in which they are academically prepared and able to perform requested tasks, but also possibly ill prepared socially and emotionally for the challenges they may face as citizens in an ever changing and complex society.

Merton (1957) expanded upon Lewis’ notion. He found that if individuals immersed in a society where goals merely focus on the attainment of status and wealth were socially acceptable, then socially acceptable means to achieving those goals will many times be ignored to obtain the acceptable goal. More recently, Lampe (2010) continued with the perspective that education in the United States is currently driven by a society focused on attainment, stating "education for making a good living, rather than for living a good life, appears to be the overriding concern for most people in the United States today" (p. 50). The assertions of Lewis, Merton, and Lampe have been echoed via the initiatives and policies directed towards education in recent years. Policies such as those instituted since George W. Bush signed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) into law in 2002 have led to teacher accountability and measurable student performance becoming the primary focus of U.S. education (Chubb & Ravitch, 2009). Deborah
Meier (2004) contends that because of policies such as these, students and schools are considered successful only if they are scoring high on standardized tests. Meier reiterated how policies leveraging high-stakes testing such as NCLB, and most recently Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), have created a "bigger is better" mentality in American education. Because of this type of legislation, students "are carefully groomed to recognize ways to enhance their status in the race to look good, get ahead, be the most, and have the most" (Meier, 2004, p. 70).

The state of Ohio has provided support for Meier’s (2004) sentiments through the various policies it has implemented related to education reform. Many of these policies have kept the measurement of student performance the focus, attaching them firmly to the success and failures of school districts and those who lead, teach, and learn within their boundaries. In fact, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) (2015) explicitly states, “test results are the foundation” [emphasis added] (p.3) of report cards that illustrate how well students are doing, and “identify schools and districts that need additional support and intervention” (p. 3). Some of these policies include those such as the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) that attempts to mesh student performance with teacher accountability. While this system looks to ensure quality teaching, it also ties student test scores to not only school and district quality, but teacher quality as well, placing greater pressure on both the teachers and students. ODE (2015) highlights that "results of standardized tests also hold the teacher accountable for their contributions to their students' learning" (p. 4). Combining teacher accountability and standardized testing can be dangerous, as Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) suggest, pointing to the fact that although achievement and accountability are associated, this association can also lead to assigning blame to teachers if not applied appropriately.
A State of Ohio Board of Education member shared his thoughts related to the impact achievement paired with accountability is having on teachers. He stated, "What we are dealing with now is a test that they (teachers) think can end their career and the morale of teachers [sic] is disintegrating right before our eyes" (Urycki, 2015, p. 2). Under the pressure of these high-stakes accountability measures, additional time is being spent during the school day to meet their demands, not only in preparing for them but in their administration as well. During the spring of the 2014 - 2015 school year, 850,000 tests in the areas of math and language arts occurred across the state of Ohio (Urycki, 2015). The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) (2015) found that students spend an average of 19.8 hours a year on state tests. With kindergartners being at the low end, spending 11.3 hours testing and students in grade 10 at the high-end spending 28.4 hours on average taking standardized tests. This testing does not account for student learning objectives (SLO) that are teacher-developed assessments given to students. These assessments are tied to the evaluations of the teachers required to create them and account for an additional 5.1 hours’ worth of testing for students. Nor does it account for the recent addition of the mandatory ACT for all students in grade 11, beginning the spring of the 2016 - 2017 school year (Ohio Department of Education, 2016). And although many focus on time spent testing students, it does not depict the full impact these tests have on schools and the students they serve. The additional hours spent in preparation for these tests are unaccounted for in the data. Although this is recognized by ODE (2015) noting, "most schools and teachers spend a significant amount of time preparing for standardized tests" (p. 7).

When testing measures are tied directly to a district, school, and teacher's success, as noted above, educators begin to compartmentalize their curriculum, spending more time focusing on the tests at hand (Giroux, 2002). Regular testing, tracking, and measurement of students have
led to what Carneiro and Draxler (2008) described as teaching and learning motivated by a testing system that just tests for knowledge and nothing else. Erskine (2004) echoed this sentiment feeling that because of high-stakes testing many teachers have become robotic in their approach to educating students, and instruction has become mindless, uninspiring, and focused on passing tests. The ODE itself illustrated that testing is a hindrance to innovative practices that may benefit students, allowing schools to apply for waivers that would enable them to ease testing requirements to promote innovative practices. However, this was a very limited number; with almost 1,000 community schools and districts throughout the state of Ohio, only ten had access to this opportunity (Ohio Department of Education, 2015).

Academic subject areas such as math, language arts, science, social studies, along with the teachers and students within these areas, have not been the only ones impacted by high-stakes accountability measures. Physical education, art, and music have also found themselves affected. As educators in these areas are attempting to adapt to the ever-evolving changes they face, such as cuts in funding, and shifts in pedagogy due to pressures to integrate other content into their curriculum (Garrison & Seymour, 2015; Graham, Parker, Wilkins, Fraser, Westfall, & Tembo 2002; West, 2012).

Finding the appropriate balance in the current era of accountability is important (Ohio Department of Education, 2015). To only say that policies such as NCLB or ESSA should be completely vanquished is not realistic, nor would it be altogether appropriate. It is important for educators to be highly qualified and held accountable for the job they do, and ensure students are making progress necessary to be college and career ready (Butzin, 2007). Butzin also outlined that in addition to accountability and preparation, students attending schools considered to be low performing have been provided additional supports and options that have assisted in better
meeting their needs. Also, the testing required by policies such as NCLB and ESSA provides an efficient way to measure student progress (Cawthorn, 2007; Ohio Department of Education, 2015). However, the narrow measures of these tests combined with the immense amount of time and resources spent on preparing for them and their execution may be limiting opportunities for students, when it comes to the educational experiences needed to prepare them for success as citizens in the 21st century (Butzin, 2007). Carter (1998) contends that without educating children to think beyond their self-interests, they will not gain the necessary understanding of what it means to live in a community.

Ken Kay (2010), president of the Partnership for 21st century Skills, expresses that due to how the world is changing, the pure mastery and ability to recall facts is not sufficient. Students need educational opportunities that allow them to demonstrate a "deeper understanding through planning, using evidence and abstract reasoning … making connections … devising an approach to solving a complex problem" (p. 24). Students not being provided these opportunities to the extent they should be, due to the emphasis placed on high-stakes testing, is an unfortunate scenario. Today's students will face challenges such as globalization, environmental degradation, and a rapid emergence of digital technology (Starratt, 2004). Problems such as these will force them to not only understand, but also be active participants in complex relationships between themselves and the world (Starratt, 2012).

Due to the factors noted above, Starratt (2004) contends learning in the United States "remains a huge waste of students' time, and taxpayers' money, especially in the middle and secondary schools" (p. 2). His rationale is that instruction and student learning are currently inauthentic and do not add the value necessary to prepare students for citizenship in a 21st century society (Starratt, 2004, 2011). While Starratt identifies the current state of educating
students in the United States not to the quality it should be, he also sheds light on another fundamental concept: student preparation for life in the 21st century. In doing so, he links student learning to the development of skills that will prepare students for life during this time period. The Partnership for 21st century Skills (2009) identified the critical skills needed in the 21st century to be creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration. Trilling and Fadel (2009) state, "these skills are the keys to unlocking a lifetime of learning and creative work" (p. 49). Furthermore, these skills will prepare students for not only the various challenges they will face in the 21st century but for jobs that don't even exist yet (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010; Newmann, Carmichael & King, 2016; Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

What would traditionally be considered rigorous learning to master content and develop intelligence does not look the same in a classroom developing 21st century skills (Newmann et al., 2016; Resnick & Schantz, 2015). Development of these skills takes place in classrooms where students are engaged in learning that is relevant and conducted through investigative inquiry and analysis, not those in which students sit idly in desks working through packets (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010). Expectations for students are set high, with a focus on quality work, and assessments are formative and action oriented versus summative and rote: ownership of learning and a sense of community are standard (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Researchers such as Ken Kay, Howard Gardner, Chris Dede, Bob Pearlman, Jay McTighe, John Barrell, and Cheryl Lemke have asserted that 21st century skills are an essential component of student learning and preparation for life in the 21st century. And an environment rich with authentic learning opportunities is key to the development of these skills (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010). Because of this, educational leaders such as school principals should be looking to lead efforts that facilitate
learning environments that provide students greater access to these kinds of learning opportunities (Lemke, 2010; Starratt, 2004, 2011).

For students to be successful in the rapidly changing environment of the 21st century, educational leaders must move beyond the delivery of their education as that of efficiency, measurement, and performance (Starratt, 2012). Furthermore, it will require educational leaders to view their leadership as a conscious and active practice in ethics (Starratt, 2012). This ethical stance taken by Starratt needs special attention. The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (2008) shared that ethics are much more than words on a wall, but rather "dispositions and habits that enable us to act" (p. 3). Starratt, along with Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011), contend that to lead in a manner that will ensure opportunities for students to be prepared to navigate the various challenges the 21st century will continue to pose them, educational leaders must actively engage the ethical components of their leadership. Furthermore, Ehrich, Harris, Klenowski, Smeed, and Spina (2015) expressed “ethical school leadership becomes imperative in a context of increasing performance-driven accountability” (p. 197). Doing so will provide educational leaders such as school principals, the necessary foundation to draw from when leading efforts to provide students appropriate learning opportunities: despite the challenges posed by policies mandating high-stakes accountability measures (Ehrich et al., 2015; Starratt, 2004, 2011, 2012). The ethical leadership of principals leads us to the purpose of the study.

**Purpose of the Study**

Starratt (1991, 2004, 2011, 2012) points to a nexus between the ethical leadership practices of educational leaders and the learning opportunities provided to their students, in spite of external accountability measures. It is the educational leader's role and responsibility to facilitate a productive learning environment (Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Lemke, 2010;
Factors, such as accountability measures that utilize high-stakes testing, have made it difficult for educational leaders to lead in a manner that consistently allows for students to be exposed to learning environments that prepare them for citizenship in the 21st century (Newmann, 2007; Knapp & Feldman, 2012; Koyama, 2013; Lemke, 2010; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt, 2004, 2011). Starratt (2004) outlines a particular framework comprised of ethical virtues educational leaders can lead from, that may assist them in not only managing various accountability measures, but lead in a manner that facilitates a learning environment conducive to educating students in a fashion that fully prepares them for life. As Sergiovanni (2006) shares, "in the principalship, the challenge of leadership is to make peace with two competing imperatives: the managerial and the moral" (p. 13).

This qualitative study's purpose will be an effort to explore the phenomenon of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue. Starratt's (2004) framework of Foundational Virtues of Educational Leadership will assist in framing the study. The framework outlines that by leading ethically through virtuous acts educational leaders, such as principals, have a greater capacity to influence and facilitate learning environments that fully prepares students for citizenship in the 21st century. This study will be guided by the following research questions:

**Research Questions**

1. How do principals describe their ethical leadership experiences through acts of virtue?
2. How do the ethical leadership experiences of principals through acts of virtue influence student preparation for 21st century citizenship?
Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework gives a study ground to stand on, providing it the stability required to appropriately direct its scope, and provide the reader with the necessary lens to view the study through (Roberts, 2010). For the purpose of this study Staratt's (2004) Foundational Virtues of Educational Leadership will be used. Starratt's framework will be a platform for the virtues he poses as critical to the successful ethical leadership practices of educational leaders, particularly the school principal in their efforts to provide students with quality learning opportunities that will prepare them for 21st century citizenship in the midst of an era of high-stakes accountability.

Foundational Virtues of Educational Leadership

At the core of this framework are the three virtues of responsibility, authenticity, and presence. For the purpose of this study, these virtues will be considered specific to the role of school principals. The concept of specific virtues aligning to one's role within a given context aligns with Audi's (2012) definition of role-specific virtues. This concept will assist myself as the researcher to further isolate and describe principal experiences leading from the virtues presented by Starratt (2004). Role-specific virtues will be defined in greater detail later in this chapter as well as chapter two.

Although there are other ethical frameworks, triads, and paradigms educational leadership can be viewed through concerning ethics, most of these evaluate and guide a leader's decision-making, in response to various moral dilemmas. For example, the majority of the time they will pose a scenario that places the school principal, typically referred to as the "agent" within ethical dilemmas. The agent will be in the role of the decision maker, where he or she must evaluate the various consequences that may arise depending upon the moral position the
"agent" takes. Two of the most noteworthy for educational leaders include Starratt's (1991, 1994) ethical triad of care, justice, and critique, along with Shapiro and Stefkovich's (2011) multi-paradigm approach, which utilizes Starratt's triad, while adding the ethic of profession. These provide the "agent" with ethical perspective, assisting them in seeing things from a different angle then they may have previously, without the presence of the ethical lens provided. Doing so, allows the agent to evaluate his or her options against an ethical standard, or a combination of standards, before making a final decision.

Starratt's (2004) most recent framework moves beyond basic decision-making by focusing on "the work [emphasis added] of educational leaders when they attempt [emphasis added] to lead" (p. 5). Starratt views the virtues of responsibility, authenticity, and presence as virtues to be exercised to fully engage the school community, and posits that their interconnectedness establishes a sound foundation for the leadership of educational leaders to be developed. Also, Starratt notes that not only is the interconnectedness of these three virtues important, but their use by the educational leader to the human, academic, and civic dimensions of the school community are critical to facilitating an environment conducive to student learning. Below, a brief overview will be provided. However, further exploration will take place within the literature review of this study.

Responsibility. Starratt (2004) divides the virtue of responsibility into ex-post facto (after the fact) or ex-ante facto (before the fact), the moral of the two being ex ante facto. The rationale for ex ante facto being superior is that the individual who takes responsibility before an act or decision has taken the time for deliberation, and therefore illustrates care for who may be affected.
** Authenticity. ** The virtue of authenticity is related to individuals being themselves. Leaders exhibit this virtue by bringing their true self, their authentic self, to all aspects of their leadership (Starratt, 2004). Starratt cites Charles Taylor as referring to authenticity as an ethic as, "a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else's" (Taylor, 1991, p. 28). However, an individual's true authenticity does not come to full life without interaction with what they see as their identity, and what others see them as: such as those in their family or community. This web of interactions develops a reflective image of who an individual sees themselves as over time and affirms the relationships they have with others. The authentic leader is humble, grateful, and gracious, while always acting "with the good of others in view" (Starratt, 2004, p. 71).

** Presence. ** Starratt (2004) considers the virtue of presence the link between the virtues of responsibility and authenticity for leaders. The virtue of presence is an act of effort in being aware of one's self in relation to their surroundings, and being aware of the signals they are giving off, as well as any signals received from those around them they are interacting with. This interaction allows the leader to be aware of the events taking place within their organization, and the ability to recognize, respond to and address situations as they arise. When fully present, one can bring their authenticity to full light, leading to increased engagement, stronger relationships, and greater harmony between the leader and their surroundings.

** Significance of the Study **

Spanning back almost fifty years the school principal has faced various barriers that have challenged his or her ability to lead in a manner they would like to fully. Tyack and Hansot (1982) share the disdain of a high school principal in 1968:
At one time, we considered ourselves educators. I think the problem is much too complicated, the organization is much too vast, the ramifications are too great, the partners in the enterprise are too many for us to serve any longer as educators. (p. 238)

This comment was made not long after the launch of Sputnik, at a time when some of the most progressive legislation related to education in the United States was introduced. Some of the most important legislation included the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): Legislative measures such as these gave birth to policies that began to make education more complicated, and has led to an ever-growing focus on measurement of progress through testing (Grant, 2004).

Today, principals continue to face similar challenges placed before them, making it difficult for them to lead fully, particularly with the challenges that come along with policies linked to high-stakes testing as a tool to measure success. Therefore, this study will expand upon the literature related to the ethical leadership practices of principals as a means to influence student preparation for life as a 21st century citizen, and provide a contrast to the traditional research regarding educational leadership, which has primarily focused on the instructional leadership practices of principals as a means to student preparation. Also, this study will highlight principal experiences in their pursuits to lead efforts such as those noted above in the midst of the challenges they face, along with examples for principals to follow that are based on the actual experiences of principals who have tapped into their ethical leadership to overcome those challenges.

Furthermore, the important dynamic between the ethical leadership practice of principals and student preparation will be illuminated. This illumination will also provide those who are in charge of making decisions related to the development of leadership courses additional research
to draw upon to highlight the importance of providing those studying to be leaders in education
greater opportunities to engage with and develop the ethical components of their leadership. As
Bakopoulous (2013), Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011), and Starratt (2004, 2011) have indicated,
there is a lack of exposure and training related to ethics for educational leaders, with most
graduate courses focusing on the policies and laws related to educational leadership and not
ethics.

To provide the reader a better understanding of the concepts being explored within this
study the next chapter will be a review of the pertinent literature related to the practice of ethical
principal leadership through acts of virtue. A brief account of accountability in American
education will be shared in an effort to provide the reader context for the era of high-stakes
accountability principals lead within in. Also, a review of the literature pertaining to leadership
theory, ethical leadership, Starratt’s (2004) foundational virtues of responsibility, authenticity
and presence, and educational leadership will be presented.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The work of education is both intellectual and ethical, particularly in the way it approaches preparing students to work and live with others (Starratt, 2012). Trilling and Fadel (2009) echoed this sentiment in discussing successful student preparation in the 21st century stating:

Preparing students to contribute to the world of work and civic life, has become one of our century's biggest challenges. In fact, all the other great problems of our times—solving global warming, curing diseases, ending poverty, and the rest—don't stand a chance without education preparing each citizen to play a part in helping to solve our collective problems. (p. 150)

Evaluating 21st century education, Carneiro and Draxler (2008) continued to express that education made available to students that not only develops knowledge and skills but goes deeper, by developing meaningful relationships, can assist in the reduction of "poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression, and war" (p. 150). These ideas strengthen the case of providing students access to learning environments that facilitate learning opportunities for them to develop the knowledge, skills, and morality required of them to be productive citizens in the 21st century (Carneiro & Draxler, 2008; Starratt, 2012; Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

Those who find themselves in leadership positions in education have the opportunity to lead efforts that promote opportunities towards high quality learning for students (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt, 2004, 2011, 2012). However, at a time that it seems apparent student exposure to quality learning opportunities are needed related to the development of 21st century skills, barriers exist due to testing practices associated with policies, such as NCLB and ESSA (Starratt, 2004). For over a decade, state and local policies, spawned from the federal policy NCLB, have measured students, educators, and communities via pressure-packed high-stakes
testing (Erskine, 2014; Jones & Eagley, 2006; Knapp & Feldman, 2013; Koyama, 2013; Minarechova, 2012). And although NCLB has retired, a successor was signed into law by President Obama, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which requires high-stakes testing components similar to that of NCLB. Martin and Sargrad (2015) reported, "the bill [ESSA] preserves annual, statewide assessments and the reporting of transparent, disaggregated performance data … and it requires action in schools where individual groups of students are not making progress" (p. 2). This is a clear illustration of the importance the national legislature places on accountability measures within schools, and although there was lobbying to move away from NCLB to ESSA, many of the components related to high-stakes accountability remain.

With policies that rely on high-stakes testing as a measure of student, school, and community success not going away, educational leaders such as principals, continue to find themselves in a precarious situation. They must follow mandated policy, yet provide quality-learning opportunities that prepare students to face the challenges the 21st century will present (Knapp & Feldman, 2011). Some have referred to school principals as merely "political machines" who are concerned with raising test scores, while others see them as unofficial policy makers that make sense of larger political issues within the context of their local community (Jones & Egley, 2006; Koyama, 2015). Knapp and Feldman (2012) illustrated that principals might actually "merge an externally-driven logic, reflecting management, bureaucratic, and political accountabilities, with one professionally driven, and anchored to patterns of professional and moral accountability" (p. 37). For the present study, the latter is preferred, as it aligns with Starratt’s (2004) perspective, that educational leaders must look beyond the technical efficiencies of teaching and learning, and see this interaction as an “activity that should engage
the full humanity of learners and their teachers” (p. 9). More importantly, Starratt (1991, 2004) posits that to accomplish this, leaders within education such as school principals, should actively lead with ethics: through the virtues of responsibility, authenticity, and presence.

To gain a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of leadership, ethics, educational leadership, and student learning, the remainder of this chapter will be a synthesis of the literature about these topics. However, it is important to provide an initial backdrop for which this occurs within. Therefore, a brief overview of policy related to American education and high-stakes testing will be provided.

**Policy and Accountability in American Education: A Backdrop**

Policies related to the education of youth in the United States, predate the official establishment of our nation, dating back to the 1600s with the Massachusetts School Act (Laude, 1997). After establishing itself as a nation, in 1787 in legislation related to the Northwest Ordinance, the U.S. Government illustrated its feelings regarding the educating of its citizens stating, "religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged” (as cited in Laude, 1997, p. 3). Additional legislation supported this position requiring townships of a particular size establish public schools for their youth and levy taxes to support them (League of Women Voters, 2011).

As our nation developed and changed over time so did policies related to education. However, these policies shifted from conducting education to improving it after the launch of Sputnik by Russia in 1957. Initially, this was illustrated via passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958 in response to the Russian launch (League of Women Voters, 2011; Minarechova, 2012). Additional acts consistently illustrated a push towards improving
education, such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 1969. These policies combined school improvement, testing, and federal funds determining a new path for education in the United States (Grant, 2004; Minarechova, 2012). This was influential due to the fact Title I of ESEA created a direct link between local schooling and federal funds by being "the largest source of federal funding for public schools" (Minarechova, 2012, p. 85), whereas NAEP led the way for national standardized testing (Grant, 2004).

A government report published in 1983 entitled *A Nation at Risk* assisted in strengthening the public perspective that education in the United States needed improving, as it attempted to illustrate student learning was subpar compared to that of students in other countries (Minarechova, 2012). *A Nation at Risk* was a reminder of the continued threat of global competition from the 1960s. After this report, policy related to education in the United States began to sharply focus on the quantitative measurement of student success and goal attainment: into the turn of the century (Koyama, 2013; Spillane & Kenney, 2012). Giroux (2002) recognized this focus in the midst of the authorization of NCLB in 2001 stating, "public schools are overburdened with high-stakes tests and harsh accountability systems designed to get teachers to narrow their curriculum and to focus on raising test scores" (p. 1146). Although policies were in place in many states that already required annual testing, NCLB expanded testing by requiring all students in the third through eighth grade be tested (Minarechova, 2012). Also, it made these tests high-stakes by linking federal dollars to student performance on tests (Meier & Wood, 2004; Minarechova, 2012).
High-Stakes Testing

Various researchers contend that a flaw in policies such as NCLB is the use of high-stakes testing (Erskine, 2014; Grant, 2004; Meier & Wood, 2004; Ryan & Weinstein, 2009; Spillane & Kenney, 2012). Impacting the teaching, learning, leading, and at times the overall functionality of schools. Grant (2004), through his in-depth review of the high-stakes testing literature, went as far as to say, "I have learned that during this high-stakes testing reform, the chances are diminishing of public schools richly contributing to their students becoming reflective, enlightened, and critical learners ... " (p. 10). Even supporters of policies such as NCLB, like Chubb (2004), have agreed that how student success is measured should be reexamined. Educational leaders such at the building level, such as principals, are impacted by high-stakes testing (Demos, 2009; Jones & Egley, 2006; Knapp & Feldman, 2012). This is because accountability systems that utilize high-stakes testing often pose challenges for principals, who must meet the various external demands they create within their organization while leading for learning (Knapp & Feldman, 2012). However, as noted previously, this is not an easy task to accomplish. If educational leaders, such as principals want to lead for learning, they must develop a form of leadership that is rooted in a basic understanding of what leadership is, connected to who they are as an individual, and gives purpose to the actions they take. To further illustrate this, the following section will provide an overview of leadership, and connect leadership to its ethical components.

Leadership

Bass (1985), Burns (1978), Hersey and Blanchard (2001), Rost (1993), among others have discussed the influential power of leadership (Bennis, 1990; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Leithwood & Louis, 2012). And how influence impacts the followers
and organizations they lead: be it in business or education. The term leadership itself can
summon varying philosophical perspectives and definitions. In its simplest form, Hersey and
Blanchard (2001) make the link between leadership as the influence of an individual's actions on
the behavior of others. However, the accomplishment of this through various types of leadership
has been a focus of leadership theorists for some time (Rost, 1993). Warren Bennis (1990)
evaluated almost one hundred leaders across the United States, identifying essential
competencies of leaders and Hersey and Blanchard (2001) did the same. Through their twenty
years of research, Kouzes and Posner (2002) identified the most effective practices of leaders,
"available to anyone, in any organization or situation" (p. 13). These include modeling the way,
inspiring a shared vision, challenging processes, enabling others to act, and providing
encouragement. Others have focused on leadership accomplishing a particular task, such as
Michael Fullan (2011) has done, evaluating how leaders lead change. Rost (1993) outlined how
philosophical perspectives and definitions related to leadership have changed throughout time,
including those such as great man theory, group theory, trait theory, behavior theory,
contingency theory, situational theory, and excellence theory: all bringing a different perspective
to the table regarding leadership. Due to these ever-evolving views related to leadership, Rost
illustrated that there has been an inability to identify what leadership is. Rost cited Bennis
(1959) as stating, "of all the hazy and confounding areas in social psychology, leadership theory
undoubtedly contends for the top nomination" (p. 19). Keeping in mind leadership's complexity
I will not be able to turn every possible stone related to the subject, nor attempt to develop my
own definition of leadership. I will, however, use this section of the literature review to provide
the reader a lens to view leadership through for the remainder of the study.
Rost (1993) illustrates the complexity and breadth leadership has to offer, and while doing so attempts to etch out his own definition of leadership as well, which will be used to facilitate this section's discussion of leadership. Rost's definition leans heavily on the leadership theories presented by theorists Bass (1985) and Burns (1978). Both Bass and Burns highlighted two forms of leadership; transactional and transformational. It is important for the reader to have a basic understanding of these forms of leadership, and how they fit within leadership theory.

Transactional leadership is viewed as a process of transactions, where the leader influences their followers to accomplish tasks or goals through an exchange. The exchange can be nominal, social, or emotional, but once the exchange is complete, so is the leader-follower interaction until it is once again necessary (Burns, 1978). Bass (1985) looked to expand upon Burns' definition of transactional leadership by placing greater focus on the role the followers played, particularly items that motivated them intrinsically, such as job satisfaction. However, his definition still focused on exchanges based on the needs of followers, to be manipulated by the leader, to achieve the desired outcome to benefit the leader. Some such as Rost (1993), argue that this form of behavior manipulation based on exchanges, be it nominal, social, or emotional, should not be considered a form of leadership: but merely considered management and "leaders are not the same as managers" (p. 150). And although both Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) held transactional leadership as a form of leadership it is not held to the same degree or illustrated as having the same influence, on followers as transformational leadership. At the end of the day, transactional leadership is a cold, lifeless, exchange void of the leadership lifeblood of lasting relationships among leaders and followers (Burns, 1978). Burns (1978) stated, "the bargainers have no enduring purpose that holds them together; hence they may go their separate ways" (p. 20). Rost (1993) continued his argument that transactional leadership is not a form of leadership,
but only management. He contended that those in an industrial era who meshed leadership and management together, viewed those who could get others to accomplish tasks that produced specified outcomes as leaders, and heavily relied upon this outdated form of leadership. Rost built a definition of leadership from the roots of transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership seeks to inspire followers to achieve more than they initially thought they would, pushing them to continue to achieve at greater personal levels, and do so for the greater good (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Burns (1978) stated, “Such leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (p. 20). However, with this being said, there is a fundamental difference between Bass and Burns regarding what constitutes a transformational leader. Bass contends that a transformational leader's actions indeed inspire their followers to achieve beyond their self-interest for the greater good of a movement or cause, but the intent of the leader and result of his or her actions are not of primary concern. The leader’s actions do not have to be in the best interest of the follower, as moral actions vs. immoral actions of the leader are not the ultimate consideration. For Bass, if a transformation has taken place due to the leader's actions, viewed as enduring change, transformational leadership is appropriately assigned.

Burns (1978), however, believed that a transformational leader leads in a manner that promotes the leader to the role of a moral agent having the best interest of their followers in mind. In this case the intent of the leader and result of his or her actions matter. Burns deemed transformational leadership as "the kind of leadership that can produce social change and will satisfy followers' authentic needs" (Burns, 1978, p. 4), not simply the greater good of a
movement. For Burns, transformational leadership can only be appropriately assigned if the leader's actions, and the result of those efforts, benefit his or her followers.

Joseph Rost (1993), building upon Burns’ (1978) theory, took the concept of leadership a step further, as he insisted upon the presence of a *relationship* between leaders and followers as a necessity, not simply a mutuality that benefits both. Rost argued that the intended outcomes associated with leadership actions are accomplished through leadership that is symbiotic in nature and is “forged in the relationship that followers and leaders have, one which allows followers to influence leaders as well as leaders to influence followers” (p. 120). Also, Rost presented in his theory that a *common purpose* among leaders and followers as a key component to leadership that transforms. He illustrated that this common purpose moves the leader and follower beyond the attainment of goals, allowing true transformation within an organization, community, or society to take place. Rost defined leadership as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (p. 102).

An area in which Rost (1993) further differs from both Bass (1985) more so than Burns (1978) is his perspective regarding the necessity of morality or immorality within leadership, particularly within transformational leadership. He contends that morality is too ambiguous to be a standard for transformational leadership. Feeling that a large proportion of any society may contain differing moral stances on any given topic, such as the death penalty or abortion, thereby making the leadership related to these issues moral and immoral at any given time; with only that which raises those to a higher moral standard being truly transformational. This type of moral standard is not feasible within Rost's definition of leadership, as he contends that leadership transcends and can transform too many facets of life and society within varying contexts to be
pigeonholed by a higher moral standard. Although there may be debate among major leadership theorists regarding the role of morality within leadership, Rost did share that leaders are required to act ethically. Ethics was also found to be a consistent stance throughout the literature reviewed (Bass, 1985, Bass & Steidmeier, 1999; Bennis, 1990; Burns, 1978; Elliot, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Mette & Scribner, 2014).

Ethics has been viewed by philosophers such as Aristotle (trans. 1952) as a necessary component of an individual's moral development by way of ethical actions over time, one forms their moral foundation. This perspective meshes nicely with Burns' (1978) definition of transformational leadership, in which the leader raises to higher levels of morality by keeping the needs of others in mind when acting: the means must justify the ends to meet the authentic needs of others. The definition presented by Burns lends itself well to leaders working within education, as Starratt (2004) stated, educational leadership needs to be seen as “a moral activity” (p. 9). Furthermore, for the educational leader to view their work as an activity of morality, they must act ethically (Starratt, 2004). To further develop the notion that ethics is a necessity within leadership, particularly transformational leadership, and illustrate its importance within educational leadership; it is important to evaluate the topic in further detail.

**Ethical Leadership**

Ethics in leadership should be of great concern to practicing leaders and those investigating the topic of leadership, as it “is the centrality of influence in the leadership process” (Rost, 1993, p. 127). The study of ethics or *ethike* as the Greeks referred to it (Lampe, 2010) dates back centuries, having been analyzed by ancient philosophers such as Aristotle within his text on *Nicomachean Ethics* (trans. 1952), and continues to be evaluated through various lenses and perspectives. The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (2008) viewed ethics through several
ethical lenses. These included utilitarianism (most good and least harm), rights (respecting the rights of all involved), justice (equal treatment of all concerned), common good (highest benefit of the community), and virtue (actions related to the type of person one wants to be). Through this evaluation, they have defined ethics as behavioral standards of one's actions within society, no matter who it may be.

Others have also made attempts to define ethics, and evaluate what it consists of. Lampe (2010) identified ethics as “a system of values and principles that guide one's behavior” (p. 49), and Joan Callahan (1988) defined ethics as “an inquiry of the philosophical study of morality” (p. 7). Callahan further outlined three forms of ethics, which include metaethics, theoretical normative ethics, and applied ethics. Callahan described metaethics as the attempt to analyze what is happening throughout the course of moral judgment, and not an attempt to make moral judgments. Theoretical normative ethics was divided into three categories, including moral axiology (good vs. evil), virtue ethics (moral excellence and character), and the theory of moral obligation (actions and practices required by all moral agents). Applied ethics was illustrated to draw from both metaethics and theoretical normative ethics in its attempt to "resolve specific moral issues… that arise in different areas of life" (p. 7). These various forms of ethical approaches, particularly theoretical normative ethics, assist an individual in developing behaviors that help them in decision making and finding a reflective morality, that leads to them becoming an autonomous moral agent (Callahan, 1988). Callahan identified an autonomous moral agent as one who acts independently based on a conscious evaluation of their fundamental beliefs, focusing not only on themselves, but taking others into consideration as well.

The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (2008) further outlined what ethics is not, sharing that they are not consistent with feelings, following laws or cultural norms, nor are they a
form of science. Ethics are developed through rationalized actions relative to the situation an individual finds themselves contemplating, and aligned with who they perceive themselves as being (Bricker, 1993). When viewing ethics through the lens of leadership, individual leaders are no different, as they are evaluated based on their actions being right or wrong, good or bad, or even evil (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Who a leader seeks to be drives their actions, and over time develops their moral character, which is a pillar of ethical leadership (Aristotle, trans. 1952; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). This perspective of ethical leadership being driven by actions motivated through virtue is rooted in theoretical normative ethics, as Callahan (1988) outlined, and the lens this study will be viewed.

Aristotle (trans. 1952) noted that all individuals develop ethically, including leaders, by seeking happiness and goodness in their lives, and living their lives in line with rational virtues, in an attempt to achieve happiness and the highest good they can. Further unpacking this concept, Sayre-McCord (2000) connected this to the happiness of an individual being relative to their function in life, and for an individual to perform their life function well; they must consistently perform in line with their virtues. By an individual exercising virtue, they will in hand perform their function well, which will lead to happiness and ultimately the highest good. If, then, a leader's function is to influence the behaviors of others (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Rost, 1993), it is important for them to act ethically in line with the virtues that motivate their decision making (Audi, 2012; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). A leader's ability to align their values with their actions was identified by Kouzes and Posner (2002) as a key component to successful leadership. Brown et al. (2005), as cited in Brown and Trevino (2006), defined ethical leadership as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through
two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (p. 596). This definition of ethical leadership aligns with Callhan's (1988) definition of theoretical normative ethics, specifically virtue ethics, which focuses on the actions and practices of moral agents.

**Virtue Ethics**

Robert Audi (2012) narrowed the focus of ethical leadership, focusing specifically on virtue ethics. Audi identified the importance of virtue within the ethical practice of leaders within organizations. In reviewing virtue ethics as a source of motivation for leaders, Audi noted that this form of ethics in many cases had been found to be of higher quality compared to other ethical theories. Audi's (1995) examination of virtue ethics highlights virtue as the core element to an agent's ability to act morally. Within this examination, Aristotelian and Kantian perspectives were analyzed, illustrating that a Kantian virtue perspective focused on duty or obligatory actions, does not truly meet the definition of acting with virtue. Audi (1995) states, "it is not sufficient that an action simply be of the right type... action from virtue is not a behavioural concept, in the sense of one defined in terms of what is accomplished, as opposed to how" (p. 451). For an agent to truly act with virtue, several requirements must be satisfied according to Audi. These requirements include recognition that a decision must be made, selecting what decision to make, the decision made is motivated intrinsically in relation to a virtue (responsibility, presence, authenticity), and the decision made in relation to a virtue is related to a stable element of character (trust, unity, integrity).

Audi (2012) takes actions grounded in virtue a step further by establishing six core conditions. First being the *situation*, in that there must be a situation for an agent's virtue to act in relation to. Second is *conceptual*, where the virtue must have a specific target, such as building trust in others by being responsible. The third is the agent's *cognitive* understanding of
the virtue they are enacting. Fourth is the agent's *motivation* to act the way they are acting. Fifth is *behavioral*, in that the agent's actions are based on a clear understanding of the virtue that is motivating their action, and sixth there are *others who benefit* from the virtuous act or acts of the agent. By viewing virtue ethics through this framework, as Audi noted, other motivating factors related to action, such as emotion or boredom are mitigated, and action from virtue can be identified.

Aristotle (trans. 1952) expressed this notion well before Audi (1995, 2012) establishing the core components of acting virtuously, which Audi expanded upon within the current context of leadership. Aristotle contended that the virtuous agent must have knowledge, select actions that are of their own and not motivated by extenuating circumstances, and actions taken must be from the solidly established character of the agent. Highlighting the concept of knowledge, Sherman (2006) detailed Aristotle’s focus on practical knowledge and its concern with human actions towards an end. Practical knowledge was discussed as the knowledge required by the virtuous agent to know in what circumstances the appropriate action or actions must be taken and *from* which virtue. Therefore, leading to virtuous action by the agent towards an end and not the end alone.

The concept of action from virtue and not acting of virtue due to extenuating circumstances is an important concept within the present study, particularly as it relates to principals. In discussing the role of principals, Sergiovanni (2006) provided support for this, emphasizing that if principals focus on outcomes alone, and define their role in terms of these outcomes this "increases the likelihood the means will be separated from the ends … separating the two is risky business and can be troublesome in schools" (p. 25). Therefore, those in leadership positions, particularly in educational settings, must act per their virtues to ensure their
moral compass guides them appropriately. Based on the literature reviewed, this is not done haphazardly on a whim, but purposefully executed on a daily basis. Although, both Audi (1995, 2012) and Aristotle (trans. 1952) align rules to the concept of virtue ethics it is important to remember throughout this study, as Cruzer (2016) noted within his examination of the rules behind Aristotle’s virtue ethics, “rules are not precise, exceptionless, or self-applying; they must be combined with perception and applied with practical wisdom” (pg. 66).

Drawing from the work of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) related to transformational leadership, Riggio, Zhu, Reina, and Maroosis (2010) connect the daily work of ethical leaders to virtue ethics. By connecting this to the character, motivation, and discipline of the leader: placing it in line with Audi's (1995) framework. Audi (2012) shared that, "virtue ethics stresses day-to-day activity, not just end results" (p. 274). He also outlined two types of virtues. These include comprehensive-virtues and role-specific virtues. Comprehensive-virtues encompass almost all one does within their daily life, such as beneficence: this virtue can impact almost anyone an individual comes in contact with. Whereas, role-specific virtues are more finite, being used within a specific role to achieve a specific outcome within society or an organization, and according to Audi are of utmost necessity for those holding positions of importance. In this study, three role-specific virtues will be used as ethical leadership practices of school principals. These virtues are the foundation of Starratt's (2004) framework related to the ethical leadership of educational leaders and include responsibility, authenticity, and presence.

**Responsibility**

Merriam Webster (2016) defines responsibility as a state of being, in which one is accountable: be it morally, legally, or mentally. As a virtue Starratt (2004) goes a step further breaking responsibility into two forms; ex-post facto (after the fact) and ex-ante facto (before the
fact). He considers the later the virtuous of the two, which aligns with Audi's (1995, 2002) account of what makes an act truly that of virtue. Starratt's rationale for this is that the individual who takes responsibility before an act or decision (ex-ante facto) has taken the time for deliberation, therefore acting from virtue, in hand illustrating care for those impacted by his or her decisions. This differentiation between acting from virtue, compared to acting out virtue due to external factors and legal accountability is an important concept within the study being conducted. Therefore, I would like to take a moment to expand upon it briefly.

Illustrated throughout this chapter and Chapter One, policies related to high-stakes testing and accountability measures can apply external pressures that may lead to principals acting out a virtue more often than acting from virtue: focusing more time and effort on end results versus the means by which results are achieved. Spillane and Kenney (2012) highlighted these pressures, through their research related to the role of school administration in the implementation of federal, state, and local policies, saying "policy initiatives have increasingly put pressure on school leaders to adapt their organization to meet new demands" (p. 553). Although these pressures have been illustrated to impact the decision making of educational leaders, such as school principals, it is still their responsibility to act ethically within their role (Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008). The responsibility of the educational leader to act ethically can only be achieved in a state of ex-ante facto, outlined by Starratt (2004), in which the responsible leader evaluates what their responsibilities are to the greater school community while taking care to avoid doing harm.

Starratt's understanding of the virtue of responsibility encompasses numerous areas and is broken into the three subsets that include as, to, and for. Responsibility as ensures the reflexivity required for the educational leader to act ethically (Callahan, 1988). This reflexive process,
through responsibility, was highlighted as a key component to the ethical development of principals in a study conducted by Langlois and Lapointe (2007) as it bolstered the reflexive process required by such leaders. Starratt views the educational leader as a responsible human, educator, administrator, and citizen. Who, when moving beyond the reflexive self, is accountable to students, teachers, parents, and superiors for authentic relationships, authentic teaching, authentic learning, and authentic citizenship. The virtue of responsibility assists in examining if principals as humans, educators, administrators, and citizens who act from this virtue are accountable to students for authentic learning opportunities. However, the virtue of responsibility does not exist alone, but is an essential part of a larger framework.

**Authenticity**

Starratt (2004) viewed authenticity as a web of interactions that develop a grounded image of which an individual sees him or herself as over time, and affirms the relationships they have with others. His notion of authenticity aligns nicely with the research of others, such as Rebecca Erickson (1995) who conceptualized the authentic self as an emotional state, in which an individual uses a self-value system to reflect upon their internal state in comparison to societal expectations: emotions that arise through this process drive behavior. Erickson's concept of authenticity dovetails the cognitive research conducted by Mayer and Salovey (1990). They defined the concept of emotional intelligence as a form of emotional processing, which an individual goes through the following: (a) appraising and expressing emotions in the self and others; (b) regulates emotions in the self and others; (c) uses emotions in adaptive ways. Furthermore, Block and Kremen (1996) equated this emotional processing to what they called ego-resiliency, being "the capacity of the individual to effectively modulate and monitor ever-changing complex desires and reality constraints … regulation of the individual's affective
and motivational pushes and pulls, given the existing possibilities and constraints in social environments" (p. 359). The importance of authenticity was further highlighted, through the research of Gino, Kouchaki, and Galinsky (2015) related to inauthenticity, highlighting the importance of the authentic self to the psyche of individuals. They found that a state of inauthenticity can lead to negative feelings related to the self, and be "psychologically costly" (p. 984).

With authenticity as a virtue, Starratt (2004) cited Charles Taylor who viewed authenticity as "a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else's" (Taylor, 1991, p. 28). Taylor drew from the work of German philosopher and theologian Schleiermacher, who established the ethic of individuality, and noted that this ethic could not exist without there being a relationship between the individual and all that exists around them (Sockness, 2004). Therefore, an individual's virtue of authenticity does not come to full life without interaction with what they see as their identity, with what others see them as.

When Starratt (2004) connected the virtue of authenticity to educational leadership, he expressed that the virtue is exhibited by leaders in education when they bring their true self, their authentic self, to all aspects of their leadership. And use it to shape their life, work, and the learning of the students they are responsible for, while leading "with the good of others in view" (p. 71). Starratt divided the virtue of authenticity of the educational leader into authenticity as, and authenticity in. Situating itself firmly to the virtue of responsibility, within Starratt's framework, the ethical leader in education is authentic as a human, educator, administrator, and citizen. Their reflexivity as is mirrored in their relationships, cultivation of teaching and learning, partnerships, and democratic stewardship of school community. The literature
presented has illustrated the virtue of authenticity assists in fueling the emotions that drive the actions of the educational leader. Starratt (2004, 2011, 2012) aligns himself with this research, by expressing that the authentic educational leader is driven to action by their sense of responsibility. Being responsible to the work of leading education that is authentic through the sustainment of "an environment that promotes the work of authentic teaching and learning" (p. 81), and doing so despite the various limitations they may face. Bringing Starrat's (2004) framework to full light, connecting the virtues of responsibility and authenticity, is the virtue of presence.

**Presence**

Starratt (2004) considers the virtue of presence the link between the virtues of responsibility and authenticity for leaders. When fully present, one can bring their authenticity to full light, leading to increased engagement, stronger relationships, and greater harmony between the leader and their surroundings (Starratt, 2004). In their development of their framework related to humanitarian assistance Hunt, Schwartz, Sinding, and Elit (2014) noted that engaged presence as an ethic that promotes "respect, humility, and solidarity" (p. 51). The concept of a presence that is engaged meshes well with Starratt's notion of presence as a virtue, as it allows the leader to be aware of the events taking place around them, and within their organization: providing them the ability to recognize and respond to situations needing to be addressed. Starratt indicates that "in the absence of this virtue, a person's authenticity, no matter how well developed, may miss the leadership implications of events in his or her organizational setting" (p. 91). Starratt (2004, 2011) categorized the virtue of presence as affirming, critiquing, and enabling.
The first of the three forms of presence presented by Starratt (2004), affirming, is exhibited through mutual respect and developed through meaningful interaction among those within the school community. During these interactions, the leader taps into their authentic self as a human, educator, citizen, and administrator with a responsibility to all stakeholders, to affirm the work of schools is to "promote a quality learning environment for all students … but even more to the transformative impact of authentic learning" (p. 94). The link drawn between environment and student learning facilitated by the educational leader's affirming presence is supported by research conducted by Stronge et al. (2008), where they found the school principal's ability to foster relationships among all stakeholders impacted instructional quality, learning, and overall school success. For affirming presence to flourish a component that cannot be overlooked, is the fact the leader must not only be mentally and emotionally present, but visibly present as well (Starratt, 2004).

The second presence is a critiquing presence, which allows the leader to identify and respond appropriately to barriers that do not align with their authenticity and or responsibilities (Starratt, 2004). Also, it poses that the leaders ask critical questions of themselves, others, and policies that hinder their responsibilities as a leader to all stakeholders for authentic relationships, teaching, learning, and citizenship. Starratt (2004) explained this mediation of responsibility and authenticity through the presence of critique:

The self, in response to the presence of the other, becomes aware of some blockage to or distortion of authentic communication. This awareness may lead to an attempt to clarify what is going on and what is at stake in the situation. That clarification, in turn, may call forth a more genuinely authentic presence on the part of one or both of the parties. In this
The virtue of presence mediates the dialogue between authenticity and responsibility. (p. 97)

The third and final form of presence is enabling presence, which is a residual of the previous forms of presence. This presence, through the full engagement of the leader, is one that develops trust and promotes empowerment among all involved in the school community for the betterment of all students (Starratt, 2004). This form of engagement is referred to as capacity building by Starratt (2004), furthermore its "building whatever capacities are needed to improve learning" (p. 100).

Starratt's (2004) virtues within his framework are a thoughtful reflection on how educational leaders should act when leading, moving beyond actions taken. Aligning with Audi's (1995, 2002) philosophy regarding virtuous actions being only truly virtuous when they are ex-ante facto, and connected to the character previously established within the agent. Also, as previously noted, Aristotle (trans. 1952) contended that virtue in a person is what makes that person a good person, and enables them to perform their function well. If then, what educational leaders seek is the highest good for their students, and the highest good is to fulfill their function well through virtuous acts, then educational leaders must lead through virtuous acts. Sergiovanni (2006) provided support for this concept throughout his text regarding the work of principals as normative, stating, "the heart of leadership has to do with what a person believes, values, dreams about, and is committed to" (p. 2). This approach to leading within education provides those in positions to do so, particularly school principals, a framework to draw upon that can lead them to conduct truly transformational work within schools.

While Starratt's (2004) framework connects educational leadership to the various important stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and community members: at the heart of his
framework is student success. Therefore, a significant part of the work of educational leaders is to ensure this is accomplished. To further develop this connection, a better understanding of educational leadership is required and will be explored in the following section.

**Educational Leadership**

In the 1800s, schools were dotted across the rural American landscape in the form of one-room school houses, in which local authorities led efforts to educate the youth of their communities, with many of those doing so as a part-time endeavor (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). As the American school system began to expand and become more complex, with religion and science clashing toward the end of the 1800s, an increase in immigration, and financial catastrophe at the turn of the century, education in America began to rapidly evolve (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). With this, a greater focus on the leadership of schooling began, with William Payne writing the first text related to the subject of school administration, and by the end of WWII colleges and universities began officially offering specific training related to school administration and leadership (Murphy, 1998).

Global competition throughout the early 20th century led to policies that not only expanded access to education but also narrowed its focus towards achievement, and furthermore, how to measure achievement. With this evolution, training programs began to focus on scientific approaches borrowed from the social and behavioral sciences that focused on developing strategies that would benefit the school leader, leading to the development of professional performance standards for school leaders by the Committee for the Advancement of School Administration (Murphy, 1998). This period, lasting until the late 1980s, defined as the scientific era of school administration by Murphy, which laid the foundation for educational leadership's continued evolution into the early 21st century. As educational leadership grew, so
did its demands, and the attention it gained by policy makers (Bredeson, 2016; Sergiovanni, 2006).

Educational leaders, particularly school principals, began to face increased pressure from policy makers to turn around low-performing schools. During this time, educational leaders relied heavily on business related leadership practices, developed during the scientific era, that were primarily transactional in nature, with many efforts ending in failure (Mette & Scribner, 2014). Many of these efforts failed due to a lack of ethical leadership practices, which focused not on what was in the best interest of students, staff, and community, but what was in the best interest of school leadership (Mette & Scribner, 2014). With educational leaders, such as school principals, actions being evaluated and scrutinized at ever increasing levels research and literature related to educational leadership began to focus on transformational leadership practices, along with the impact principal leadership had on the academic achievement of students (Arlestig, Day, & Johansson, 2016; Dufour & Marzano, 2001; Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Marzano, Walters, & McNulty, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2006; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt, 2004; Stronge et al., 2008).

In a review of research on school principals from twenty-four countries, spanning a decade, Arlestig et al. (2016) determined principals are essential to the success of schools. Not only are they key to the success of schools, but their leadership actions have also been found to have an impact on student achievement (Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Leithwood & Louis, 2012). Albeit indirect, the leadership of principals has been found to account for roughly twenty-five percent of the variability related to student achievement (Bredeson, 2016; Kafka, 2009). Dufour & Marzano (2011) go as far as to refer to the relationship as "significant" (p. 48). In a recent analysis of the research related to school principals from the years, 2003 through
2013, Bredesen (2016) found that a majority of the research indicated principal leadership matters and that their leadership style, behaviors, and daily practices impact school and student outcomes. In their review of sixty-nine studies, spanning thirty years, Marzano et al. (2005) identified twenty-one responsibilities of school principals that identified some form of positive impact on student achievement. Whereas Stronge et al. (2008) identified eight qualities, Sergiovanni (2006) eight competencies, and Leithwood and Louis (2012) identified four categories of core leadership practices. Although all use a different number or varying terminology, all have several common themes that relate to transformational and instructional leadership.

Research has indicated that the successful outcomes students experience as a result of their principal are related to a complementary combination of transformational and instructional leadership practices (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Hallinger, 2003). Leithwood (1992) viewed transformational leadership as a facilitative approach to influencing instructional change within schools, by assisting staff in maintaining a collaborative and professional culture, fostering teacher development, and promoting collective problem-solving. Leithwood determined that this form of leadership altered the attitudes and instructional behavior of teachers. This research connects to the literature presented previously in this chapter regarding the influential power of transformational leadership. Due to the fact the principal does not have direct access to students on a daily basis, as teachers do, they must influence the actions of the teachers in the classroom. The "principal affects teachers who in turn have a direct influence on student achievement" (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p. 49).

The influential power of transformational leadership is disseminated through some form of instructional framework utilized by a principal. Hallinger (2003) conceptualized instructional
leadership as a construct involving three components: defining the school's mission, managing instructional programs, and promoting a positive school climate. Within these elements are varying and ever-evolving roles and responsibilities that have grown over the years (Sergiovanni, 2006), however, execution of these roles and responsibilities is what allows principals to impact student success. Stronge et al. (2008) stated, "the principal's obligation for moral behavior and moral leadership leads to the need for the balance regarding what principals are expected to do with how they do their work" (p. 128). This relationship connects to the concepts of transformational leadership and ethical leadership presented previously in this chapter. As Burns (1978) explained, true transformational leadership lifts the leader to higher levels of morality through focusing on how they do what they do when they are leading, keeping those they are leading and how their actions will benefit them in their foresight.

Throughout the literature about educational leadership, particularly related to principals, the importance of ethics and morals is ever present (Day et al., 2016; Sergiovanni, 2006; Starratt, 2004; Stronge et al., 2008). Sergiovanni (2006) referred to morality as the spearhead of the principalship. Having a strong sense of their beliefs, values, and moral code is a necessity within educational leadership and must be communicated through the leader's actions: this is in essence ethical leadership (Marzano et al. 2005). Although not explicitly stated, it can be deduced through the literature reviewed within this chapter, that ethical leadership is an accelerant for effective educational leadership. With effective educational leadership being tied to student learning (Arlestig et al., 2016; Day et al., 2015; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Marzano et al., 2005; Starratt, 2004; Stronge et al. 2008), ethical leadership within education should be of great interest to leaders within the field. Starratt (1991, 2004, 2011,
2012) has indicated, educational leaders who lead ethically or moreover virtuously, promote environments that lead to student success.

**Summary**

The school principal finds him or herself leading within a dynamic and ever evolving environment, which has been illustrated by numerous theorists and researchers (Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Sergiovanni 2006; Spillane & Kenney, 2012; Starratt, 2004; Stronge et al., 2008). A principal’s ability to navigate diverse roles and responsibilities has shown to have an impact on the social, emotional, and academic success of the students under their care (Leithwood & Louis, 2012). How a principal not only navigates, but also executes their roles and responsibilities in the face of various challenges, such as policies related to high-stakes accountability, can determine the quality of education a student receives (Lemke, 2010; Sergiovanni, 2006; Sobo, 2002; Starratt, 2004, 2011, 2012). How a principal executes their roles and responsibilities is intimately aligned with their leadership.

Various stances regarding what leadership is, what it looks like, and how it should be done have been taken (Bass, 1985; Bennis, 1990; Burns, 1978; Rost, 1993). Although varying, consistently present throughout the literature related to leadership has been ethics. As principals approach, how they should lead their school to ensure student success, they too must rely on the ethical components of their leadership (Sobo, 2002; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt, 1991, 2004, 2012). Sobo (2002) and Starratt (2004) have contended that leading ethically as an educational leader is not only important but also imperative, because of the long-term impact such a role can have on society. Recognizing this importance, Starratt drew from normative ethics to develop a framework consisting of the virtue ethics of responsibility, authenticity, and presence. Illustrating how principals can use these virtues within their
leadership to assist them in leading ethically, Starratt further illuminated an area related to the leadership of principals that is often taken for granted.

Although, ethics as noted previously, is ever present within the literature related to leadership, it is routinely overlooked as an area to leverage within one’s leadership: particularly in education. As Sobo (2002) noted, “the moral nature of leadership is largely unrecognized and untapped source of motivation for the education profession” (p. 85). Because of the powerful undercurrent ethics possess beneath the vast waters of leadership, particularly within education, it is a phenomenon needing further exploration. The methods to conduct this exploration will be outlined in the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study’s purpose was an effort to explore the phenomenon of the practice of principal ethical leadership through acts of virtue. This phenomenon was explored through the described ethical leadership experiences of principals as viewed through Starratt’s (2004) Foundational Virtues of Ethical Leadership Framework, which is composed of the virtues of responsibility, authenticity, and presence. The main research questions for this study included the following:

1. How do principals describe their ethical leadership experiences through acts of virtue?
2. How do the ethical leadership experiences of principals through acts of virtue influence student preparation for 21st century citizenship?

The questions posed above required an in-depth exploration into the lives, perspectives, and experiences of those living out the questions. This required a qualitative approach. Creswell (2013) described qualitative research methods as relating to "social or human problems" (p. 44), in which a researcher seeks to gain greater understanding. Glesne (2011) stated, "qualitative researchers often seek to make sense of actions, narratives, and the ways in which these intersect" (p.1). Maxwell (2013) is explicit in illustrating that this form of inquiry is flexible in nature, allowing for the reflexive practice necessary to answer questions that cannot be answered quantitatively. This form of methodology provided me the opportunity to select a research design that could effectively explore questions of human experience and perspectives that breathe life into the research being conducted (Moustakas, 1994).

Due to this, my study warranted a qualitative inquiry, as I was seeking a greater understanding of a human experience within society, an experience that could not be explored in a quantitative fashion. As the research conducted was an effort to better understand the intersection of the practice of ethical leadership of school principals through acts of virtue and
the preparation of their students for 21st century citizenship: amid an era of accountability. A phenomenon as dynamic as this would not have been able to be explored sufficiently using quantitative methods. A qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to dive deeper into a phenomenon, allowing him or her the flexibility to examine research questions with the reflexivity and rigor required to extract the true essence of what is being explored (Maxwell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). By doing this researchers have the ability to present their research findings in a rich textual manner that provides others a better understanding of the research (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). In addition, qualitative inquiry provides the researcher the ability to evaluate complex issues and bring the essence of a phenomenon to light (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994); therefore it was best suited for my study.

**Research Design**

The research design for this study was phenomenological. Creswell (2013) defines a phenomenological study as one that seeks to understand a phenomenon through the experiences of several individuals who have experienced the phenomenon in question. The researcher then finds common ground among shared experiences and then contextualizes what is shared through descriptive text (Creswell, 2013). An example of this type of design being used in practice is a study conducted by Field, Lauzon, and Meldrum (2015) related to the shared experiences of outdoor education leaders. Field et al. (2015) interviewed five outdoor education leaders regarding their experiences. From those interactions, outdoor education leader experiences were described, interpreted, and common themes were developed. This information was then shared in the form of descriptive text, allowing the reader to connect with the phenomenon being explored, and have a better understanding of the phenomenon as a whole. Field et al. (2015)
expressed that their study added to the literature in the field of outdoor education by adding the “voices of outdoor education leaders” (p. 1) to the quantitative literature already available.

With this approach and rationale Field et al. (2015) echo the sentiments of Moustakas (1994) who posited that phenomenological studies have the ability to bring greater meaning to a topic through the marriage of reflexivity and inquiry through the consciousness of others, moving beyond analysis, in an effort to fully develop understanding of a phenomenon. This is particularly true when a study is situated within an interpretive paradigm, in which complex realities are assumed to be socially constructed and too challenging to measure quantitatively (Glesne, 2011). For example, the experiences of an individual are constructed through an individual’s reality in relation to their social setting over the course of time. These rich experiences become deeply rooted within the conscious of an individual or individuals, neither easily accessed nor measured quantitatively.

Therefore, research conducted within the interpretive paradigm seeks to contextualize, understand, and interpret what is occurring within a social group, which can only be accomplished by accessing the minds of others who have experienced what the researcher seeks to better understand (Glesne, 2011). This study sought to accomplish this by gaining access to the minds of principals to better understand their practice of ethical leadership through acts of virtue and provide greater understanding to the areas of educational leadership, ethical leadership, and leadership in general. By gaining access to the perspectives of multiple members of a specific social group, such as principals, through questioning, observation, and interacting with them the researcher has the ability to come to understand the phenomenon better (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011; Groenwald, 2004).
Creswell (2013) outlines two forms of phenomenology: hermeneutical and transcendental. Where hermeneutical focuses heavily on the researcher’s interpretation of the lived experience of the phenomenon being studied, transcendental focuses on describing the experiences of those related to the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). As the researcher of this study I used a combination of both forms of phenomenological inquiry described by Creswell. This approach was chosen as an attempt was made to interpret and describe the phenomenon of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue. This was to move beyond my personal interpretation of principal experiences and bring greater meaning to the phenomenon through rich contextual descriptions of the participants’ lived experiences. However, this could not be approached haphazardly and required a calculated approach to ensure the essence of the phenomenon was fully brought to light. Moustakas (1994) expressed this need illustrating that only by taking calculated steps can one know "the meaning and essences of entities and experiences in the everyday world" (p. 60).

This phenomenological approach has been used regularly in studies related to education when phenomenology is the method of choice, as was illustrated in studies conducted by Groenewald (2004) and Raffanti (2008), and discussed by Creswell (2013) and Moustakas (1994). With a phenomenological approach, researchers seeking greater understanding of phenomena set within dynamic societal settings, such as education, can engage with the variables related to the phenomenon through conversation, observation, and a level of reflexivity not possible when simply analyzing quantitative data. As I was seeking a greater understanding of the phenomenon of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue set within the dynamic societal structure of education, to simply gather quantitative data would have not been a sufficient approach to answering my questions related to the phenomenon. I required the
ability to engage in meaningful conversation with those who had experienced the phenomenon to be able to peel back the layers that may at times muddy the true essence of such as a phenomenon. Also, this research method provided me the opportunity to bring my personal experiences related to the phenomenon to the study, which would not have been possible otherwise.

Ultimately, approaching my study qualitatively via phenomenology I was be able to highlight the ethical leadership of principals in a manner that will lead to improved principal leadership and student learning within schools. Conklin (2007) asserted phenomenology can be a powerful research method, stating:

Any arena concerned with an increase in health, quality of life, knowledge, or achievement of deeper relationships and understanding with the other, this method has true potential to leverage the tools, knowledge, skills, and abilities that the professional brings to his or her craft. (p.285)

As a researcher and practicing educational leader wanting to expand my knowledge and understanding of the practice of ethical leadership of the school principal, and how they lead from this, a phenomenological study provided me the opportunity to understand this phenomenon at a deeper level and share this with others in a rich contextual manner. Taking this approach, the opportunity to create new knowledge and add to the current body of literature related to educational leadership was provided to me. Conklin (2007), in his attempt to discover if phenomenology as a knowledge creator was a legitimate path to discovery, concluded that there is "ample support for the use of phenomenology as a valid means of understanding organizational phenomena and managerial behavior" (p. 285).
Participant Selection

Before illustrating the method for selecting participants it should be noted that participants of the study are identified as a selection and not a sample. The term selection was identified as the appropriate terminology to be used in a phenomenological study versus the term sample by Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, and McKibbon (2015). Through their research, Gentles et al. (2015) found that the term selection was preferred by authors of phenomenological studies such as Yin (as cited in Gentles et al. 2015) as this choice of wording did not mislead others that this form of study is generalizable to a larger population: as is the case in quantitative studies. Gentles et al. (2015) also highlighted inconsistencies in the use of the terminology, sampling and selection, in various qualitative studies including phenomenology. Due to these various factors outlined by the research of others this study utilized a selection versus a sample.

Purposeful selection was used to identify and select participants for this study. Maxwell (2013) referred to purposeful selection as a process, in which "particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to one’s questions and goals, and that can't be gotten as well from other choices" (p. 97). This form of selection was also chosen in an effort to select participants who I felt I could develop and maintain a sound relationship with (Maxwell, 2013). Both Maxwell and Creswell (2014) felt this was a beneficial approach, as the appropriate selection within a qualitative study is important, so the researcher has full insight into the phenomenon they are studying. This type of selection allows for selections as small as one, if selected properly, to provide information that can allow a researcher to gather in-depth information related to questions central to a study. Also, approaches to purposeful selection can vary depending on the researcher's questions and goal of the study (Patton, 2002).
I determined my selection by contacting those who I knew would qualify to be participants based on my personal connection with these individuals and through the use of informants. Noy (2007) points out that relying on social networks in which the researcher employs the assistance of informants to select appropriate participants for their study is widely used within various qualitative studies. The use of social networks and informants allows the researcher access to those who have particular attributes or experiences the researcher is seeking to explore, who typically would not otherwise be easily accessible, such as those considered marginalized or elite (Noy, 2007).

This approach assisted the study two-fold. First, I was seeking access to principals to interview. The dynamic role of a principal is demanding and leads to them having busy schedules. Because of this, principals are typically selective in how they spend their time. Therefore, they are not as likely to participate in surveys or interviews presented by those they do not know or have some form of social connection. Because of this, I attempted to gain access to principals through informants who were socially connected to principals I sought to interview.

Initially, I used my social connections with superintendents and principals in Northwest Ohio by contacting them via email, face to face, or by telephone, seeking their assistance in informing me of principals who they felt fit the selective criteria I was looking for. I conducted follow-up phone conversations, as needed, to provide any additional information related to my study or answer any questions anyone had. Also, I allowed myself the flexibility to contact principals I knew directly who I felt fit the selective criteria I had determined for the study.

Secondly, this approach was of assistance by allowing me to narrow my selection process based on informant recommendations or personal social connections. The initial narrowing of my selection provided me the ability to select individuals that I knew fit the criteria I was
seeking for my study. This allowed me to ensure, to the best of my ability, I had selected principals who had experienced the phenomenon of practicing ethical leadership through acts of virtue. This selective process assisted me in exploring the phenomenon to the depth necessary to bring its essence to full light. Through this selective process I was also able to ensure my selection was homogenous. By focusing my research on a concentrated group with similar characteristics I was able to explore my research questions in greater depth than if I attempted engaging with a broader more diverse selection. Once a group of six public school principals in Northwest Ohio with a minimum of seven years of experience was identified and all agreed to participate in the study I began conducting interviews with them.

**Participants**

Creswell (2013) indicated that an appropriate sample size for a phenomenological study could range from five to twenty-five. For this study, a total of six participating principals were selected. All principals had a minimum combination of seven years of experience in any principal role, including assistant principal and held a principalship in one of the one-hundred and twenty-six public schools located in Northwest Ohio (see Appendix A), not to include joint vocational schools or schools of technology at the time the study was conducted. Northwest Ohio was identified as the twenty-county region that makes up the Ohio School Board Association's (OSBA) Northwest Region (Ohio School Board Association, 2015) (see Appendix B). The rationale for participating principals having a minimum of seven years of experience with no maximum limit was diverse. First, a principal having fewer than seven years of experience may have not had the varied experiences necessary to provide a rich description of the phenomenon. Secondly, a maximum experience level was not selected due to the fact those with experiences well beyond seven years were viewed as possibly being able to provide far
richer descriptions, due to their experiences. This is particularly true related to ethical leadership, as Aristotle (trans. 1952) posited that ethics are developed through ethical practice over time. Therefore, those with a greater number of years of experience were thought to be possibly more beneficial to the study than those with less. However, placing the minimum years of experience too high would have limited to the study and the process of purposeful selection.

**Demographic Data of Selected Participants**

Participants included 4 males and 2 female principals. Principals led buildings that included elementary (PK-4), (4-5), (k-6), middle (5-6), junior high (7-8), and high school (9-12). Participating principals ranged in age from 34 years to 58 years with a mean age of 43.5 years. The mean number of years principals had been working in the field of education was 18.5 years, while working for an average of 3 different educational institutions during their time in education. The length of time principals held leadership positions in education averaged 11.5 years. All principals were highly educated, all holding a minimum of a master degree, and 3 holding a doctorate degree.

**Participant Profiles**

In an effort to provide the reader a more intimate understanding of the data presented, and from whom the data came from, profiles of the six participants are being shared. These profiles are a summative account of the interactions I have had personally with each participant including two formal semi-structured interviews as well as time spent engaging in casual conversation while building rapport. In addition, the PCEs provided by participants, observations of their work space, observed interactions they had with others when meeting, and written communication between myself and participants related to the study have all assisted me in coming to a better understanding of who the participants are as individuals and principals. All
participants have been assigned pseudonyms in an effort to protect their anonymity and participants have also validated profiles.

**Mr. Baumann**

Mr. Baumann has been in education for 29 years, working for 4 different educational institutions throughout this time. These have included a joint vocational school and traditional public schools at varying levels including middle, junior high, and high school. He has held a leadership position for 21 years holding positions as both an assistant principal, principal, and district director of curriculum and instruction. Mr. Baumann is currently the principal of a suburban middle school of approximately 700 students. He is intelligent, humorous, caring and student-centered. Analyzing topics from various angles through the lens of a realist has both benefited and challenged him as a leader. Mr. Baumann shares, “just like the analyzing trait, I tend to prepare for both bad and good results. The lack of full optimism helps me accept less than desirable results, but has also caused my mind to be full of doubt in too many situations.”

**Dr. Dietrich**

Dr. Dietrich has been in education for 16 years, working for 4 different educational institutions throughout this time. These have included educational service centers and traditional public school districts. She has held a leadership position for 9 years in which all have been as a principal. Dr. Dietrich is currently the principal of a suburban elementary school of approximately 500 students. She is articulate, organized, driven, and exudes a strong sense of care regarding the students in her building and the community she serves. Dr. Dietrich makes an effort to embrace her life experiences and view her leadership through the various lenses of her constituents to build relationships. She shares, “I continue to work and grow in awareness each day as I develop relationships with many different people, listen to stories, and actively
participate in the schooling experience. Family, friends, media, culture, heritage, work, community, and religion constantly influence me.”

Dr. Fisher

Dr. Fisher has been in education for 21 years and has worked for 2 educational institutions during this time. These have both been traditional public school districts where he has worked at both the junior high and high school grade levels. He has held a leadership position for 9 years holding positions as both an assistant principal and principal and is currently the principal of a suburban junior high school of approximately 700 students. Dr. Fisher is concise, empathetic, and patient. He emphasizes lifelong learning and goal attainment through planning, communication, and the development of relationships, which he models through his leadership. He shares, “I believe that when you’re working with students when you’re working with parents, colleagues, staff, I like to treat people the way I like to be treated, and I think that’s key. I try to operate from the mindset that everybody within the organization has value.”

Dr. Simon

Dr. Simon has been in the field of education for 13 years, working for 3 different educational institutions throughout this time. All have been within traditional public education at varying levels including elementary, middle, and high school. He has held a leadership position for 8 years, including time as a dean of students, assistant principal, and principal. Dr. Simon is currently the principal of a suburban elementary school of approximately 400 students. He is thoughtful with his responses, an illustration of how he appears to approach being a principal, focusing heavily during our time on speaking to the development of the whole child. “I'm attuned to not just the academic side, and I think something that will probably come
out in more of these interviews is, as cliché as it sounds, the whole child piece of it. Kids are still learning about themselves, the world, and how they manage all that is going on around them; you have a great opportunity to impact kids’ thinking, kids’ thoughts, kids’ emotions, kids’ social being.” I feel this approach is fostered through Dr. Simon’s faith. In his personal code of ethics, he states “the guiding principle for my life is my belief and relationship with Jesus Christ. Simply put, without him, I am not here, and I am not a leader.”

Mrs. Voigt

Mrs. Voigt has been in the field of education for 15 years, working for 4 different educational institutions throughout this time. These institutions have included alternate learning centers focusing on students with intensive behavioral needs as well as what would be considered a traditional public elementary school. She has held a leadership position for 10 years, including supervisory roles and principalships. Mrs. Voigt is currently the principal of a suburban elementary school of approximately 500 students. She is focused, goal-oriented, and very connected to the mission of her district and school related to student learning. She is friendly, approachable, and brings a sense of toughness and vitality to the table that illustrates she is willing to put in the time and effort to ensure the goals and objectives set forth for her school and in life are achieved. Mrs. Voigt states, “the range of decisions I make on a daily basis in both my professional and personal life are innumerable. By keeping my focus on the goals and asking myself the above questions (these are questions noted within her personal code of ethics she uses to assist in guiding her decision making), I can rest easy knowing I did what was ethically best for my school and myself/family.”
Mr. Walter

Mr. Walter has been in education for 17 years and has worked for 1 educational institution during this time, which has been a traditional public school district at both the junior high and high school levels. He has held a leadership position for 12 years holding roles as both a dean of students and principal. He is currently the principal of an urban high school of approximately 800 students. Education is a second career for Mr. Walter working for 14 years in the business world prior. Mr. Walter is service oriented, hardworking, and illustrates an understanding and connection to the needs of his students, staff, and the community he serves. He views his leadership as an obligation that extends beyond the walls of his building sharing, “I have a responsibility that goes beyond the walls of my high school. Creating connections to families, to better their lives, whether that’s through education, whether that’s through making connections to social agencies that better themselves (students and families) with healthcare or with childcare, or just connections to jobs.”

Data Sources

Maxwell (2013) places great emphasis on the qualitative researcher selecting the appropriate methods for accessing data, those that will "work most effectively in the [sic] situation to give you the data you need" (p. 100). Within a phenomenological study, the most prevalent method used by qualitative researchers is the interview, typically multiple interviews (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). However, this is not the only form of acquiring data, as Creswell includes observations as an important technique used by qualitative researchers, allowing them to use the full capacity of their senses to understand the phenomenon they are seeking to explore in greater depth. For this study, observations were conducted informally and prescriptively, using a checklist, and maintained in a field notebook in conjunction with
reflective memoing. Also, I sought both current and historical artifacts in the form of documents related to the participants and the schools they lead. Glesne (2011) indicated, "to understand a phenomenon you need to know its history. Thinking historically, you will seek documents and photos and other artifacts that you may not access otherwise" (p. 86). This combination of data collection methods allowed me the opportunity to fully immerse myself in the phenomenon as experienced through the lives of the participants.

**Interviews**

I contacted participants directly via email or telephone. During this initial contact, I discussed the study, shared participant expectations, and answered any questions the potential participants may have had. After our initial contact, if the potential participants agreed to enroll in the study they were sent a letter of consent, via email, further outlining the study and explaining their rights related to the study (see Appendix C). This letter was signed and collected upon meeting for the first interview.

Initially, I conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with participants. Glesne (2011) identified semi-structured interviews as those that allow for the development of additional questions during the interview. Semi-structured interviews are beneficial as they allow for the flexibility noted by Glesne, yet provide structure for later analysis due to the fact questions are guided by “specific areas of inquiry” (McIntosh & Morse, 2015, p. 2). By using a semi-structured interview protocol, I was provided the opportunity to probe deeper and elicit greater clarity regarding the phenomenon, while at the same time ensuring the interview collected the data I was seeking.

The initial interview protocol (see Appendix D) for this study consisted of a short introduction to build rapport and seventeen carefully selected open-ended questions. All
questions were able to be asked during the interviews. However, I was prepared just in case an interview was interrupted due to unforeseen circumstances or surpassed the noted time, by front loading ten questions I felt would be the most beneficial to ask. Questions were developed in a manner that sought to assist participants in accessing specific events and experiences related to their practice of ethical leadership through acts of virtue. Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, and Kangasniemi (2016), through their synthesis of semi-structured interviews in an effort to create a framework for developing these types of interviews, noted that this form of interview was found to be particularly beneficial when studying items related to complex concepts in which “participants were not used to talking about such as values, intentions and ideals” (p. 2959). Because of this, questions were designed in a manner that allowed for participant focus to be drawn to issues they found familiar, while still highlighting the phenomenon of their practice of ethical leadership through acts of virtue. Doing so was found to be an additional benefit of using the semi-structured interview by Kallio et al. (2016).

Initial interviews using the noted protocol lasted no more than ninety minutes, with all interviews taking place at participant schools. Meeting in a space such as the participants’ schools was done to assist in placing participants at ease. Creswell (2013) identified conducting interviews in a space familiar with the interviewee particularly important when conducting one-on-one interviews, due to the fact it is important for participants to feel comfortable speaking openly with the researcher, and being in a familiar space assists in putting them at ease.

Interviews were audio recorded, with participant permission, and later transcribed by a third-party transcription service for further analysis. Following transcription and analysis a second semi-structured interview took place with the participants. Questions for this interview derived from the original interviews, and consisted of eleven questions (see Appendix E). These
questions gathered additional demographic information related to individual participants and assisted in providing greater clarity and understanding concerning the phenomenon in question. This interview took place in person, once again in the school of participating principals. These follow-up interviews took no more than thirty minutes. Total interviewing time, combined, lasted no more than one hundred and twenty minutes.

During all interviews, attempts were made to maintain open-ended dialogue and clarify any misconceptions with follow-up questions, as Moustakas (1994) expressed are appropriate methods to ensure participants feel protected, valued, respected, and a part of the research process. In addition, final transcripts of participant interviews were provided to participants for their review and validation. I found participants of this study were actively engaged in this process.

Also, throughout the study and before all interviews I attempted to engage in bracketing or "epoch." This process is utilized by the researcher to recognize and acknowledge their thoughts and experiences before interviews in order to fully embrace any preconceived notions related to his or her personal experiences, participants, and the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). Raffanti (2008) described this technique as giving him "fresh eyes and receptiveness…" (p. 60) to the phenomenon being explored. The ability to do this allows the researcher to fully bring what they have to offer to the study while at the same time being open and accepting to new knowledge being presented by those who have experienced the phenomenon (Conklin, 2007). This process was necessary and refreshing. I found myself being much more receptive and mindful prior to, during, and after interviews by engaging in epoch. Many of my preconceived notions related to the phenomenon and related areas were at times nullified, and at times validated through a new lens, providing me a fresh perspective.
Observations

I utilized observation during my interviews with the participants. During this time, I attempted to take note of important non-verbal cues such as posturing, inflection and tone of voice, and facial expressions that added to the richness of the data during analysis. My positionality as a researcher related to my observations is important to note. Throughout interviews with participants I considered myself making observations as an observing participant, as I was participating in the activity of interviewing while making my observations (Creswell, 2013). Creswell identified this form of observation as being beneficial to the researcher. This observational approach provided me with additional opportunities to engage with the various thoughts, views, and perspectives of the participants before placing them within the context of my observations for description and interpretation. The facial expressions, such as furrowing of the brow, or posturing of participants lead me to ask follow-up questions that provided important clarification or added salient detail to the information gathered. Additional observations were conducted of the schools themselves that participants led. These observations ranged from what was hanging on the walls to the demeanor and interactions of students, staff, and community members when available. These observations, considered non-participant observations by Creswell, were guided by using an observation checklist (see Appendix F). All observations were kept in field notebooks for later reflection and analysis. These observations were minimal, yet beneficial, particularly observations of interactions between principals and other individuals such as teachers and secretarial staff.

Artifacts

Several artifacts were collected for the purpose of this study. Primary of the artifacts collected was a personal code of ethics (PCE) in the form of an unstructured written response by
participants. This document only contained what participants wanted it to contain. Participants were provided a prompt (see Appendix G) to assist them in the development of their PCE and had the opportunity to write this independently over the course of a week prior to the interview. Participants were asked to provide me with their PCE at least twenty-four hours prior to our initial interview. Half of the principals were able to accomplish this request, with one having it for me at the time of the interview, and two others getting it to me after our interview. The PCE was used to provide participants an opportunity to reflect independently on their personal ethical perspectives, stances, and development. I found the PCE of participants to be genuine, insightful, and beneficial to the success of the study. Additional information regarding the PCE will be shared in the data collection section of this chapter. In addition to the PCE, public documents related to the participants and the schools they led were collected. Researchers Glesne (2011) and Creswell (2014) identified documents as a valuable source of data within qualitative research. Documents provide the researcher the ability to expand their inquiry and gain access to information that otherwise would be inaccessible (Creswell, 2014; Glesne, 2011). Documents may bring additional connections into views that were unseen without their use (Glesne, 2011).

**Data Collection**

As was outlined in the previous section, this study utilized three primary sources of data: interviews, observations, and artifacts. The following will be an overview of the process of how these data sources were collected. The study was initiated by making contact with informants in the geographic area defined as Northwest Ohio by OSBA. Contact with informants was an attempt to elicit the names of principals they felt would be strong candidates for participation. Guidelines requested that participants were principals of a school located in
Northwest Ohio as defined by OSBA, who had a minimum of seven years of principal experience, which could include time employed as an assistant principal.

Additional contact was made with principals in Northwest Ohio known by myself and based on word of mouth recommendations by other principals and superintendents. Recommendations were narrowed down to six participants, who all enrolled in the study. Determination was made by selecting individuals who met the necessary criteria for the study, and through conversation, were willing, interested, and had the time available to invest in the study. Superintendents of these principals were also contacted to seek permission to conduct this study within their district, all superintendents agreed.

After selection, I made additional contact with participants via email or telephone, whichever worked best for the participant, to answer any additional questions they had regarding the study, begin to establish rapport, and determine a time to conduct our initial interview at the school they led.

**Interviews**

Interviews have been found to be the main form of data collection in phenomenological studies (Creswell, 2013). A total of two face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted for this phenomenological study. This included initial interviews with each participant of ninety minutes and follow-up interviews of approximately thirty minutes. Interviews were scheduled at a time convenient for the participants and at the schools they led as the primary location. Flexibility related to location of follow-up interviews was provided depending on participant availability, however all were able to meet with me at their school. Before recording interviews, attempts were made to continue building rapport with the participants through genuine conversation. Once interviews officially began they were recorded using a quality microphone.
for later transcription and analysis. Utilizing the developed interview protocol time of the interview, date, location, name of the participant, current position, and years of experiences was collected. At that time participants were asked if they would like me to use a particular pseudonym for the study. None of the participants had any specific suggestions regarding a pseudonym, therefore I selected a pseudonym for them, and requested participants’ authorization to use the selected pseudonym. All participants agreed to me using the pseudonym I had selected for them.

Questions developed for the protocol were used to seek information from the participants related to the research questions guiding the study and overall phenomenon being explored. Although a series of specific questions were developed, interviews progressed in a semi-structured fashion, allowing for follow-up questions, probing questions, and clarifying questions related to the phenomenon as they arose. Kallio et al. (2016) expressed that within a semi-structured interview follow-up questions and probing techniques, both verbal such expressing interest and nonverbal such as silent wait time, can assist the flow of the interview and “expand on some particular point that came up during the interview” (p. 2960). From the initial interview, specific follow up questions were developed for the second interview in an effort to access additional detailed information from participants related to themes developed from the first interview.

During the interviews, shorthand recordings of responses were taken within a field notebook. These notes were kept to a minimum, only recording salient and interesting information, along with informal observations related to body language and tone of voice. The rationale for keeping these to a minimum is related to Creswell (2013) expressing that taking notes of observations while participating in such an activity, such as interviewing, can be
distracting. Handwritten thank you notes were sent to participants following the initial interview in an effort to maintain contact and continue to build rapport. Also, communication continued via email throughout the study, during which time I expressed my gratitude for participants taking the time and effort to assist me with the study.

**Observations**

Observations are identified as "a key tool to collecting data in qualitative research" (Creswell, 2013, p. 166). Observations were used throughout this study to assist in the collection of data. All observations were in the form of participant as observer and non-participant observer. Creswell identified participant observer observations as taking place as the researcher participates in activity during observations, while at a specific location. Creswell also expressed how these observations provide the researcher with "insider views" (p. 167). These observations took place during all informal interactions and formal interviews, as I was participating in these activities while making my observations.

Creswell (2013) identified non-participant observer observations as those conducted by the observer from a distance, in which there is no direct involvement with activities or individuals under observation. These observations were conducted in the school led by the participating principal. I took note of the exterior entrance. Did it look as if the school was cared for? Upon entry, I observed my internal sense of feeling related to the climate of the school. Was there a sense of energy and vitality or did it feel dull and stale? I took in visual observations of aesthetics. What was posted on walls? Were there positive messages, messages of welcome, vision or mission statements, student work, student photos, and celebration of success or were walls institutional, dreary, and abandoned? Also, when possible, interactions among individuals in the building including the participating principals were observed. Were
these interactions warm, genuine, and authentic or did they come across as insincere or negative? These questions are simply posed as examples, and I did not limit myself to these alone. However, as these types of questions came to light as I observed from afar they were collected as data that assisted in informing the study.

**Artifacts**

In Reischauer's (2015) attempt to explore the phenomenon of innovation, artifacts were viewed as "products of human actions" (p. 291). These products were considered those created through verbal interactions or what were deemed manifestations, such as interviews, and tangible objects related to the phenomenon that could be physically manipulated such as documents. For this study, both forms of artifacts were collected. The first type of artifact, interviews, has been discussed in previous sections in depth and will not be discussed within this section. The second type, physical objects primarily in the form of documents, will be discussed in greater detail within this section.

Initially, participants were requested to provide a PCE. As discussed previously, the PCE gave participants the opportunity to independently reflect and focus their personal ethical lens, while at the same time bring them closer to the research being conducted in preparation for their participation. In addition, the PCE provided myself as the researcher the opportunity to have a more intimate understanding of the ethical perspectives of participants and how these perspectives positioned themselves within who participants viewed themselves as an educational leader. This was used in conjunction with additional artifacts that assisted in illustrating the actions of virtue related to ethical leadership of participants.

The phenomenon of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue is manifested through the actions and interactions of principals (Starratt, 2004). Artifacts related to
these actions and interactions are regularly recorded through documentation, many of which are found in the form of public records that can be accessed digitally. This allowed me to access and collect documentation in a purposeful manner, identifying materials that related to the practice of ethical leadership through acts of virtue.

Searches were also conducted of public social media accounts connected to the participating principals, such as Twitter and Instagram. Many school principals are now encouraged to use such public accounts to share school-related information, and many use them to post and share information related to their personal likes and beliefs. These accounts, if public, are easily accessible and meant for public viewing. I also sought information on the web pages of the schools in which the principals lead. Some of these items included, but were not be limited to, community newsletters, handbooks, curriculum guides, principal messages, vision and mission statements, and images.

**Data Analysis**

Glesne (2011) discusses various forms of data analysis in qualitative studies, all being used to organize collected data so the researcher can better discover and comprehend what they experienced throughout the data collection process. I elected to analyze collected data through the use of thematic analysis, in which "the researcher focuses analytical techniques on searching through the data for themes and patterns" (Glesne, 2011, p. 187). Creswell (2013) and Glesne (2011) both shared how the process of analyzing data in a qualitative study is ongoing and regularly takes place throughout the study, assisting the researcher in framing the study as it progresses. This process was illustrated by Creswell (2013) through the visual imagery of a spiral. This spiral span from data collection to a final account of the data, with analyzing of data being represented by four platforms:
1. Data managing

2. Reading and memoing

3. Describing, classifying, and interpreting

4. Representing and visualizing

Although Maxwell (2013) asserted a linear or cyclical model does not adequately allow for the reflexivity necessary in a qualitative study, he did note that “typological or linear approaches to design provide a model for conducting the research—a prescriptive guide that arranges the tasks involved in planning or conducting a study in what is seen as an optimal order” (p. 2). As a novice researcher, I selected to follow the model outlined by Creswell (2013) to assist me with how to approach the analysis of my data. This was in an effort to ensure I was not only including all possible approaches necessary in analyzing data qualitatively, but also to increase the trustworthiness of the study, by interacting with data throughout the experience in a consistent manner. I will now discuss how I addressed each platform of the data analysis process outlined by Creswell.

**Data Managing**

Creswell (2013) stated, "the data gathered by qualitative methods is voluminous" (p. 182). Because of this, the management of the data collected was an important component of my study. Throughout the study, I maintained individual personal field notebooks to record observations, memoing, and reflections for each participant. I decided to maintain individual personal field notebooks to ensure varying thoughts and perspectives did not converge prematurely. Also, I wanted to avoid what Creswell and Glesne (2011) described as what can become an overwhelming experience when reviewing data in the later stages of analysis if not properly managed. Maxwell (2013) also stressed the importance of ensuring notebooks and
memos are maintained in an organized fashion throughout the process of a study so they are able to be efficiently accessed for future use.

Digital recordings were captured of all interviews, uploaded, and organized as individual computer files. After conducting all interviews, digital recordings were transcribed by a third party and saved. Data management was an ongoing process throughout data analysis. All data, including interview recordings, documents, and field notebooks were secured by password protected devices and a personal fireproof safe. All materials related to the study will be maintained in a secure location for no less than five years from completion of the study.

**Reading and Memoing**

The processes of reading and memoing are important components of data collection and analysis of a qualitative study (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2014). Reading and rereading of the data, particularly transcripts of interviews, allowed me to gain a more thorough understanding of the data as a whole (Creswell, 2013; Roberts, 2010). By maintaining discipline throughout the organization of my data I was able to focus my reading and rereading in a manner that allowed for more thorough analysis (Glesne, 2011).

The process of memoing has been highlighted by several (Glesne, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013) as an effective technique for analyzing data throughout a qualitative study. As I memoed throughout the development of this study I experienced what Glesne (2011) has described as the benefit of memoing. That was an enhanced capability to thoughtfully reflect upon and analyze content, allowing me to make greater connections between ideas, leading to additional thoughts and perspectives related to the study. Maxwell (2013) asserted, "memos are one of the most important techniques you have for developing your ideas" (p. 20). It was important for me to continue this process throughout the study as it allowed me to not only
continue to develop ideas, but also note thoughts of analysis in the moment (Glesne, 2011). Memoing was particularly beneficial when reading through transcripts as it assisted me in developing themes among the data.

**Describing, Classifying, and Interpreting**

Describing, classifying, and interpreting data relates specifically to the coding, development of themes, and initial interpretation of data (Creswell, 2013). Coding was described by Creswell (2013; 2014) as a process of simplifying text, such as the transcripts I analyzed, into keywords or terms that represent categories within the text. He suggests forming three types of codes as they emerge. These types of codes include those that are expected, surprising, and unusual. I followed the suggestions outlined by Creswell. This process assisted me in identifying and developing emerging themes within the study. As Glesne (2011) held, the coding process provides a point to launch from for deeper exploration of one's data.

Using the codes, I developed I began digging deeper into the heart of the codes to find comparisons and patterns, as suggested by Glesne (2011). To assist me with this, I utilized a technique I have found beneficial in the past, and has been highlighted by Maxwell (2013): the is the development of matrices. Glesne also referred to matrices as tables. Using matrices or tables allowed me to maintain organization of my data, while at the same time, assisted me in narrowing my data into what Creswell (2013) called "manageable sets of themes" (p. 186). So, like Creswell, I was able to use these themes effectively within my final narrative. By using this process, I avoided what Maxwell suggests that most beginning qualitative researchers fail to do, that is, take the time during the process of the study to develop theoretical themes that assist in developing conclusions.
After coding and the development of themes, I began interpreting my data. Creswell (2013) shared that within a phenomenological study a goal of the researcher should be to develop both textual and structural descriptions of what happened and how a phenomenon was experienced. This is done in an effort to develop a greater understanding for the essence of the phenomenon being studied: my goal while interpreting the data.

**Representing and Visualizing**

The representation and visualization of data can be shared in what Creswell (2013) refers to as text, charts/tables, or figure form. I utilized text as the primary method of representing my data, however, I have taken the opportunity to incorporate tables and figures as a way to present the data in a more visually digestible fashion when applicable.

To simply state that the process of describing, classifying, interpreting, representing, and visualizing data was conducted is not sufficient. This analytical process of phenomenological reduction to identify the true essence of the phenomenon was facilitated through the use of a sequence of steps outlined by Creswell (2013), and an adaptation of the reduction, analysis, and representation of phenomenological data presented by Moustakas (1994):

1. Describe personal experience(s) with the phenomenon under study.
2. Develop a list of significant statements.
3. Take the significant statements and then group them into larger units of information, called “meaning units” or themes.
4. Write a description of “what” the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon.
5. Write a description of “how” the experience happened.
6. Write a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both textural and structural descriptions.

**Trustworthiness**

Roberts (2010) explains that trustworthiness is to qualitative studies as the term validity is to quantitative studies. Essentially, how do readers know what is being presented is credible information. Within a qualitative study, such as the one I conducted, the researcher has various tests they can select from to assist them in, as Maxwell (2013) states, “ruling out validity threats and increasing credibility” (p. 125). I used a combination of guiding questions and tests to enhance the trustworthiness of my study.

Glesne (2011) presents four questions she has borrowed from Hollway and Jefferson (2000) that assisted me in interpreting my data. These questions consist of:

- What do you notice?
- Why do you notice what you notice?
- How can you interpret what you notice?
- How can you know that your interpretation is the “right” one?

Each of these four questions assisted in keeping my interpretations focused while encouraging a form of reflexivity that kept me honest in my interpretations. In addition to these guiding questions, I also utilized five specific tests used in qualitative research studies. These tests include triangulation, member checking, peer review and debriefing, and rich description.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation is a method discussed by numerous researchers (Creswell, 2013; 2014, Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2013; Roberts, 2010) as a trustworthiness test within qualitative research studies. This method is the process of utilizing various methods to gather data, and assist the
researcher by decreasing the odds conclusions are not biased by a single method, and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2013). My methods for gathering data included semi-structured interviews, observations, and the evaluation of artifacts. All of which methods have been described in previous sections of this chapter.

**Member Checking**

Through personal interactions, interviews, and observations I was able to build rapport and a working relationship related to the study with all participants. Rapport was developed initially through a shared understanding of the role of those I interviewed. As I have an understanding of this due to my role as an assistant principal. This understanding provided the participants and myself a form of common ground that may not otherwise be possible, allowing for ease in conversation. I also took steps to ensure interview language was not overly academic, and thoroughly answered any questions participants had related to the study. I was aware of my body language being sure to carry myself in a positive and respectful manner. In addition, I was sure to illustrate my thanks for participants taking the time to meet with me, both verbally and written. Glesne (2011) expressed that building rapport is an important and necessary step to not only gaining access to participants who have experienced the phenomenon, but also in developing the trust required to work with participants collaboratively on the study. Other qualitative researchers have also taken this approach, such as Raffanti (2008) who referred to his participants as "co-researchers" within his study.

Taking a similar collegial approach with participants in my study, I used a strategy known as member checking to assist in strengthening the trustworthiness of my study. This approach offered the participants of the study opportunities to provide feedback regarding various components of the study, particularly interpretations made by myself regarding
participant comments (Maxwell, 2013). Utilizing member checking also assisted me in checking the accuracy of participant accounts (Creswell, 2012). I provided participants ample opportunities to provide feedback.

**Peer Review and Debriefing**

Throughout the study, I reviewed data and debriefed with committee members, particularly my dissertation chair and methodologist. Creswell (2013, 2014) highlights the importance of taking this step to not only ensure rigor and relevance to the process via an outside perspective but also to provide the researcher an individual to vent to throughout the development of the study.

**Rich Description**

Rich description was utilized in this study as a tool of trustworthiness to draw the reader closer to the data, allowing them to connect with the phenomenon being studied. Glesne (2011) describes how the researcher should utilize descriptive writing as a way to allow the reader to identify with others in a manner that can lead to transformation and possible action. This type of connection leads to greater trustworthiness due to the fact the reader can make connections with the information presented by the researcher in a manner that allows them to transfer it to other settings. Therefore, finding it more realistic and more acceptable (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Glesne, 2011).

**Limitations**

In conducting this study, I realized there would be limitations. However, having a clear understanding of these limitations and acknowledging them has only strengthened the trustworthiness of my study (Glesne, 2011). Conklin (2007) in reviewing phenomenology as a knowledge creator illustrated that there are various limitations such as opportunities for
misunderstanding, confusion, and uncertainty. This may be particularly true in an attempt to participate in the process of "bracketing" also known as "epoch." Conklin (2013) contends that this process may not be capable of being fully achieved, as no one can fully tap into their subconscious to fully accept knowing what they do not know. Therefore, he discusses that this may lead to truly new knowledge, when presented before the researcher, to be unknowingly deemed as not important. Creswell (2013) confirms this concept as one that could be a limiting factor to a study as well, noting that assumptions of the researcher are always present in the evaluation of data. Therefore, I took time as Creswell suggests ensuring my personal understandings of the research were introduced into the study.

Although I attempted to prolong my engagement with participants and data to the greatest extent possible, time is always a limiting factor, as there is only so much one can accomplish within this constraint. To assist with this, I developed a timeline with checkpoints with my dissertation chair, along with a more specific timeline related to various tasks that I needed to accomplish. However, even with this in place, there were unforeseen challenges that lead to delays in the study. Therefore, I remained as flexible as possible (Glesne, 2011).

Although I'm hopeful that the findings of this study will be significant, the fact remains that I was limited in the number of participants I was able to draw from to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon. This limitation was due to the structure of this type of study. Also, the scope of the study was limited to Northwest Ohio. Because of this, results will not be generalizable beyond this particular set of circumstances (Creswell, 2014). Green and Caracelli (1997) were, however, cited by Creswell (2014) as indicating that particularity is "the hallmark of good qualitative research" (p. 204).
In addition to the various other limitations I have discussed, I was also possibly at times a limitation to the study. Although I continued to research and review examples of successful phenomenological studies, I am still a young researcher who is embarking upon his first qualitative phenomenological study. Like any other activity in life, be it consistently hitting the fairway in golf, or parenting, it takes time and practice to become an expert. Therefore, I'm acknowledging the fact that I am currently not an expert regarding qualitative research, nor the vastness of phenomenology. Due to my inexperience, I was not always as efficient as I may have wanted to be, and I may have made a few mistakes along the way.

However, as noted previously, I utilized a combination of prescriptive steps deemed appropriate by experts such as Creswell (2013, 2014), Glesne (2011), Maxwell (2013), and Moustakas (1994) who have utilized this approach to learn and grow throughout this phenomenological process of discovery and creation of knowledge. Because of this I found myself becoming more confident, efficient, and progressively proficient as the study progressed. By exposing my insecurities and opening myself up to learning opportunities along the way I was able to grow extensively as a qualitative researcher over the course of this study.

**Subjectivities**

Subjectivity in a qualitative study set within an interpretivist paradigm should be embraced and monitored to provide additional trustworthiness to a qualitative study (Glesne, 2011). The process of reflexivity, or asking questions and reflecting throughout the study assisted me in identifying and reflecting on my subjectivities. Glesne (2011) noted, "reflexivity is not a ‘cure’ and even though one can never know oneself well enough to critique oneself, the work of reflexivity is useful" (p. 151).
I was a participant in the act of reflexivity throughout the study, as it assisted me in identifying and monitoring my subjectivities. I relied on Peshkin's (1988) approach to engaging with one's subjectivities through the various lenses of *I*, as at different times the different emotions of *I* may present themselves. I found this to be useful in providing myself as the researcher the ability to identify and tackle something innate and intangible.

Peshkin's (1988) approach to engaging with one's self through the various lenses of *I* assisted me in this process. As I approached this study related to the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue and the various learning opportunities they provide students in an effort to prepare them for citizenship in the 21st century there were several lenses of *I* that I acknowledged. The use of Starratt’s (1991) framework related to the ethics of care, critique, and justice, assisted me in this process.

I care immensely about the work I do as a leader in education, which leads me to become very passionate when participating in it, talking about it, thinking about it, or reflecting on it. I care that others around me are successful, particularly the students within my building. I care that those students are prepared for the world that awaits them as independent adults living in the 21st century. I care about the stress not only I experience due to high-stakes testing initiatives, but more importantly how they impact teachers and students. Because of this, I begin to question if how we are leading education is faulty. Leaving our leaders as managers of a system out of their control, placing unrealistic demands on our teachers, while at the same time leaving our students ill prepared for the academic, social, and emotional challenges they may face in the future. Therefore, I begin to critique the educational landscape around me.

My critiquing lens is one of questioning various educational efforts within our schools today. This lens leads me to regularly question the teaching techniques in use, policies in place,
and the school principal's ability to impact the teaching and learning that takes place within their school; due to the challenges, they face related to policies such as those that leverage high-stakes testing. These are questions I regularly pose as an educational leader. And these critiques have only grown stronger as I have acquired a greater understanding, through experience and research, of how these various areas impact student learning. There are times I feel we are failing our students because of how we are approaching educating them and I want to act; leading me to my justice lens.

Because I care and I critique, I begin to want to act. I feel that my justice lens is what has truly brought me to this study. I believe that policies that have been mandated by the federal and state government on local school districts, although meant to move education forward have created injustices within our educational system. Several of these I highlighted in chapter two of this study. To me, an injustice is when an individual or group of people is oppressed knowingly or unwittingly. Through my lens, leaders, teachers and most importantly students have been, at times oppressed, due to the pressures they have faced because of policies that use accountability measures inappropriately by leveraging high-stakes testing. My goal was to learn how educational leaders could take action beyond those related to instructional strategies. And enact justice through their ethical leadership, to provide students access to learning opportunities that are not meant to simply measure, but fully prepare them to be conscientious, intelligent, collaborative, and productive members of a society that is rapidly changing: and will continue to do so well into the 21st century and beyond.

My personal lens fuels my passion toward the others. My life experiences, such as being a father, have provided me with a perspective that makes this study personal. A parent's love for their children is immense. We as parents want nothing more than the very best for our children,
and this includes the education they receive. Families will move to certain areas, if able, for their children to attend a specific school district. They will pay thousands of dollars, if able, to send their children to private schools if they feel that is what is best for them. As a parent, I am no different. Therefore, it energizes me as an educator to act in a manner that could assist in ensuring they may be better prepared for what they may face upon graduating. It also saddens me to know that there are countless other children who currently face great challenges, due to their socio-economic status, race, gender, abuse, or lack of access to the opportunities my children have. I am hopeful that my study can, even if it is a drop in the pond of knowledge created, assist in moving educational leadership in a positive direction. A direction that will allow for greater student access, and provide students with the knowledge, skills, and social capacity to act with empathy and make a difference in the lives of those who may not be as fortunate. And an even greater hope is that those who are less fortunate due to the circumstances they may find themselves in, are provided the same learning, so they find themselves empowered to break free from and move beyond the barriers they face.

**Description of Personal Experience**

Moustakas (1994) identified this initial step in phenomenological reduction as bracketing. This process provides the researcher the opportunity to engage with their ego in relation to the phenomenon to not only focus on the external description of the phenomenon being explored but also expose the researcher’s ego to the phenomenon to bring greater meaning to it. Moustakas (1994) notes, “in phenomenological reduction we return to the self; we experience things that exist in the world from a vantage point of self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-knowledge. Things enter conscious awareness and recede only to return again” (p. 95).
As an educational leader, holding a position as an assistant principal, I sit close to the phenomenon explored. Due to my positionality, I have a strong sense of understanding, if not empathy for the school principal. I regularly observe, and at time experience, the challenges associated with the role. I work alongside those who diligently attempt to lead in a manner that meets the various needs of those under their care: students, staff, and many times parents and community members. Because of the dynamic complexity of the role, leadership at times can be lost in the managerial, leading to the mundane rotation of time such as quarters that lead to semesters, that lead to summer, and so forth.

I have possibly become bitter at times, watching this cycle proceed effortlessly and comfortably, without seeing course corrections take place to meet the ever-changing needs of students. When adjustments are made to education, they are at the leisure of politicians who do not seem to have a sense of how these changes impact students, teachers, communities, or those leading schools. These adjustments many times hinder what progress could be made that would better serve students to be better prepared for life in the 21st century.

However, I am inspired by the thought that there are educational leaders who are willing to ask the necessary questions and take the required steps to ensure students’ success. I am reminded that there are good men and women working diligently to lead these difficult efforts and take an ethical stance when it could be more comfortable to proceed effortlessly and comfortably. Because of this, I find myself wanting more out of leadership and wanting to dig deeper to expose its rawest elements. For me, the rawest element of any individual leader is their character, which is exhibited through their actions: particularly in the face of adversity. This positionality and perspective, combined with my subjectivities previously noted, being
acknowledged and embraced have allowed me to bring forth a complementary value to the lived experiences of the participants of this study.

Summary

Moustakas (1994) discusses the philosophical underpinnings of transcendental phenomenology, and how his love for philosophy led him to use this method to discover new knowledge. Because this method allows for the researcher to use the knowledge they have generated throughout their life, when recognized and embraced, to develop ideas and core concepts that last the test of time, as "phenomena are the building blocks of human science and basis for all knowledge" (p. 26).

I too find myself enamored with the philosophical, and understand now why I was drawn to phenomenology as my research method of choice. My study also lent itself to this approach, focusing on a framework related to the ethical leadership of educational leaders. There was no other way to gain a greater understanding of the essence of such a concept without exploring the phenomenon through the eyes of the leaders in question, as Moustakas (1994) posited, "perception of the reality of an object is dependent on a subject" (p. 27). Therefore, although I saw ethical leadership among educational leaders as an ideal, I had to explore the consciousness of educational leaders to discover at what level the ideal meshed with the real. This process led me to the true essence of the phenomenon of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue (Moustakas, 1994).
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF DATA

The study’s main findings will be reported in this chapter. This study explored the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue and used the framework of Foundational Virtues of Educational Leadership to assist in framing the study (Starratt, 2004). A phenomenological methodology was used as described in Chapter Three. Therefore, data were collected and analyzed to describe the essence of the phenomenon of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue and was anchored by two overarching research questions:

1. How do principals describe their ethical leadership experiences through acts of virtue?
2. How do the ethical leadership experiences of principals through acts of virtue influence student preparation for 21st century citizenship?

The essence of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue was discovered through personally engaging with each participating principal via two semi-structured interviews. Interviews from all interactions totaled 8 hours and 40 minutes and produced 127 pages of narrative to be analyzed. The additional analysis of artifacts, including a written personal code of ethics (PCE) by participants, which on average consisted of a 1.5-page response, and copious observation, also assisted in the exploration of the phenomenon. The remainder of this chapter will share the findings of the study.

Data Analysis

Chapter Three of the study outlined its methodology. As noted, the process for analysis followed Creswell’s (2013) spiral approach that included four platforms. These platforms included data management, reading and memoing, describing, classifying, and interpreting, along with representing and visualizing. This cyclical model allowed for the regular revisiting of the data throughout the process of analysis.
Throughout the management of the data, reading and rereading interview transcripts, participants’ PCEs, along with related memoing and observational notes, initiated further in-depth analysis. Through this process, a greater familiarity and comfort were developed with the data. As this familiarity and comfort grew with the data, I began the process of description, classification, and interpretation; initially through coding. Eventually, representation and visualization of the data were accomplished via analysis of the codes and utilization of the steps of phenomenological reduction outlined by Creswell (2013) and Moustakas (1994) in Chapter Three. These steps included the description of my personal experience with the phenomenon under study, development of significant statements, grouping significant statements into themes, providing a written description of “what” participants experienced with the phenomenon, a written description of “what” the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon, a written description of “how” participants experienced what happened in relation to the phenomenon, and a composite description incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon. The description of my personal experience with the phenomenon was shared in Chapter Three; therefore, the development of significant statements will be outlined in the next section.

**Significant Statements**

After reviewing transcripts and personal codes of ethics, statements of significance were collected related to the practice of ethical leadership of principals through acts of virtue; also, statements related to student preparation for 21st century citizenship that was facilitated due to the ethical leadership of principals were also collected. This process was exhaustive as hundreds of statements were identified. Statements were then organized in an excel spreadsheet
by participant in relation to the related interview question from both interview protocols and each participant’s code of ethics.

During this process, an attempt was made to value each statement as holding equal importance among its peers to expose it for what it was according to its accolades. By approaching statements in this manner, as suggested by Moustakas (1994), I was able to allow each statement to wash over my own conscious experiences related to the phenomenon. This approach provided me new perspective and insight and move closer to the true essence of the phenomenon of the practice of principal ethical leadership through acts of virtue. Examples of significant statements included:

“I like to promote as much active learning, and I mean that when I say that I want students to be a part of that process. Students are given more time to creatively think on their own, collaborate with other students, and teachers just planting those seeds and those thoughts” - Dr. Simon

“You know, and I think as educators we need to do that. We have that influence. And if we create a better atmosphere for them they are better educated, better people, better citizens.” - Mr. Walter

“I hope that by being present, greeting students, seeing them in the hallways, seeing them in the mornings, seeing them in the afternoons, talking with them during class changes, sending letters home to parents, that that becomes apparent that the principal is someone that cares about their achievement and well-being.” - Mr. Baumann

**Theme Development**

Moustakas (1994) referred to themes as horizons that present themselves then recede into the conscious of the researcher to only appear again. This process occurs throughout the process of reviewing significant statements, such as those presented above, or what Moustakas refers to as horizontalizing. This is a continual process that could go on indefinitely according to Moustakas, as “horizons are unlimited” (p. 95). As horizons appear non-essential and non-repetitive information is recognized and set-aside leaving only the common experiences that
begin to illustrate the essence of the phenomenon through themes (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

As I engaged in this process, I found myself weaving in and out of the personal experiences of participants symbiotically, developing connections among experiences, while connecting with them personally as well. There were numerous moments in which horizons appeared that provided me new insight while others left me seeking greater understanding and asking additional questions. Only by capturing and regularly re-engaging with horizons could those not essential be eliminated leaving me with 162 horizons that began forming the essence of the phenomenon. A remaining 81 statements were then grouped into the following themes: (a) the virtue of responsibility; (b) the virtue of authenticity; (c) the virtue of presence; (d) the virtue of perseverance; and (e) student centrality. Although various statements may have been left out of a specific grouping, bits and pieces of statements lingered with me throughout the analysis and assisted in theme development, descriptions, and extraction of the essence of the phenomenon. This included each principal’s PCE. As significant statements materialized into the themes noted above, textural descriptions of participant experiences were written individually. Examples of these are provided in Table 1.

Individual textural descriptions such as those illustrated in Table 1 were summarized collectively giving an overall structural description to the theme. All individual textural descriptions are included as Appendix H. Summarized structural descriptions based on individual textural descriptions of themes are provided in Table 2.
Table 1:

*Themes with Examples of Associated Significant Statement and Textural Descriptions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Significant Statement</th>
<th>Textural Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virtue of</td>
<td>“I think my role as a principal is to always look forward, and be progressive thinking and innovative.” – Dr. Simon</td>
<td>Principals feel they are responsible for being visionary and innovative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtue of</td>
<td>“Deep down, I’m very sincere, I’m very understanding. I feel that you don’t have to lead with an iron fist. That’s not where it’s at.” – Mr. Walter</td>
<td>Principals reflect within; assisting them to lead in a manner that authentically represents who they are as an individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtue of</td>
<td>“I think on an individual basis, what I do is I try to just reach out and make the connections with students, knowing their names, asking them questions about their day, and just hopefully helping them understand and trying to create a sense of belonging for those students in the building.” – Dr. Fisher</td>
<td>Principals believe that their presence assists in developing connections with students that create a sense of belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtue of</td>
<td>“I think the mental approach is the biggest way that I’ve been able to do that.” – Mr. Baumann</td>
<td>Principals focus on the importance of their mentality to assist them in persevering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>“I try to always remind people in everything we do to constantly use the filter, ‘It’s for our students and our families. That’s why we come to work. That’s why we are here.’” – Dr. Dietrich</td>
<td>Principals view their role as defined by serving the students in their building and their families and use their role to facilitate that viewpoint among their staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2:

*Themes and Associated Structural Descriptions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Structural Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virtue of Responsibility</td>
<td>A strong sense of responsibility is deeply rooted in the daily actions of principals and strengthened through their connections with students, parents, staff, and their community. This virtue provides them the drive to take action and lead strategically towards a vision in an effort to enhance the lives of those around them, particularly the students in their building not only academically, but socially and emotionally as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtue of Authenticity</td>
<td>Principal authenticity is a combination of historical and recent experiences that are used by the principal to reflect upon and monitor interactions they have within their personal and professional environment. These dynamic interactions bring about a state of equilibrium that provides principals a sense of clarity and confidence that assists them in connecting with others to positively impact students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtue of Presence</td>
<td>Principal presence moves beyond casual interaction. Presence of a principal is a necessity and a constant in their role and life. Their presence facilitates the development of interconnected relationships among students, parents, staff, and community that support the social, emotional, and academic development of the students in their building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtue of Perseverance</td>
<td>Perseverance for a principal is a necessity for them to be able to move forward personally and professionally during challenging times productively. This virtue is intimately connected to who they are as an individual and works in conjunction with other core values to motivate them to seek a higher good not only for themselves but others around them, as well, especially the students they serve. Due to the difficulty associated with being a principal without perseverance principals would not be able to effectively function as an ethical leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Centrality</td>
<td>The primary functioning of the principal revolves around the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students. By establishing students as the central focus within their building, principals can direct their energy and energy of others, such as staff and parents, collectively to ensure student success. Principals are consciously aware of the various external pressures placed upon schools and work as a filter to mitigate the challenges posed by such forces to ensure students remain the central focus.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Themes

Figure 1. Illustration of Identified Themes

The themes of the virtue of responsibility, the virtue of authenticity, the virtue of presence, the virtue of perseverance, and student centrality were supported by the textural descriptions of each principal’s own words, both verbal and written. The following paragraphs are a descriptive account of what principals experienced with the phenomenon.

Virtue of responsibility. Principal descriptions of responsibility as a virtue were illustrated at times through the lens of service. Dr. Simon expressed what he felt was a responsibility to serve his students, sharing “my main role, obviously, is to serve students first and foremost. It has everything to do with serving the student population and being a leader for them.” Dr. Dietrich expressed a sense of responsibility for serving the school’s community, stating “we serve the public and we talk about that a lot.” At other times this virtue was illustrated through a lens of genuine care related to not only the students but also the school and staff. Mr. Walter exhibited this, sharing “I demonstrate and I really, really try every day to demonstrate that I care wholeheartedly about my students, my student’s success, the school, the
reputation of the school, and the success of its staff. You have to take that to heart, and if you’re
going through the motions, if you really don’t believe that, it’s really hard. You can’t put on a
vaudeville act.”

This sense of responsibility continued to be described as a way that assisted principals to
make connections and develop relationships with others involved in the educational process. A
sense of responsibility to serve others combined with a sense of responsibility to care assisted
principals in further developing relationships. Dr. Fisher noted exhibiting this form of
responsibility expressing the importance of maintaining genuine connections with his students in
an effort to foster a culture within his building in which students feel they belong.

“I think on an individual basis, what I do is I try to just reach out and make the
connections with students, knowing their names, asking them questions about their day,
and just hopefully helping them understand and trying to create a sense of belonging for
those students in the building.” - Dr. Fisher

The virtue of responsibility exhibited through a sense of service and care was expanded upon by
Mr. Walter. His sense of responsibility moved him to action beyond his building and for the
greater school community he served and greatly cared for. Mr. Walter described developing
connections that assisted not only his students, but also their families, in order to better their lives
holistically.

“I feel that duty, that I have a responsibility that goes beyond the walls of this school. It
goes into the neighborhood. It goes into creating connections to families, to better their
lives whether that’s through education, whether that’s through making connections to
social agencies that better themselves with healthcare or with childcare, or just
connections to jobs.” - Mr. Walter

Principals of this study were highly focused on the greater good of others, and felt the
responsibility to develop connections to better the school community. They regularly described
efforts they took to reach out to stake holders to involve them in the educational process in order
to expand opportunities for their students, and as Mr. Walter highlighted their families. They felt responsible for not only betterment of their students, and focused greatly on their efforts related to them, but the betterment of the school community as a whole.

Although principals acted upon a sense of responsibility to connect with and involve others, if they felt it necessary, they illustrated they would take matters into their own hands. Principals of this study were highly motivated to ensure the most productive learning environment for their students. They took this responsibility very personally. This was expressed by Dr. Dietrich, stating “If I feel like a kid’s needs are not being met, and you’re not stepping up to the plate, then that’s when I got to do what I need to do as a leader to—that responsibility piece. That’s my job.” Principals were willing to be responsible for taking on this responsibility, even at the risk of being perceived in a negative light initially. This was particularly true of making decisions related to instituting protocols or programs that were progressive and shown to provide students with greater opportunities to engage in higher order thinking skills, collaboration, and creative problem solving. Such as Dr. Simon, in reference to implementing looping in his building, shared “I had to make some decisions, and some of those decisions were not well liked.” Being responsible for taking matters into their own hands did not always align with a negative connotation. At times, it was illustrated as simply pushing others in a manner to motivate others, particularly their staff, such as Mr. Walter expressed, stating “there is a moral responsibility, I think, that I feel to make sure that we’re not creating a generation of not educated individuals, that are unemployed, that are not motivated, so I feel that I have to motivate a staff to try to motivate students in a better way.” Although challenging at times, working to institute innovative programming and motivate staff were expressed by principals to be fruitful efforts and through the process assist them in continuing to develop the foundation
necessary to ensure students in their building were provided the maximum number of meaningful learning opportunities possible.

Through various connections with students, staff, parents, and the community in an effort to develop positive relationships the virtue of responsibility was strengthened. This was illustrated by Mr. Baumann, stating “I try to get positive interactions with staff and students and parents and community members and let the things that are going well drive me.” This connection and drive facilitated the virtue of responsibility and led to a greater sense of understanding among all stakeholders, enhancing partnerships, and providing principals the confidence to take action, particularly in the form of communication to ensure student success. By taking responsibility for communicating a collective message and following through by consistently modeling that message, principals such as Dr. Dietrich were able to establish the appropriate focus for greater school community.

“I have to be a constant communicator of that piece, of that collectively shared vision that we have for that ultimate accomplishment in student achievement and then be communicating that to the parents, be communicating that to the staff, be modeling that for everybody in all that I do.” - Dr. Dietrich

Principals described how taking responsibility for the modeling of these efforts inspired and motivated others, enhancing the school environment, and benefiting students. Dr. Dietrich, as noted below, viewed taking on the responsibility to handle a difficult situation and the importance of doing so in the midst of others. Because of her willingness to do this she is able to garner trust and develop relationships that assist in ensuring a productive learning environment for her students.

“If I’m struggling with the behavior of a student or tackling a heated issue with a parent, they see that I am taking that head on and taking care of that, because that is my responsibility. It’s for our kids. We do this because we are here to facilitate the most productive learning environment that we can for our kids.” - Dr. Dietrich
Principals described a responsibility to meet the needs of their students holistically. With academic learning viewed as important, such as Mrs. Voigt, expressing “they all know that I expect them to be learning. We preface everything with, ‘What do you come to school for?’ ‘To learn.’” But principals exhibited an understanding a necessity to move beyond academics as a lone measure of success, wanting to meet the needs of students socially and emotionally as well to ensure they were prepared to be well-rounded citizens.

“So, in order for our students to grow and achieve as individuals further down the road, I think we have to look at them as not only students, but as people, and try to educate the whole student. And that’s a challenge because—you know, a lot of that social emotional stuff, you might assume that they have those things in place, maybe they’ve learned it outside of school with parents, maybe through faith-based education—but oftentimes you find that that’s an area where students struggle the most. So, trying to have things in place to support them so they can acquire those skills so they can achieve later in life.” - Dr. Fisher

“I’m feeling more responsible for what are we doing today that’s helping that child not just for next week, for next year, but for scholarship opportunities, college choices, career opportunities, life opportunities.” - Mr. Baumann

Principals described that state-mandated legislation related to the testing and measurement of their students had not only placed greater pressure on them but their students and staff as well. This was expressed by Mr. Walter stating, “I think the pressure of achievement for students that are really struggling. It’s probably my biggest—it’s probably the thing that weighs most heavily on me as an administrator, because of the pressure that I receive from ODE in turning the school around, what they consider academic success, student achievement.”

Principals, such as Mrs. Voigt, felt that many of the initiatives enacted are done so prematurely or in haste placing it in the hands of the school principal to handle how to meet mandated requirements that may create confusion. She shared, “there are a lot of legislative initiatives that are pushed out that are not thought through yet that we have to then figure out how to make happen. And some of the legislation conflicts with other legislation, but you have to meet both.
And so sometimes it’s just trying to figure out what they want and then trying to figure out how to creatively do it.”

However, these challenges they faced due to legislative pressures did not stop them from acting ethically from the virtue of responsibility. Principals described the responsibility to not simply follow suit, but evaluate legislative initiatives, ask questions, and learn more about what was placed before them. This effort was not only to further educate themselves but others around them such as their staff, to ensure students still were provided opportunities to grow beyond the academic measures placed before them and remained the focus.

“So, if they’re asking for more and more assessments, and more standardization, then that’s great, but then how can we still get that love of learning in the school? How can we still support kids? How can you still support staff? We do say, “Kids first at all times.” I think every district in the state of Ohio says, ‘Kids first,’ and that’s definitely true, so I’m thinking about how do the mandates and requirements harm education? So, I try to think of how are they not good? How are they good? Maybe accountability, maybe performance in tracking teachers and students? There’s some value to that, so I don’t want to discount that. But what are also things that it adds pressure to? What are some things that it deters us from doing? And then I think if it does that, and then how can we kind of counteract that?” - Dr. Simon

“We always have to come back to what is our purpose. What is our overarching purpose here? And it’s to ensure that our students are successful. So, balancing those other needs are important, but it can’t be done at the expense of what’s best for the students.” - Dr. Dietrich

“It’s very easy to get pulled in the directions that really aren’t conducive to accomplishing that goal, and I think I try to keep my focus on what’s best for our students at all times.” - Dr. Fisher

Principals through decisions and actions taken from a sense of the need to serve and care for the entire school community, particularly students, described the virtue of responsibility. Although at times they were pulled in various directions due to the dynamic nature of their position this virtue continued to assist them in making decisions and taking action in the best interest of the greater school community and their students.
Virtue of authenticity. As Starratt (2014) noted, the virtue of authenticity assists principals by allowing them to bring their true self, the self they have developed over a lifetime of experiences and continue to develop, to the interactions they have within the school community. This perpetual reflective state, of historical experiences, recent experiences, personal interactions, and the self, continued to assist in shaping who they are personally and professionally and facilitated their leadership by assisting in the further development of relationships, including the self, that contributed to positively impacting the students under their care.

Principals interviewed exhibited the virtue of authenticity by reflectively describing their connection to professional experiences, in relation to others, and how these experiences have assisted them in growing within their role. By doing this, principals illustrated the ability to connect with their past reflectively, assisting them with their current state, and showing a sense of honesty and understanding of who they truly are as a leader. Their ability to recognize these instances, and how they have impacted them as a leader assisted principals in the development of their leadership.

“I think I’m pretty much the same person I was as a leader day one when I took the principal’s seat or put my principal’s hat on but I’ve gotten a lot bolder, I think, and braver and willing to take chances than I was initially. I was nervous, like I felt like I always knew what I wanted to do, had a vision for like what something could be. And kind of where I always saw possibilities, but I was not confident enough in myself sometimes to present ideas and to be willing to fail in front of my staff and I’m willing to do that now. I don’t feel like I have to be perfect all the time and I felt like I had to be perfect before and in order to be perfect, it’s hard to take chances if you want to be perfect all the time.” - Dr. Dietrich

“I really thought my third year was kind of the positive tipping point where we were on the same page with the staff, they knew me, I knew them. Relationships were starting to build; I was more comfortable around them. I knew that when I became more comfortable, I would open up more as a person. Now they see me more as a colleague, more as a person, more as an advisor.” - Dr. Simon
“My first principal job was at a behavior school, and I came in with all these grandiose ideas that were immediately shut down, and there was like a resistance. And it was like, ‘Okay, take a step back. What the heck just happened?’ Because all these ideas seemed great in my head. And I realized that I didn’t take the time to get to know them or to develop relationships with them. They didn’t know who this bozo was who was coming in and trying to change everything, and it was like, ‘Okay. I got to step back and just learn about the environment I’m in’.” - Mrs. Voigt

Principals moved beyond their professional experiences and described the power of meshing personal attributes such as personality traits, beliefs, and experiences with their professional life. This ability, or necessity, by participating principals to mesh their personal life with their leadership illustrated how the virtue of authenticity assisted them in bringing a sense of humility to their leadership that was empathetic, sincere, and humanizing: allowing them to connect with others at a deeper level.

“I always think about things in terms of the opportunities, advantages that I want provided to my own children, and I try to apply that same level of expectations here at school, in my building. Like if it’s not good enough for my own children, should it be good enough for other people’s children? I’m really not that different in my personal life—which I am as a mom, who I am a wife, as a daughter, as a friend—as I am here. This is really me. This is authentically me. “ - Dr. Dietrich

“Staff would definitely say the big thing that I carry over is my sense of humor. It’s not planned, it’s just off the cuff and there it goes, and they relax, they laugh, and then we get right back to it. But that happens throughout the day all the time; the office staff would say that for sure.” - Mr. Baumann

Codes of ethics provided by principals placed the virtue of authenticity on full display. Through their rich personal descriptive examples, principals described how they intimately connect and reflect upon their ethical code, consisting of various life experiences, to assist them in bringing the virtue of authenticity to their work as an educational leader. Principals illustrated interconnectedness between their core values and beliefs, who they were as an authentic individual, and their leadership. By, in some ways being vulnerable by exposing their deepest convictions, principals in brought forth the virtue of authenticity to assist them in how they led,
particularly related to the decisions they made. By processing leadership decisions reflectively in comparison to the authentic self, principals acted from the virtue of authenticity.

“I know the values I carry are from my parents instilling in me the ethical conscience to do what is right; as leadership is simply character in action. I come from a family of educators and we share the belief in the cliché that knowledge is power and life is about Learning and growing. When I make a decision, I want to make sure it will help me grow in Christ, I want to know how it will affect my family or how a student will benefit? When I know the ultimate result will be a gain and betterment of a process, program, or person, my decision is made easier. Relationships push me to be a better person and allow me to surround myself with people that have a mutual respect for each other and are interested in bettering humankind. I know my capacity as a leader can be exceeded. I need assistance from my parents and those closest to me (family and friends) to handle situations that lead me down paths of balance and a solid disposition in many circumstances.” - Dr. Simon

“I consciously consider how my own experiences might influence decisions I make. I continue to work and grow in awareness each day as I develop relationships with many different people, listen to stories, and actively participate in the schooling experience. Family, friends, and media, culture, heritage, work, community, and religion constantly influence me. I intentionally stay open to these influences and then use all of the factors to help guide my ethical compass to inform decisions. Assumptions and biases need to be balanced. My behavior and language must match what I want others to see as the ethical and moral choice. Who I am as an administrative leader is also who I am as a person. These identities cannot be in conflict as education is an act of ethics and morals. Who I am as I advocate for children and the experience that they should have under the care of our staff, is who I am as a human being. I do not know how you can care for children any other way.” - Dr. Dietrich

“The Golden Rule is summarized in the New Testament of the Bible. Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31 state Christ’s teaching specifically ‘Do to others what you would want them to do to you.’ I attempt to apply this rule in my daily professional and personal life when making decisions with others. I have a belief that everyone matters. As a student, I could be very shy and quiet. I was especially appreciative of teachers who encouraged my participation and showed genuine interest in my wellbeing. As an educator, I strive to show interest in all students regardless of their appearance, behaviors, or ability level.” - Dr. Fisher

The virtue of authenticity was exhibited through principals connecting with and expressing aspects of their deepest convictions such as those related to family, religion, and historical experiences and merging these with their work as a principal. By merging their authentic self with their professional life as a principal, participants illustrated the necessity of
acting from the virtue of authenticity to lead genuinely with an open mind and open heart; allowing them to be fully present within their role as a principal.

Virtue of presence. Being the link between the virtues of responsibility and authenticity, principals illustrated this virtue through descriptions of being present and connecting with the school community (Starratt, 2014). Dr. Fisher exhibited the virtue of presence by being mindful of his interactions with others and illustrating through his actions a sense of care and support, sharing “I’ve been told that I’m approachable by people in the building, students, faculty, staff members, so I try to be very people-oriented. I try to incorporate that kind of customer service attitude when working with parents, and then, just letting students know that I’m present, I care, and I’m supportive of them.” Others such and Mrs. Voigt described being consistently present physically expressing the virtue of presence through interactions with others throughout the school day, stating “every morning and every afternoon I am out on the sidewalk welcoming all of the kids in. I’m interacting with parents. I’m interacting with kids. I’m out on the sidewalk every day.” Dr. Dietrich expressed the necessity to be present to the needs of others, such as parents, to develop working relationships, sharing “I want parents to call me first or to show up here at school and meet with me so we can work together.”

Participating principals further exhibited the virtue of presence through descriptions of how being present by showing interest in the needs of others assisted them in approachability and promoting a positive culture of care and understanding within their building among both staff and students. This positive culture of care provided principals the opportunity to develop trusting relationship that they relied upon to work collectively towards achieving various goals and objectives related to the holistic development of their students.
“Come and share with me, tell me. If you don’t like something, we’ll figure it out.” I work really hard, like I said, to never make a decision out of anger when I’m annoyed and I work really hard to not respond in a confrontational or agitated manner to people. Even if I am, I work really hard to always stay composed so that I don’t prevent people from coming in then in the future. Like I need to hear it sometimes. I’m not always right. I’m not always doing the right thing and I need people to feel safe to come in and tell me.” - Dr. Dietrich

“I hope that by being present, greeting students, seeing them in the hallways, seeing them in the mornings, seeing them in the afternoons, talking with them during class changes, sending letters home to parents, that that becomes apparent that the principal is someone that cares about their achievement and well-being.” - Dr. Fisher

“I think you go through a lot of different things of how you treat people and how you understand that the situations that they might be going through outside of here, let alone in here, and I think they see me as genuine and very caring about them as a person, not just what results they’re producing.” - Mr. Baumann

By being actively involved in decision making related to the needs of students’ principals illustrated the virtue of presence. They described their need to be engaged in various items such as curriculum, selection of programming, scheduling, and hiring in their buildings as a way to ensure all students’ needs were being met. This active participation in how students were being educated versus the outcomes allowed principals to focus on developing educational environments that were tailored to the various needs of their students and remain attuned to what was and was not beneficial and or effective.

“So, when we’re looking at student programming, that curriculum piece, I really work hard to consider both ends of the continuum making sure that I’m involved with all of it. I’m very much a believer that if you create your own building schedule, if you are hands on, have control of what’s going on in your building, you can positively influence what’s going on in your building.” - Dr. Dietrich

“Programs I’m bringing in, whether it’s for positive behavior, or maybe it’s a program for an academic area. How is this going to close our gaps? How is this going to help in deficient areas that we have in our test scores, and other state results, or classroom results? I need to evaluate those programs to see if they’re effective and worthwhile to pursue. So, that’s, I think, probably the main role I have as far as influencing student learning.” - Dr. Simon

“I look at our schedule and look at teacher performance. I ask myself the question, did I have the right people on the bus? I look at the hiring process and take a tremendous
amount of time trying to bring on the people that I think will best serve our students moving forward.” - Dr. Fisher

The virtue of presence allowed participating principals to be present mindfully and physically. This presence provided principals the opportunity to connect and collaborate with others in the school community, including students, to promote a positive climate, culture, and learning environment for all. Also, this virtue provided principals the opportunity to be actively involved in the day to day decision making, allowing them to directly and indirectly impact students’ learning opportunities and experiences as a result.

**Virtue of perseverance.** Principals described their role as challenging and one that must be approached with persistence despite the challenges they face or obstacles they encounter: illustrating the virtue of perseverance. Many described the role of the principal as one that is somewhat unforgiving and exhaustive and if not approached with the appropriate mentality a position that could become insurmountable. An inner drive, connected to their code of ethics and their authentic self, propelled principals to persevere in the face of obstacles that were many times connected to what they saw as their purpose as an educator, which consistently related to their students.

“I can’t get hung up on something if it doesn’t go well or it doesn’t work out just the way I had planned. They don’t have time for me to be in a bad mood, or give up for a day or two to process through something and be grumpy about it, or have a bad attitude, or cry about it. I can’t. I don’t have the luxury of doing that. I don’t want to and that’s not fair to these kids and these families.” - Dr. Dietrich

“Maybe that’s the perseverance of knowing, ‘you know what? Not everything turns out great. Not everything is great in the moment.’ But again, if you do the right things, based on your code of ethics, you’re going to end up with the next day being fine, and you’re going to keep rolling. That’s kind of how you’ve got to approach it. Otherwise, this job will eat you up.” - Mr. Baumann

“I think a leadership quality has to be perseverance, because if you don’t have it, then you will get knocked down, you will quit, and the health of the building and organization is not going to be positive. It’s not going to be productive.” - Dr. Simon
Principals illustrated the virtue of perseverance by describing challenges they faced that required them to seek balance to assist them in ensuring students remained central to their mission as a school leader. Within this area principals consistently expressed a collective “we” when making reference to balancing the challenges they faced, suggesting that others assisted them in achieving the balance they sought. Principals of this study exercised the virtue of perseverance with others in mind. They did not perceive themselves as a lone entity that endured challenges by themselves, however, by acting from the virtue of perseverance principals were able to lead in a fashion that inspired and motivated others around them to move forward collectively to achieve what was in the best interest of the students under their care.

“We are being asked to do so much more than ever before in education, so much more parenting, as well as teaching. The biggest challenge is new things happen at the state level, new things happen locally, new fades that are occurring. So, trying to balance all those is probably the biggest challenge. If there’s a new law, if there’s a new theme coming through, we have to be able to balance all those and do what’s best for kids.” - Dr. Simon

“Keeping up with—keeping up with what’s coming has been a challenge. More has been expected, so I can’t lead it all. I’m not the expert on everything we do in this building. We’ve just got to keep going in lots of directions for our kids, because if we’re not, they’re not prepared for the next opportunity.” - Mr. Baumann

“Staying centered on what the goal is. ‘What is that ultimate outcome that you hope to achieve? We always have to come back to what is our purpose. What is our overarching purpose here?’ And it’s to ensure that our students are successful. So, balancing those other needs are important, but it can’t be done at the expense of what’s best for the students, and just continuing to communicate that, and model that.” - Dr. Dietrich

When faced with challenges such as legislative mandates that impact themselves, their staff, and students, principals described an initial sense of unease and frustration that gave way to questioning, acceptance, and problem solving. Participating principals were able to maintain a positive perspective. This was done to not only assist them emotionally in handling these challenges but also as a necessity to ensure those they maintained the appropriate perspective,
not only for themselves but those they lead. Principals made an effort to persevere to mitigate the negative impact legislation had on both staff and students.

“Panic, initially, and then you have slight fear because often times, it doesn’t come with a whole lot of information behind it. And then just kind of you’ve got to breath, and say, ‘Okay, this is something that they’re asking us to do.’ I’ve really taught myself to be more accepting of it, instead of resistant to it. I learned to be more accepting of it, and just say, ‘Okay, I’ve got to fight through this,’ even though it’s unpleasant. It’s nothing that I like to do. I would much rather concentrate on taking a focus and applying the things that I know work, and expanding on that, but I have to make room in my plan to do that, and I guess, like I said, panic, fear, and then acceptance.” - Mr. Walter

“My first initial response is usually, this is one more thing that teachers have to do. And that frustrates me because teachers are already asked to do many different things from a district level, to a building level, from what I ask them to do at times. So, I know it’s just going to add pressure to them because it’s new, and its extra work, and when I think about student results and student impact, to be honest, they have very little impact on either in my opinion. I don’t know if even the state has results to show that it’s impacting student learning. So, my first initial reaction is, it’s going to overwhelm the teachers, probably, so how can I roll this out so that it’s less invasive, and intrusive.” - Dr. Simon

Principals described the importance of approaching challenges such as those noted above with perseverance to also motivate and inform others to move them beyond the challenges they face by communicating a message of perseverance. By communicating a message of perseverance and working collectively the pressure of the challenges related to legislative mandates were eased.

“Well, the big thing is, with staff, that I feel is you have to tell them that we can do this. If you say, ‘Oh, no, you know how it is, here’s another thing,’ you’ve lost them. If you say, ‘We can do this,’ it doesn’t matter whether you think it’s great, whether you think it’s terrible, or in between; what you’re saying is, ‘This is what’s before us; let’s make it happen. And if we’re going to make it happen, let’s make it happen in the best way we can. Let’s be better than everybody else at it.’” - Mr. Baumann

“Let’s find the good in this and then let’s stay focused on the good. How can we achieve this and then how can I quickly get people trained because when you have the knowledge and you have the understanding, it’s not so scary?” - Dr. Dietrich

“I find that just communicating to faculty, and trying to get them to understand that, like really everything else, education is constantly evolving and constantly changing, and we as educators have to continue to constantly change and evolve.” - Dr. Fisher
It is important to note that although many of the challenges principals faced were related to legislative mandates these were by far the only challenges. Where legislative mandates acted as an external force or entity that was in many ways out of their control yet necessary to deal with, somewhat like a patient persevering through a chronic disease that flares up, as expressed by Mrs. Voigt related to the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, sharing “so I’m going from evaluating eleven or twelve teachers to evaluating thirty-one teachers this year.” Other challenges were posed they may appear without warning, and much more acute in nature, such as Dr. Dietrich explained, “we’re struggling a lot with mental health in our youngest students. More and more of them are coming diagnosed with a mental health condition at such a young age and just knowing how to serve those students.” Or. Mr. Baumann expressed discussing what he has seen in a shift in parenting, stating “I don’t think it’s the biggest challenge—but parents are, and even kids, are more into immediate need, ‘I need what I need, and I need it now,’ and what’s happened is I think parents might be less involved than ever in my career with their kids’ education. Very involved with their kids in some ways, less involved with their kids’ education.” These collective challenges faced by principals were faced with regularity and pace.

Goals and objectives, or an established central focus, were described by principals as being necessary components to assisting them in persevering challenges such as those noted above. By working towards a central focus principals described the ability to weather failures and maintain a level of focus and resiliency that kept them moving forward.

“You can see up here, we’re sitting in my office, up on the whiteboard there, when we’re looking at growth, we’re looking for academic growth, personal growth, and hope for our students. And I really use that framework as an umbrella to work under. So, it’s easy to get pulled in different directions that can lead you off track. So that’s really how I stay organized and focused, and that’s how I persevere, is just by having that focus and that mindset of those are the things that are most important.” - Dr. Fisher
“If you continue to stay focused on why am I doing this, it’s for the students, and it’s okay if I’m not successful the first time. I have to be willing to keep trying because I’m working for them, and I’m doing it for them. It shouldn’t be for you. When you know that you’re working for these kids, you’re able to rebound a lot faster, and it kind of takes your ego out of it.” - Dr. Dietrich

“The focus on what profession did you get into and why. You chose this for a reason. If the reasons, what brought you to this point, is still there you have to grab ahold of that, and walk through the door each day with knowing that I came to make a difference in kids’ lives.” - Mr. Baumann

Principals described the virtue of perseverance as a driving force behind their ability to effectively function as an educational leader and a part of who they are as an individual that is acted out through their function as a principal. This virtue was described at times with greater emotion than other virtues by principals when discussed and illustrated itself as a launching point that supported principals’ efforts to act ethically from other virtuous actions despite the failures or challenges they may face. They described perseverance as a virtue that assisted them in embracing challenges and failures as a way to learn and grow not only as a principal but as an individual. This assisted them in their leadership by providing them greater perspective, as the virtue of perseverance was shown to assist principals in growing both personally and professionally over the course of time.

“If you have persevered to get to the point that you’re at in your life, there’s been a lot of learning that’s taken place. If you’ve truly persevered and maybe faced adversity, hopefully you have an ability to empathize with people. Bringing that perseverance in that regard, with your own experience, helps empathize with students. It helps you understand where they’re at in their lives.” - Dr. Fisher

“I guess it kind of does go back the code of ethics, the values that I have to get me to persevere. I draw upon the fact that I’m here because I think God has placed me here, to impact people and students. I don’t think every profession can maybe say that. I do feel strongly about that, and I do draw upon that balancing act that if there’s going to be a will, there’s a way. If there’s discouragement or challenges, I can still say that this is what God wants me to do.” - Dr. Simon

“I’ve gotten a lot more into just that self-reflection piece, that also has helped me persevere, because I’ve been able to tell myself, ‘Look, if it’s not that great, you don’t just say, ‘Oh, well,’ but you say, ‘It’s not that great and now what?’ Because if you don’t do
that you’re not going persevere because you’re going to keep making the same mistakes, or you’re going to hold on to something just because. ‘Darn it, I said this is going to work,’ then it’s not.” - Mr. Baumann

Principals described the virtue of perseverance as a measure that assisted them in maintaining a steady course towards a central focus in the midst of challenges they may face.

Perseverance as a virtue propelled participating principals forward towards the central focus of students.

**Student centrality.** As one could note from the data presented throughout the chapter, principals continuously connected what they did and why they did it to what was in the best interests of the students under their care. Students were described as being the central focus for principals’ actions. Actions taken by principals that exhibited the virtues of responsibility, authenticity, and presence were done so with students’ social, emotional, and academic needs in mind. Students provided principals a sense of purpose, or their greatest good, and motivation that drew out the virtue of perseverance; that allowed them to act from other noted virtues in a manner necessary to ensure student preparation (Aristotle, trans. 1952).

“I think as far as a daily decision, it goes back to benefitting students. How does this benefit students? How is it going to meet our vision—mission statement of cultivating learning and creating a culture that students care about, staff care about? I think our organization is as much about anything else is about betterment, improvement, and growth.” - Dr. Dietrich

“Kids are always at the forefront of every decision. So, convincing the staff that student needs come before their own can be a challenge at times. But our mission states it. Everything that we do is revolving around kids, so to continuously bring them back the mission and why we are here.” - Mrs. Voigt

“Really, if you lump them all together, and you tell yourself, ‘I’m going to do what’s best for kids,’ it doesn’t matter that much what population you’re dealing with. When you’re working with parents, the most disagreeable parents in the world, if you can convince them genuinely that you have the best interest of kids, they may even walk out still disagreeing, or still even angry, but deep down inside—it might take them a couple hours, a couple weeks, a couple years—but they’re going to say, ‘You know what? I know where his heart was. I know where his head was.’ ‘My final client is my kids.’ You
Principals described the importance of ensuring the academic growth and achievement of students. High expectations for student learning and academic rigor were viewed as not only important to them but also parents, students, and the community. Dr. Fisher expressed his efforts to promote this within his building to benefit students, sharing “well, in our building this is something that I worked on last year, with just promoting academic rigor and really promoting achievement among students. At the end of the day, I think that’s what parents want, and when students look back on their experiences in school, they’re going to remember the social aspects and the clubs and sports, but I think they want to have that foundation of knowledge.” And Mrs. Voigt focused on the expectation of her community to maintain a high level of academic excellence, stating “my goal is that every student achieves. Measuring by the report card, we’re number one in the state. That’s our students. That’s all our students. So, I want them to stay there.”

Although academic achievement was viewed as important to principals a greater amount of time was devoted, and more passion showed when describing what they were doing to ensure the social and emotional growth of students, so they were prepared for life beyond the walls of their building.

“If kids can learn those three, four, five attributes of care, love, support, empathy, then I think when they leave here, or they graduate, they’ll understand what their role is, as well. I think if you can instill good character, and values in kids, that they’re ultimately, hopefully going to be good.” - Dr. Simon

“I think if we continue to work on the character piece—it can be kind of controversial, character education, but it’s so important to teach our kids to be good, caring, contributing people. Like teaching our kids to be thoughtful, respectful caring individuals and contribute to one another.” - Dr. Dietrich
“I think that grit mindset, the growth mindset, it’s been a good thing. We’ve done a lot of classroom activities with trying to build that growth mindset; we’ve done lots of counselor in-class sessions, as well as when they meet individually. We’ve tried to coach some parents when we’ve had situations. You know, instead of feeling like I failed, I just haven’t done it yet.” - Mr. Baumann

Keeping students central to their decision making assisted principals in determining what course of action to take. They worked to keep students as the central focus for others as well in as a way to work collectively with others towards a common purpose: the student. Principals of this study expressed how it was not always easy to keep students the central focus of others, as many times, adults would seek what was in their best interest and lose sight of what was in the best interest of their students. Therefore, principals of this study expressed the importance of their role as the school leader to ensure proper focus towards the student was maintained, which could cause conflict at times, but was of necessity.

“Just asking myself, ‘Is this good for students? Is this good for this particular child? Will this be beneficial to all?’ And really getting their (teachers) collective feedback, input, get them on board and then move forward with that. We really work hard to kind of use the filter, ‘Is this beneficial for all of our kids?’” - Dr. Dietrich

“My customer is the student, and that has been at times a little ouchy, because there’s principals who, ‘I defend my staff to the nth degree, and that’s how I am,’ and they know that’s not my—that’s not my take. When I meet with parents, I don’t beat them down or the teacher—but my ultimate goal is, let’s figure out what’s best for this child.” - Mr. Baumann

Engaging with students and gathering their feedback related to their learning and the culture and climate of the building was a way principals connected with students and provided them an opportunity to feel empowered and have a voice in their educational experience. This level of engagement with students assisted principals in developing curriculum and programming that met their needs, and guided discussions with staff and district officials related to the teaching and learning within their building.
“As a student perspective goes, we have a lot of survey data, a lot of points of data. So, this allows the students to have input and then it really kind of helps dictate their learning. It’s important to hear what they have to say, too.” - Dr. Simon

“We have our student ambassadors, which we started last year and we’re continuing with this. These are our at-risk kids. That’s a group of about 25 kids that give us monthly feedback on what they’re liking, what they’re not liking, what they are enjoying in the classroom.” - Dr. Dietrich

“We’ve done some roundtable chats and just randomly have kids come and ask them questions about their classroom, their teacher in the right way, not like, ‘Do you like So-and-So,’ but questions that you can lead to what you want to get to. ‘What do you think about what you’re doing? How was last week? Just all kinds of questions where you’re getting that information of, is what’s happening here good for them, and is it creating that learning atmosphere?’ So, the roundtables have been good, because you’re usually not getting just that child’s impression; you’re usually getting theirs and everybody they know.” - Mr. Baumann

Students were described regularly as central to the mission of participating principals. By positioning students in this manner, principals were able to use them as a central focus for their ethical leadership through acts of virtue. Student centrality was a magnetic force that drew out the virtuous actions of principals towards ensuring students were provided with a learning environment and opportunities that promoted their holistic development.

**Composite Description**

Creswell (2013) identified the composite description as the development of a singular statement or paragraph that describes the essence of the phenomenon under study. In the following paragraph, I will provide a description of principals’ experience of the phenomenon of the practice of ethical leadership through acts of virtue based on the exhaustive description of five identified themes: (a) the virtue of responsibility; (b) the virtue of authenticity; (c) the virtue of presence; (d) the virtue of perseverance; and (e) student centrality. The composite description is described as the following:
The experience of the practice of ethical leadership through acts of virtue is a process of unity between the principal as a leader and the principal as a person. It sits quietly yet powerfully in the shadows of the subconscious of the principal having been initially rooted early in life and regularly groomed and strengthened through life’s experiences. In the midst of blurring daily interactions, the phenomenon appears from the subconscious and is brought to bear in the conscious to bring clarity and assist principals in taking the actions necessary to ensure students remain the central focus of their building. Although at times a grueling task, these efforts are fueled by an intense need to forge ahead to accomplish goals related to the betterment of the whole child to prepare him/her for not only school and work but also life.

The role of a school principal is complex and dynamic. When viewed through the lens of ethical leadership through acts of virtue the rawest components of their leadership are brought to light. To condense this experience into a singular statement is challenging. However, when shared with participants, they agreed with the above statement being an accurate representation of their lived experience.

Participant Validation

Moustakas (1994) expressed that the final step to a sound qualitative study is to provide participants the opportunity to validate the findings of the study. I asked participants to validate the essence of the phenomenon of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue by reading the statement several times and reflecting on if the statement represented their lived experience of the phenomenon. The following are responses provided by participants:

“Well written. I agree with this statement.” - Mrs. Voigt

“The text provides a fine summation of the experience. Well done sir.” - Dr. Fisher
“I believe your themes are right on and I hope I gave you some insight into each. The phenomenon that is described also depicts life as a principal and as a person.” - Dr. Simon

“I have read over your proposed composite description multiple times and feel that you have done a very nice job capturing the essence of this phenomenon.” - Dr. Dietrich

“I think your statement rings true.” - Mr. Baumann

“I absolutely agree. You captured it. It exemplifies my experience.” – Mr. Walter

**Analysis of Research Questions**

Through continual interaction, evaluation, and reflection of the data a picture emerged that provided insight to the research questions asked that guided this study. The following is a synthesis of the answers to said questions.

**Research Question 1**

How do principals describe their ethical leadership experiences through acts of virtue? The ethical leadership experiences of principals through acts of virtue were illustrated through the structural and textural descriptions leading to a composite description which yielded the universal essence of the phenomenon. The study generated data that provided rich descriptions of the phenomenon revealing four themes that have been outlined in detail throughout this chapter. These themes included the virtue of responsibility in which principals took measured actions driven by a sense of connection with the greater school community and self to enhance the lives of those around them: especially the students under their care. The virtue of authenticity was illustrated through a sense of self and connection to lived experiences. This combination was used as a reflective template to engage in meaningful interactions with others in the school community to develop relationships that were used collaboratively to meet the varying needs of the students under their care. The virtue of presence
was exhibited through the efforts of principals to be present within their buildings not only physically but mentally as well. Principals relied on presence among others to maintain a level of awareness that afforded them the ability to understand the needs and wishes of students, staff, parents, and the greater community, which they serve. The virtue of perseverance was illustrated by an inner drive to exercise other noted virtues in the midst of various obstacles and challenges they faced on a daily basis.

Student centrality, the fifth and final theme, sat firmly seated at the center of all that principals did. The ethical components of principal leadership were brought to the surface due to a central focus on the student, their needs, their aspirations, their preparation for life, and all that encompasses their academic world. This centrality of the student acted as a beacon of light for principals as they navigated the rough waters of leading a school.

Research Question 2

How do the ethical leadership experiences of principals through acts of virtue influence student preparation for 21st century citizenship? For the school principal, illustrated in this study, all they do revolves around the central focus of the student. As was illustrated in the essence of the phenomenon principal efforts are fueled by an intense need to forge ahead to accomplish goals related to the betterment of the whole child to prepare them for not only school and work but also life. This portion of the phenomenon was brought to light through the regular reference principals made related to students beyond student achievement academically. Principals were fully cognizant of the fact they were working to prepare students to work, live, and be active participants in society, and students would be faced with unique challenges others have not had to face. Because of this principals utilized an ethical framework of the virtues noted to establish
a learning environment in which students had access to experiences and learning opportunities that would prepare them holistically.

Principals noted the need to prepare students academically by establishing an appropriately challenging and rigorous curriculum to develop a strong foundational knowledge for students to build upon. While at the same time sharing the need to foster creativity, independent exploration, and problem-solving were noted as ways to provide students opportunities to tap into unique talents and develop skills that would allow them to approach learning with a sense of curiosity and discovery. Principals also emphasized these times of learning were opportunities for students to face challenges and experience failure in a safe environment to develop coping skills that will allow them not to quit when faced with the various obstacles they may face in life or are possibly currently facing.

Furthermore, principals acknowledged establishing programs or developing opportunities for students to develop their ethical compasses through targeted character development. These opportunities were built around a perspective that students needed to develop the appropriate character traits necessary to be productive citizens in society and were embedded by many principals within collaborative and leadership experiences provided for students. These types of opportunities provided to students by principals were made possible due to the fact principals felt a sense of responsibility to prepare students for life beyond the walls of their building. They tapped into their authenticity to develop meaningful collaborative relationships and were present to the school community mind, body, and spirit which allowed them to be fully aware of the holistic needs of those within their building to meet the varying needs of their students.
Noted previously, being a principal can be a daunting task, facing any number of challenges and needing to balance a myriad of items on any given day. Therefore, principals illustrated a need to be able to persevere to effectively provide students with the opportunities noted above. Perseverance provided principals the appropriate state of mind to regularly act on the virtues of responsibility, authenticity, and presence to provide students the necessary opportunities to prepare them for citizenship within the 21st century. The ethical leadership experiences of principals through acts of virtue were found to influence student preparation for 21st century citizenship.

Summary

The phenomenon of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue and guiding research questions were addressed in this chapter. This was done by utilizing processes of phenomenological reduction outlined by Creswell (2013) and Moustakas (1994). Through this process, five essential themes were established: (a) responsibility; (b) authenticity; (c) presence; (d) perseverance; and (e) student centrality. Both structural and textural descriptions of the noted themes led to the discovery of the composite description or essence of the phenomenon of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue. Themes and the composite description were both validated by all participating principals as an accurate representation of their lived experience. This essence was further analyzed to assist in successfully answering the established research questions of this study. The following chapter will consist of an in-depth reflection related to the findings.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In Chapter One, I explored and outlined the current state of public education in the United States as one in which a push to be “bigger” and “better” has led to educational policies that have created an environment of high-stakes pressure for students, teachers, and principals, leading to an illustration of problems this has created for all involved in educating students. An area highlighted was the significant impact that such a high-stakes environment has on the learning opportunities provided to students that will provide them with the 21st century skills required to be prepared for 21st century citizenship. This dichotomy between high-stakes policy and student preparation for 21st century citizenship was viewed through a lens of ethical leadership. This dichotomy led to the purpose of the study and guiding research questions.

As an educational leader, I was encouraged through a sense of social justice to explore how educational leaders, particularly school principals, could lead in a way that ensured students were provided learning opportunities that focused on the whole child and preparation for life as a 21st century citizen. And how this could be accomplished despite the numerous challenges they face in a high-stakes educational environment. Review of the theoretical framework of Foundational Virtues of Educational Leadership outlined by Starratt (2004) led me to be encouraged and seek a greater understanding of the phenomenon of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue. As Starratt theorized, that through this form of leadership educational leaders, including school principals, could lead in a manner that would allow for students to be provided learning opportunities that would better prepare them for life as a 21st century citizen. With the phenomenon of study established, I asked the following questions: (1) How do principals describe their ethical leadership experiences through acts of
virtue? And (2) how do the ethical leadership experiences of principals through acts of virtue influence student preparation for 21st century citizenship?

In Chapter Two, I began by providing the reader with a backdrop or context to place the study within. This research related to historical and current policy and accountability in American education with specifics related to the impact of high-stakes testing. I then discussed leadership, providing a broad overview of the concept through the lenses of transactional and transformational leadership, eventually drilling down to its ethical roots. Further discussion regarding the various perspectives from current ethicists and ancient philosophers related to ethics and its role and importance in leadership, specifically that of virtue ethics ensued. Expanding upon virtue ethics the virtues comprising the foundation of Starratt’s (2004) framework of responsibility, authenticity, and presence were explored in greater detail. The research was then connected to the concept of educational leadership and its impact on student learning. This review of the literature provided a body of research that gave myself and the reader the necessary foundation to connect this study’s findings related to the phenomenon of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue to current research and illustrate how my findings add to and expand upon said research.

In Chapter Three, an examination of the phenomenological approach I used to conduct my research was provided. This included an explanation of phenomenology as a research method and why it was appropriate for my study. A thorough explanation proceeded to outline in detail my plans for conducting the study and how the data generated would be analyzed and considered trustworthy. Limitations were discussed along with an in-depth personal reflection related to my subjectivities concerning the study. This information provided me with a roadmap
to follow while conducting the study, and provides others who may wish to replicate my study in the future a detailed account of how they may go about doing so.

Chapter Four of the study provided me a venue to share the analysis of the volumes of data collected. Readers were provided the opportunity to connect with the participants of the study through not only their profiles but also their shared experiences related to the phenomenon under study. Through their collective voices themes emerged related to the phenomenon and both structural and textural descriptions were provided. Themes described included the following: (a) the virtue of responsibility; (b) the virtue of authenticity; (c) the virtue of presence; (d) the virtue of perseverance; and (e) student centrality. Exhaustive descriptions of the noted themes led to the identification and summary of the essence of the phenomenon of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue through a composite description, which was validated by participants, in addition to answering the research questions that anchored this study.

In the following chapter, I will provide a summary of what I have discovered related to the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue. This will be done in a fashion that highlights each theme independently in light of the research from Chapter Two and findings from Chapter Four. I will then discuss the significance of the study, provide suggestions, and discuss theoretical and practical implications related to leadership. The chapter will close with a critique of the study facilitated through a discussion of its limitations and a summative reflection. However, before proceeding, I find it prudent to readdress my subjectivities related to the study in order to provide the remainder of the chapter the appropriate framing related to the challenges they face.
Subjectivities

While initially noting my subjectivities in Chapter Three of this study I viewed them through the various lenses of I outlined by Peshkin (1988) and Starrat’s (1991) framework related to the ethics of care, critique, and justice. As I proceeded with the study, I realized the importance of embracing and acknowledging these subjectivities in addition to my personal experiences. An area I was required to acknowledge, as a personal bias was the impact legislative measures related to high-stakes testing on had principals. As I analyzed data, I had to ensure this did not impact the way I viewed the data or presented it to the reader. Doing so assisted me in being open to a fresh perspective provided by participating principals. Although it was noted that legislative mandates did indeed create challenges, these mandates were various and not always specific to high-stakes testing. Other legislative mandates such as the (OTES), Third Grade Guarantee, and College Credit Plus (CCP) were also noted. Also, it wasn’t always the “type” of legislation that created challenges but how these mandates were rolled out and the pace at which this occurred. Also, regular changes with minimal information and training led to a sense of disjointedness and confusion they were left to sift through.

Furthermore, the collective challenges the principals of this study shared had a breadth much greater than that of high-stakes testing or legislative mandates alone. Challenges principals focused on related to their daily roles as a leader in their buildings. These included items such as getting staff to embrace and execute new initiatives, increased occurrences of students depression and anxiety, over parenting and lack of parenting, resource allocation, and safety and security. Overall, the challenges principals of this study experienced on a daily basis far outweighed the challenges they faced due to legislative mandates and high-stakes testing. However, combining these daily challenges with those presented by legislative mandates created
Discussion of the Findings by Theme

To understand the phenomenon of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue fully required a study that provided me the opportunity to engage with those experiencing the phenomenon. By purposefully selecting participants and using phenomenological methods I was able to find common ground among the shared experiences of school principals related to the phenomenon. This common ground was accomplished through the exhaustive process of theme development, which led to the identification of four virtues used by principals within their practice of ethical leadership. These included the virtues of responsibility, authenticity, presence, and perseverance. One additional theme, student centrality, was also identified.

The composite description or essence of the phenomenon, as noted in Chapter Four, provides readers an opportunity to engage with the phenomenon in a way that they would have otherwise not been able to. It will be used in conjunction with the above-noted themes to facilitate further discussion and reflection of the study.

Virtue of Responsibility

Starratt (2004) expressed the challenges principals may face in acting from the virtue of responsibility versus acting out of responsibility due to external pressures related to items such as accountability measures tied to high-stakes testing, leading to a greater focus on results versus the means by which those results are achieved. Principals within this study did express being faced with various challenges including those related to accountability measures. However, principals were not overly fixated on this topic. In fact, they moved beyond accountability
measures and high-stakes testing noting other policy initiatives such as (OTES), along with facing an increase in mental health disorders among students, and the extremes of a lack of parental involvement and parental involvement that seeks to eliminate any barrier that may exist for their child. While acknowledging these challenges principals within this study did not see these as insurmountable barriers that inhibited them in accomplishing their goals related to the students in their building. They simply adapted and balanced these items while keeping the needs of students in the forefront.

This ability of principals to acknowledge, and in some instances, embrace the challenges they were faced with, illustrated principals acting in a state of ex-ante facto versus ex-post facto (Starratt, 2004). Principals acted in this manner to diagnose the challenges that lay before them. Acting as such, allowed them to act from the virtue of responsibility to take care not to do harm (Starratt, 2004). In fact, principals illustrated a need to move beyond simply avoiding doing harm, but to encourage and empower those around them, particularly teachers, to assist them in moving forward confidently in the midst of perceived challenges. Principals were assisted in accomplishing this by illustrating the necessity to seek out additional knowledge to be informed and assist others in doing the same, be it through utilizing data or searching out additional resources. Principals of this study were problem solvers, aligning with the perspective presented by Knapp and Feldman (2012) regarding principals using a combination of external and internal monitoring in relation to expectations to assist them in taking responsibility for the decisions they are required to make.

Although important, acting from the virtue of responsibility encompasses more than making ethically responsible decisions with care for Starratt (2004), it also requires the educational leader to act from the virtue in relation to themselves as a human, educator,
administrator, and citizen. For the principals within this study, their personal and professional lives merged, and to separate the two seemed implausible. Therefore, acting from the virtue of responsibility in relation to themselves as a human, educator, administrator, and citizen came second nature. However, it should be noted that when principals shared examples that connected with themselves as a human in relation to the virtue of responsibility, such as parenthood, childhood experiences, or personal activities, there was a greater sense of passion expressed. In essence, principals filtered all they did through these life roles simply using them individually or collectively as needed depending on the situation. This reflective state intimately commingled with the virtue of authenticity, which will be discussed in later sections of this chapter.

Also, Starratt (2004) posited educational leaders must be responsible to students, teachers, parents, and superiors and responsible for authentic relationships, authentic teaching, authentic learning, and authentic citizenship. Both the structural and textural descriptions of principals in this study depict them acting from the virtue of responsibility in such a holistic manner. As the structural description depicted principals illustrated a strong sense of responsibility that was deeply rooted in their daily actions with a sense of care for the greater good of the school community. Throughout interviews, principals described feeling a sense of responsibility to others. This sense of responsibility towards others assisted them in connecting with others in an effort to develop positive relationships.

The virtue of responsibility was illustrated to be strengthened within principals through connections with students, parents, staff, and their community. These relationships assisted them with mustering the drive to take action, as Mr. Baumann stated, “I try to get positive interactions with staff and students and parents and community members and let the things that are going well drive me.” And lead strategically towards a vision to enhance the lives of those around
them, particularly the students in their building, not only academically, but socially and emotionally as well. By proceeding in this manner principals illustrated their ability to act from the virtue of responsibility in an effort to assist them in developing environments that encouraged the development of meaningful relationships, which Carneiro and Draxler (2008) and Trilling and Fadel (2009) expressed as required for students to be truly prepared for life in the 21st century.

By practicing ethical leadership through the virtuous act of responsibility, principals made decisions and took actions that assisted not only them in their leadership but also promoted and benefited the well being of others. This illustrated intent of principals to lead in a transformational manner through the development of relationships that not only influence the actions of others but their actions also (Burns, 1978; Rost, 1993). The influence of actions was not conducted by principals for the mere sake of taking action, but to ensure the greatest good would be accomplished, with the greatest good being that of enriching the lives of students through academic rigor, social competence, emotional growth, and an overall sense of wellbeing. This ensured principals avoided falling into the trap of placing an inordinate amount of pressure on teachers to focus on testing measures that could lead to the narrowing of the curriculum (Giroux, 2002).

When speaking with principals, this mindset of enriching the lives of their students, brought them a sense of pride and gratification that they were assisting in a process that was accomplishing something beyond themselves, or even their particular school district or building, and for the greater good of society. This mindset spoke to Aristotle’s (trans. 1952) notion that individuals have a desire to live in line with their virtues to seek happiness in their lives by achieving the highest good they can. For principals, by exercising the practice of ethical
leadership through the act of the virtue of responsibility they were able to perform their function well by focusing on the means by which the ends are accomplished, thereby mitigating the impact of the various challenges they may face on a daily basis.

Focusing on the means by which the ends are accomplished while focusing on the needs of others, by acting from the virtue of responsibility, principals of this study illustrated how this virtue is an underlying feature of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) and further supports Rost’s (1993) notion that ethical leadership is central to transformational leadership. However, the virtue of responsibility was only one virtue that illustrates this connection. By acting from the virtue of responsibility principals of this study exhibited the process of reflexivity outlined by Langlois and Lapointe (2007) as an important component of the ethical leadership of principals. This reflexivity was brought about by the virtue of responsibility acting in conjunction with other virtues, particularly the virtue of authenticity.

**Virtue of Authenticity**

As was noted above, at different times principals expressed various emotions when discussing their role, these emotions swelled when discussions leading to areas that were personally significant to them or reflected upon whom they were as an individual. This fell in line with Erickson’s (1995) conceptualization of the authentic self-being tied to one’s emotional state. However, these emotions do not arise out of thin air. Nor did they for the principals in this study. They are drawn from the realm of an individual’s ego, developed over time through various experiences, in which the individual processes situations in relation to themselves and the context of the scenario they find themselves (Block & Kremen, 1996). This state of emotional processing is important to one’s psychological wellbeing and assists in driving behavior (Erikson, 1995; Gino, Kouchaki, & Galinsky, 2015). Principals within this study
related intimately to their self and expressed authenticity as an act of virtue by bringing their identity, through experiences, to all aspects of their leadership: with the greater good of others in view (Starratt, 2004).

Principals exhibited the virtue of authenticity in various ways such as by describing a combination of experiences that were used to reflect upon and monitor current practices. Although, personal stories illustrated the virtue of authenticity, when principals were given the opportunity to reflect independently through the process of writing a PCE; the virtue of authenticity presented itself brilliantly in how it fit within their practice of ethical leadership. Through these reflective codes, principals illustrated all components of Starratt’s (2004) framework, both as and in. Once again, mirroring the virtue of responsibility, as related to authenticity represents the principal as a human, educator, administrator, and citizen. Whereas in, is represented in the relationships principals develop, cultivation of teaching and learning, partnerships, and democratic stewardship of school community that is reflective of the principal as a human, educator, administrator, and citizen (Starratt, 2004). For example, through his written code, Dr. Simon brought to light the power his faith and relationships play in his practice of ethical leadership, providing him the foresight and strength necessary to keep the good of others in view when leading. He shared, “when I make a decision, I want to make sure it will help me grow in Christ.”

Mr. Walter brought forth the importance of the role of the principalship itself as a moral and ethical practice. He connected with the position at a very personal level, and how those who influenced him as a child impacted this perspective, sharing “the code is a moral fiber that is you. I think this was driven by how I was raised and the expectations my parents and grandparents placed on me at a young age.”
Principals in the study illustrated that by connecting with their authentic self through reflection, and embracing who they are as individuals and ethical leaders, provided them the ability to act from the authentic self, allowing the virtue of authenticity to emerge from their practice as an ethical leader; facilitating action from other virtues. This connection brought them to a state of emotional equilibrium in relation to who they saw themselves in comparison to how others saw them. This provided them a sense of clarity and confidence that ultimately assisted them in connecting with others to positively impact students. This process aligns with the perspective of Phillip Woods (as cited in Wilson, 2014) in which authentic leadership moves beyond the self in a holistic fashion, combining the self, the ideal professional, and social expectations of the school community.

Dr. Dietrich, in an eloquent statement, presented the essence of the virtue of authenticity by expressing the intimate connection she has with herself as a human, educator, administrator, and citizen. And how this was conducted through a reflective state in relation to her relationships, the cultivation of teaching and learning, development of partnerships, and the democratic stewardship of the school community. She shared, “I consciously consider how my own experiences might influence decisions I make. “I continue to work and grow in awareness each day as I develop relationships with many different people, listen to stories, and actively participate in the schooling experience. Family, friends, and media, culture, heritage, work, community, and religion constantly influence me. I intentionally stay open to these influences and then use all of the factors to help guide my ethical compass to inform decisions. Assumptions and biases need to be balanced. My behavior and language must match what I want others to see as the ethical and moral choice. Who I am as an administrative leader is also who I am as a person. These identities cannot conflict with education is an act of ethic
and morals. Who I am as I advocate for children and the experience that they should have under the care of our staff, is who I am as a human being. I do not know how you can care for children any other way.”

Starratt (2004) noted that the virtue of authenticity fuels the emotions that drive the actions of the ethical leader. This was indeed illustrated within this study. However, it was also found that although the virtue of authenticity assisted in fueling emotions, it could also be used to make sense of and bring balance to the emotions of principals. This combination is consistent with the theory of emotional intelligence outlined by Mayor and Salovey (1990), which allows individuals to use emotions in adaptive ways and assists in appraising and expressing emotions in relation to the self and others. As noted previously, this ability allowed principals of this study being able to find a state of emotional equilibrium that provided them the ability to approach situations with a high level of confidence and clarity. This leveled approach, assisted principals in garnering the trust of those around them to develop the relationships necessary to ultimately, positively impact the students under their care.

By principals of this study illustrating the ability to connect with others, through the virtue of authenticity, to develop relationships in an effort to positively impact students; they provided further support for ethical leadership being an active and facilitative practice within transformational leadership, which Leithwood (1992) expressed as important to developing the relationships that facilitate the process of teaching and learning within principals’ buildings. Although principals of this study connected intimately with their authentic self, allowing them to act from the virtue of authenticity, without being present this virtue would not have been able to be used in the same facilitative manner.
Virtue of Presence

Presence is looked upon for a principal as one of the necessary components to the successful fulfillment of their role (Marzano et al., 2005). As an assistant principal, I have observed how detrimental a lack of presence can be for principals and have observed the fruits of its labor. To be present among students, staff, parents, and community provides principals the opportunity to engage with those who are most intimately involved in the educational process. This presence can be used as an opportunity to build the relationships needed to drive initiatives that will support and enhance student learning and ultimately student preparation for life beyond the walls of the school. Without being present principals cannot act upon their virtues of responsibility or authenticity (Starratt, 2004).

As Starratt (2004) notes, the virtue of presence is a necessary virtue for principals, and an impactful one, as it links the virtues of responsibility and authenticity. This link was shown to provide for a mutual relationship among the three virtues that allows principals to fully engage the school community: an engagement that motivates and inspires others to provide an educational environment that can be transformational. Starratt identified three forms of presence; affirming, critical, and enabling.

Principals within this study exhibited all three forms of the virtue of presence identified by Starratt (2004). These various forms of presence were observed to be a constant that facilitated the development of relationships and provided the virtues of responsibility and authenticity the opportunity to flourish. Principal presence moved beyond casual interaction and facilitated the development of interconnected relationships among students, parents, staff, and community that supported the social, emotional, and academic development of the students in their building.
Presence was illustrated to be a virtue as it was acted upon from principals’ genuine need to engage with others to ensure they maintained a sincere connection with the school community. As was noted previously, this worked symbiotically with the virtues of responsibility and authenticity to assist principals in their daily role. Dr. Fisher shared the importance of affirming presence as a way to connect with others and show he cared about the development of the whole child, sharing “I hope that by being present, greeting students, seeing them in the hallways, seeing them in the mornings, seeing them in the afternoons, talking with them during class changes, sending letters home to parents, that that becomes apparent that the principal is someone that cares about their achievement and well-being.” As Starratt (2004) and Stronge et al. (2008) expressed, this form of presence provides principals the ability to utilize their virtue of authenticity within their ethical leadership practice to foster relationships that positively impact the school environment and student learning.

Critical presence was identified by Starratt (2004) as a presence that educational leaders have in which they pose critical questions to themselves and ask critical questions of others, along with questioning policies or practices that are not in the best interest of students. Described as an interplay between the self, others, and policies and practices it provides the ethical leader the ability to be aware, process, and meditate how to approach handing such situations in an ethically responsible manner (Starratt, 2004). Principals showed how they process policies through a critical presence to come to a sense of understanding related to how such policies will impact students. Much of the discussions with principals that revolved around policies were through the critical lens. Questioning was paramount in assisting principals to be sure they executing policies, local, state, and federal, within the legal or required parameters, but also in an effort to ensure they were not placing an excessive burden on the
teachers and students under their care. By approaching policies placed before them in this manner principals were able to act as a filter and mitigate the impact policies had on both teachers and students. This approach assisted principals in maintaining a climate and culture within their buildings that was conducive to teaching and learning that was not limited by bureaucratic restrictions.

The presence of enabling was described by Starratt (2004) as a presence that educational leaders engage in that empowers others around them to work towards the betterment of all students. Principals of the study also exhibited by enabling others in the community they were able to develop partnerships that led to programming that assisted the academic, social, and emotional development of their students. This was accomplished by being present to community member interest to be involved in the betterment of their students. By enabling them to do so, they were able to provide students opportunities they otherwise would not have access to. Many of the principals of this study relied on the partnerships developed with community members and organizations to assist them in providing summer programming, reading programs, and innovative programming such as that related to science, technology, engineering, art, and technology (STEAM), in both human and monetary capital.

The virtue of presence exhibited by principals within this study brought to light its ability to work exclusively and as a conduit between the virtues of responsibility and authenticity within the practice of ethical principal leadership (Starratt, 2004). This virtue illustrated its ability to develop connections, provide understanding, and empower the greater learning community to provide support for the academic, social, and emotional growth of students.

Furthermore, through the virtue of presence principals within this study illustrated a thoughtful approach to how they conducted themselves versus what they did and consistently
showed that they did this with the good of others in view (Starratt, 2004). None of the principals in the study were self-promoting or focused on a personal agenda. Their ultimate goal, collectively, was to promote the good of others through their practice of ethical leadership through the act of the virtue of presence. By being fully present to others, as well as, policies and practices within their building principals of this study continued to illustrate the important underpinnings ethical leadership through acts of virtue have in relation to transformational leadership and their collective importance within educational leadership.

Having been noted previously in this chapter, principals of this study faced various challenges. These challenges were dynamic in nature and ever changing. Because of this, principals were required to balance numerous roles and responsibilities in an effort to lead ethically through acts of virtue. This was not an easy task, and was expressed by principals to be daunting at times. In order to be present to act from both responsibility and authenticity principals displayed the need to act from an additional virtue: perseverance.

**Virtue of Perseverance**

Through the research conducted, and the framework the study was viewed through, the virtues of responsibility, authenticity, and presence were expected to be found among the principals participating in this study. However, an unexpected finding was the presence of the virtue of perseverance. Upon further investigation, I should not find myself that surprised, as King (2014) discussed, perseverance as a virtue has been displayed throughout history by numerous individuals, all who have successfully achieved goals in the midst of varying obstacles. Although King makes a valid point, more recently the virtue of perseverance no longer appears to be viewed by practitioners in education as a stand-alone. Many, including several principals within this study such as Mr. Baumann, refer to a “grit” or a “growth mindset”
stating, “I think that grit mindset, the growth mindset, it’s been a good thing.” This term has been popularized by the research conducted by Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly (2007) in which they established and defined the term grit as perseverance and passion towards the attainment of long-term goals. Although grit has successfully been established as a stand-alone term, at its roots is the virtue of perseverance.

The virtue of perseverance is regularly thought of, although not overtly spoken of, as essential to the success of leaders including principals. Connolly (2007) discussed the importance of perseverance in accomplishing long-term goals as a principal, noting, “nothing truly significant or lasting was accomplished” (p. 51) in its absence. Throughout the current study, principals illustrated the act of perseverance throughout their practice of ethical leadership. King (2014) identified the virtue of perseverance as “not merely a matter of time, but of time and serious effort … in the face of obstacles” (p. 3511).

Principals in this study referred to their work as difficult, relating it to physical pain such as Mr. Walter stating, “you’ve got to take the licks. You’ve got to take punches, man.” Or, an overwhelming force that could consume an individual, such as Mr. Bauman, sharing “that’s kind of how you’ve got to approach it. Otherwise, this job will eat you up.” Others, such as Mrs. Voigt viewed it in terms of being constantly under attack stating, “you know, arrows are pointing at my head at any given minute. They always are.” Many of the items that manifest themselves in these statements were discussed previously in this chapter related to students, staff, parents, community, and legislative mandates that pose principals with various challenges on a daily basis. Dr. Simon simply expressed, “we are being asked to do so much more than ever before in education.”
There is no doubt the principals in this study regularly faced various challenges and obstacles. In fact, Gajda and Militello (2008) in their study on principal retention shared, “the revolving door [emphasis added] of the principalship has been fueled by pressure and demands that make the job nearly untenable” (p. 1). But, this simply provided the opportunity for these principals to exhibit the virtue of perseverance within their practice of ethical leadership. Starratt (2004) was well aware of the challenges principals face in their efforts to lead toward quality learning opportunities for students that fully prepare them for life’s challenges in the 21st century. Because of this, he expressed the need for educational leaders to view their leadership as a moral act conducted through the practice of ethical leadership through acts of virtue. His framework, that this study has been viewed through and results have supported, although robust and impactful does not illustrate the importance of the virtue of perseverance found within this study.

Although principals through their practice of ethical leadership acted from the virtues of responsibility, authenticity, and presence, to assist them in leading in a manner that was beneficial to students, they would not have been able to exercise these virtues without acting from the virtue of perseverance as well. The virtue of perseverance, as noted by King (2014), is exhibited over time, with serious efforts, in the face of obstacles towards the accomplishment of a goal. Principals within this study illustrated an overarching goal of ensuring the holistic preparation of students leading to a greater good for society by having well-prepared citizens. This central focus, which will be discussed in further detail later in the chapter, provided principals with a constant to work towards; in the midst of the challenges surrounding them. Mr. Baumann shared how this central focus kept him motivated on a daily basis, stating “the focus on what profession did you get into and why. You chose this for a reason. If the
reasons, what brought you to this point, is still there you have to grab ahold of that, and walk through the door each day with knowing that I came to make a difference in kids’ lives.”

With an established focus principals within the study were able to move forward with their practice of ethical leadership through acts of virtue. However, to act from the virtues of responsibility, authenticity, and presence took both great effort and time. These virtuous acts did not just occur haplessly in the midst of the challenges they faced: it took regular effort and time. On any given day or any in any given moment, they could simply not ask the questions needed to be asked, and not act responsibly, they could turn inward not exposing their authentic self to others, and not act authentically, or remain disengaged mentally, emotionally, and physically, by not being present. All of these listed items are not easy to do. Principals regularly deny themselves the pleasure of ease to meet the needs of students and furthermore society. Aristotle (trans. 1952) posited that those who deny themselves pleasures in efforts to achieve a greater good or the highest good are individuals of virtue, and in doing so continue to develop towards higher levels of morality. For the practice of ethical leadership to occur, as intended by Starratt (2004), this study illustrated that it requires the virtue of perseverance to provide principals the necessary drive and resilience to see the virtues of responsibility, authenticity, and presence through to fruition. Bennett (1993) expressed, “perseverance is an essential quality in high level leadership. Much good that might have been achieved in the world is lost through hesitation, faltering, wavering, vacillating, or just not sticking with it” (p. 527). Bennett continued through his discussion related to the virtue of perseverance that it cannot simply be done without a thoughtful understanding of why one is persevering. Principals of this study clearly articulated their rationale for why they persevered: students.
In order to persevere, both Connolly (2007) and Duckworth et al. (2007) express the requirement of having goals to focus on, particularly goals that are long-term. Principals of this study illustrated having a central focus of students. By keeping students as their central focus and connecting developed goals and objectives related to students, principals were able to act form the virtue of perseverance in an effort to achieve the goal of ensuring students were holistically prepared for school, work, and life.

**Student Centrality**

Having been illustrated throughout this study the primary functioning of the principal revolved around the academic, social, and emotional needs of students. The central focus of students provided principals a true north for their moral compass and assisted in guiding their ethical leadership. By keeping students as the central focus principals were able to use this focus to make decisions and lead through acts of virtue in an effort to ensure the holistic needs of all students were met; in hand providing them opportunities to be fully prepared for life. This central focus brought a complimentary consequentialist perspective to the virtue ethics of principals. Where consequentialism focuses on the consequences of one’s actions or inaction as the determinant for their selected choice of action or inaction, with said action or inaction done so with the perspective of what consequence will have the most benefit (Callahan, 1988). With principals of this study, by keeping students the central focus they chose to take action from virtues that would consequentially lead to the betterment of the students’ lives. This highlights Michael Wilson’s (2014) assertion that continued reexamination of various ethical perspectives have brought them closer in line, and how they can work in harmony to assist educational leaders.
The approach of keeping students as the central focus in schools was supported by Reigeluth (2013), noting that centrality within a learning community is determined by the focus given to individuals within the community and “contributes to the collective activities and knowledge of the community” (p. 275). By principals of this study, keeping students central to their daily efforts, they illustrated that these efforts contribute to the totality of the learning community they lead. Albeit indirect at times, these efforts assist in impacting the achievement of their students (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Principals highlighted decisions they made based on their student populations, such as, resource allocation, program selection, curriculum, scheduling, the development of community partnerships, and personnel decisions.

However, principals within this study not only used students as the central focus of their decision making, as the what, they used this as a central focus for how they led within their buildings. In fact, the principals of this study spent much more time-sharing how they led versus what they did. By focusing on the how versus the what principals were able to develop relationships that assisted them in establishing the appropriate climate and culture necessary for students to thrive in. This is not uncommon, as Hallinger (2003) and Leithwood (1992) noted, by establishing the appropriate climate and culture within a building principals can cultivate an environment ripe for collective partnerships that assist in student achievement.

By the principals of this study having the central focus of students guiding their practice of ethical leadership and expressing how they lead through acts of virtue towards that central focus, they illustrated the power of ethical leadership as a transformational force. Stronge et al. (2008) and Burns (1978) positioned, by principals placing greater focus on how they lead versus what they do, they are lifted to higher levels of morality when they keep those they are leading for and how their actions will benefit them the central focus.
Significance of the Study

The principalship is a leadership role that is complex, demanding, and can be highly rewarding. There are few positions of leadership that can have such an enduring impact on not only individuals and organizations but also society. With the far-reaching impact the leadership of principals can have it has moral and ethical implications aligned to it (Sergiovanni, 2006; Sobo, 2002; Starratt, 2004, 2011; Stronge et al., 2008). The purpose of this study was to unearth the ethical components of principal leadership by exploring the phenomenon of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue. As a researcher, I was originally fixated on how this form of leadership could be used as a way for principals to prepare students in the midst of a society and American education system wrought with accountability measures and high-stakes testing. The ethical leadership framework developed by Starratt (2004) looked to be a way for educational leaders to ensure students were being provided access to enriching and authentic learning that would fully prepare them for life as citizens in the 21st century. As I unpacked this concept and the study unfolded, I found the phenomenon to be much more meaningful and powerful than even I had originally presumed it would be due to the complex nature of the principalship. Operating in a kaleidoscopic realm of knowledge, personal beliefs, emotions, and psychology, what this phenomenon looked like per individual was impressive, but when brought together collectively, it appeared as a beautifully powerful force within principal leadership. This is brought to light through the essence of the phenomenon, which was validated by all participants as an accurate representation of the lived experience.

Before this study research has presented the concept of ethical leadership in the form of philosophy and theory, such as the theoretical framework presented by Starratt (2004), this study was viewed through. Both of these approaches have been beneficial to bringing understanding to
a complex topic. However, there has been little research conducted to explore its merits in practice, outside of those conducted by Langlois and Lapointe (2007), to shed light on the impact of its practical use by active practitioners. By uncovering the essence of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue this study has not only added to the literature related to ethical leadership of principals, but it provides a setting for it to be viewed in practice. This has led to several implications and suggestions related to theory and practice.

**Theoretical Implications and Suggestions**

This study was viewed through the theoretical framework of Foundational Virtues of Educational Leadership (Starratt, 2004). This framework provided me as the researcher a lens to view the ethical leadership practice of principals through. This study provided support for Starratt’s framework as all components of the framework were found to be present in the ethical leadership practices of participating principals. However, this study provides evidence that there is room for this framework to be expanded. As I had noted previously in this chapter a virtue that was not present in Starratt’s framework, but was found to be actively present among principals in this study, was the virtue of perseverance. This virtue appeared to play a large role in assisting principals in acting from the other virtues within their practice of ethical leadership while keeping students as their central focus. A visual representation of this is shown in Figure 2.
Additionally, the study provides further evidence and support for leadership theorists Bass (1985), Burns (1978), Rost (1993), ethicists Aristotle (trans. 1952) Audi (2012) Callahan (1989), and educational researchers and theorists Sergiovanni (2006), Sobo (2002), Starratt, (2004, 2011) that ethics are an active and impactful component of leadership. This perspective holds particular significance for both leadership and educational leadership theorists. Having been depicted in the literature review of this study, although ethics is a common aspect among the vast majority of content related to leadership, it is rarely a topic of focus. As this study has illustrated, ethical leadership, is a core aspect of leadership and should be given more focused attention within the literature.

**Practical Implications and Suggestions**

Viewing this study through the lens of an active practitioner of educational leadership, I see several practical implications from this study, namely in the areas of educational leadership and curriculum development related to educational leadership. In light of the research and the findings of this study, the practice of ethical leadership through acts of virtue may hold compelling implications for leaders in education, particularly principals. The literature review highlighted a link between ethical leadership practices and transformational leadership (Audi,
2002; Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Rost, 1993), in addition to the importance of transformational leadership within educational leadership (Day et al., 2016; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, 1992); with ethical leadership practices through acts of virtue being identified as central to facilitating the transformational leadership needed for successful educational leadership. In hand, allowing principals to lead in a manner that promotes the most beneficial learning opportunities for students (Day et al., 2016; Sergiovanni, 2006; Starratt, 2004; Stronge et al., 2008).

For example, when viewing leadership through a transformational lens, as developed by Burns (1978) and Rost (1993), in which the relationship between the leader and follower, or followers, is one of mutual benefit in the hopes of achieving a greater good; this form of leadership connects naturally with the ethical perspectives of Aristotle. Whereas Aristotle (trans. 1952) expressed that individuals seek happiness in their lives, and to do so work towards achieving the greatest good they can. Aristotle expressed that to achieve one’s greatest good and the ultimate goal of happiness one must live in line with their virtues: with virtues being expressed through one’s daily actions between the self and others, and rooted in an understanding that their virtuous acts are purposefully oriented towards the greatest good.

If then, the principal as a leader and individual is placed within this paradigm, their ethical leadership through acts of virtue should be viewed as paramount to their success as a leader and ultimately as an individual. For instance, if a principal, being viewed as both a leader and individual seeks happiness, to achieve happiness they must seek to achieve the greatest good. For principals of this study, the greatest good was ensuring students were holistically prepared for life: academically, socially, and emotionally. Therefore, if a principal as both a leader and individual is to achieve the greatest good and ultimately happiness, they must act in line with their virtues: principals must lead ethically through acts of virtue.
Exhibited in the findings of this study, ethical leadership through acts of virtue is accomplished through the development of mutual relationships with those in the school community, who could also be considered followers. This relationship illustrates the importance of ethical leadership through acts of virtue for principals. If principals are to lead in a transformational manner, which is noted as the most impactful leadership style related to student outcomes by Day et al. (2016), Hallinger (2003), and Leithwood (1992), they must lead in line with their virtues. This form of leadership leads to a mutual benefit for both the principal and those within the school community as they collectively work towards the accomplishment of the greater good for students. An illustration of this concept is available as (Appendix I). By identifying the essence of the phenomenon of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue its influential prowess was brought to full light. The implications related to educational leadership are tremendous.

Leaders within education, like any other profession, are regularly seeking how they can leverage their leadership to garner the greatest results possible. Many are familiar with the term transformational leadership and its impactful qualities, as was noted in the literature review. What this study provides the leader in education is a way to identify transformational leadership in its purest form, ethical leadership, and execute it. This study illustrates that the virtues of responsibility, authenticity, presence, and perseverance are not simply a philosophy; they are the foundation of a leadership practice that can be identified and acted upon. Also, the additional understanding this study has brought to the phenomenon in question, along with highlighting the benefits of leading from identified virtues, those hiring principals to lead within their organizations should find this information valuable. By having a greater understanding of
what attributes assist principals in leading schools effectively, these individuals can use this information to help them in selecting those who they feel exhibit such qualities.

With this being said, further implications, relate to additional professional development from school districts and an increased focus on this topic by educational leadership programs. This study, having illustrated, the benefits of the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue should encourage school districts and educational leadership programs that prepare principals to spend more time and effort addressing this form of leadership. Sobo (2002) along with Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) and Starratt (2004) share the sentiment that this type of leadership is regularly glossed over and not given the time or attention it deserves. With the diverse and complex challenges educational leaders face, specifically principals, they need a keen understanding of the type of leadership required to assist them in developing a strong foundation to lead from. Many educational leaders are not fully aware how their leadership could be transformed with additional education and training regarding how to harness the power of their ethical leadership through acts of virtue.

**Future Research**

This study provides a launching point for additional studies related to the practice of ethical principal leadership through acts of virtue. Replication and expansion of this study, by selection size or geographical location, would assist in supporting the study’s findings adding additional trustworthiness. It could also identify other important virtues within the practice of ethical leadership. One suggested area would be to focus on practical knowledge as wisdom and its role within not only ethical leadership and virtue ethics, but also leadership as a whole.

Based on the study’s findings, further research should be conducted related specifically to the virtue of perseverance and its impact on other virtues as it may significantly contribute to the
practice of ethical principal leadership. This could expand upon and give way to new frameworks related to the practice of ethical leadership.

Also, with research outlined by Bass (1985), Burns (1978), Kouzes and Posner (2002), and Rost (1993) indicating the importance of ethics in all areas of leadership, not only educational leadership, adapting this study and conducting it with those in leadership positions outside of education could be beneficial. A study of this type would expand the literature related to and provide additional insight into ethical leadership.

Finally, being a qualitative study incorporating quantitative components, such as the ethical perspectives of participants, may be beneficial. By combining quantitative methods with the current qualitative methods, new information may be brought to light that was not accessed through this study’s method. A mixed methods approach may also provide the study with additional trustworthiness.

**Limitations**

Something that you are so close to in regards to time spent and effort invested it is difficult at times to step away and view it through a critical lens. However, this is necessary for an endeavor no matter how painful. Although the findings in this study were thought provoking and significant to the literature related to leadership, particularly in the areas of ethical leadership and educational leadership, there are indeed limitations to be discussed.

I was limited by the size of my selection. Having only six participants, although falling within the suggested range recommended by Creswell (2013), an expanded selection would have provided additional trustworthiness. However, due to the fact time is a limited resource and expansion of the selection size would have made the study difficult to complete. This study was also limited geographically, with all participants being located in Northwest Ohio. Once again,
due to time and resources, to attempt to expand this study beyond this geographic region would have been too time-consuming and costly, putting the study at risk of completion. Looking closer at the sample, although purposeful selection was utilized, to truly know if one is an ethical leader is a difficult endeavor. This is typically presumed to be the case and only validated through experience. Although I found all of my participants to be of sound moral and ethical standing, there is no way to measure to what degree this is the case.

Time was a limiting factor for this study. All participants were kind, and what I felt, were as thorough as possible when given time to reflect independently in the written form, and for the most part all were attentive and engaged during interviews. However, in all reality, I know fitting my interviews into their busy schedule was difficult at times. Therefore, I was aware throughout interviews that principals may have any number of items running through their minds unrelated to our discussion. There were times when interviews felt rushed or were interrupted due to principals needing to attend to an issue or other business. Although a possible limitation, I found it added to the findings of my study, as it provided me additional glimpses into the reality of the principalship.

Also, my subjectivities, although acknowledged and embraced may have been a limiting factor in this study. There are natural tendencies to be enamored with specific ideas or concepts, and I would regularly find myself falling victim to this throughout the process of data collection and analysis. I had to ensure that I was not only seeing what I wanted to see. For example, as I had noted previously in this chapter, I was fixated on the fact that accountability and high-stakes testing were the main obstacle principals faced. However, I had to release this notion as the data shared a somewhat different story. Yes, these measures did impact principals, but not to the
extent I had thought them to. I do feel I took the time to address this, but it could be a limitation and should be acknowledged as such.

Transcriptions of the study were completed by a third-party service in an effort expedite the completion the study. This was extremely beneficial, but it did limit my opportunities to engage with the interviews and text. I did listen to and read the transcripts numerous times. However, I could have maximized my interaction with these materials by transcribing them independently.

Having noted in Chapter Three of the study, due to my inexperience conducting a qualitative study, I am unaware if this may have been a limitation after all. Working collaboratively with my committee members and participants, I found that I was much more proficient than I would have originally expected. By following a regimented plan, being organized, and thorough I found that I was fully attuned to and had a tremendous sense of what was developing before me.

**Conclusion**

The principalship is a complex and unforgiving role and at the same time one of the most rewarding. Principals are tasked with leading schools. This may be a very simple statement, but it speaks magnitudes. Schools are the bedrock of American society. Individuals spend a great deal of time during their juvenile and adolescent life attending school in preparation for life. Schools are charged with a great responsibility and principals are the leaders responsible for leading this effort. Due to their position, principals truly can be transformative through their leadership. Transformational leadership is the calling card for authentic change as it is a relationship between leaders and followers that can promote social change and benefits both leaders and followers: they have a common purpose (Burns, 1978; Rost, 1993).
Over time the role of the principal has become more complex. They are faced with numerous external and internal factors that make leading a school challenging. They are charged with carrying on productively in the midst of these challenges to ensure students are prepared for additional schooling, work, and ultimately life. Their leadership transcends the confines of their building. Because of its potential to be transformative, having a clear understanding of how to maximize principal leadership in the midst of the various challenges they face as to not lose focus on the means to the ends for their students is pivotal. This study has provided evidence the practice of ethical leadership through acts of virtue can provide principals the necessary foundation to lead in a transformative manner.

As I collectively reflect on my leadership experiences in education, a student of leadership, and a researcher I now see leadership in a new light. I’m hopeful after reading this study, others will too. Many are seeking a greater understanding of leadership through a definition, something that is tangible, so they can replicate it. However, through my experience, research, and ultimately this study I have found that the most powerful leadership comes from within. It is not something that can always be identified on a piece of paper or diagram because it sits close to one’s deepest convictions. Leadership is an active practice from ethics.

Principals seeking to lead in a manner that transforms and transcends must practice ethical leadership through acts of virtue, particularly when faced with challenges that may impact the greater good of those around them, especially their students. This study has highlighted the power of doing so by exposing its essence and supporting and expanding upon a framework for principals to lead from. I’m hopeful that by principals leading in this manner our society will benefit by having those who were once their students, enter a dynamic and ever-evolving society, prepared and willing to be productive citizens within it.
References


A decade of research on school principals: Cases from 24 countries (1st 2016 ed.). Heidelberg: Springer.


Bakopoulos, F. (2013). Ethical decision-making by high school principals in evaluating teachers


Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., McNulty, B. A., Ebrary Education Subscription Collection, & Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results.* Alexandria;Palo Alto; Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.


APPENDIX A. OSBA NORTHWEST OHIO PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Ada Exempted Village
Allen East Local
Anthony Wayne Local
Antwerp Local
Arcadia Local
Archbold Area Local
Arlington Local
Ayersville Local
Bath Local
Bellevue City
Benton Carroll Salem Local
Bluffton Exempted Village
Bowling Green City
Bryan City
Carey Exempted Village
Celina City
Central Local
Clyde-Green Springs Ex Village
Coldwater Exempted Village
Columbus Grove Local
Continental Local
Cory-Rawson Local
Crestview Local
Danbury Local
Defiance City
Delphos City
Eastwood Local
Edgerton Local
Edison Local
Edon-Northwest Local
Elida Local
Elmwood Local
Evergreen Local
Fayette Local
Findlay City
Fort Recovery Local
Fostoria City
Fremont City
Genoa Area Local
Gibsonburg Ex Village
Hardin Northern Local
Hicksville Exempted Village
Holgate Local
Hopewell-Loudon Local
Huron City
Jennings Local
Kalida Local
Kelley's Island Local
Kenton City
Lake Local
Lakota Local
Leipsic Local
Liberty Center Local
Liberty-Benton Local
Lima City
Lincolnview Local
Margaretta Local
Marion Local
Maumee City
McComb Local
Mercer County Board of DD
Middle Bass Local
Millcreek-West Unity Local
Miller City-New Cleveland Local
Minster Local
Mohawk Local
Monroeville Local
Montpelier Exempted Village
Napoleon Area City
New Bremen Local
New Knoxville Local
New London Local
New Riegel Local
North Baltimore Local
North Bass Local
North Central Local
Northeastern Local
Northwood Local
Norwalk City
Old Fort Local
Oregon City
Otsego Local
Ottawa Hills Local
Ottawa-Glandorf Local
Ottoville Local
Pandora-Gilboa Local
Parkway Local
Patrick Henry Local
Paulding Exempted Village
Perkins Local
Perry Local
Perrysburg Exempted Village
Pettisville Local
Pike-Delta-York Local
Port Clinton City
Put-In-Bay Local
Ridgemont Local
Riverdale Local
Rossford Exempted Village
Sandusky City
Sandusky County Board of DD
Seneca East Local
Shawnee Local
South Central Local
Spencerville Local
Springfield Local
St. Henry Consolidated Local
St. Marys City
Stryker Local
Swanton Local
Sylvania City
Tiffin City
Toledo City
Upper Sandusky Ex Village
Upper Scioto Valley Local
Van Buren Local
Van Wert City
Vanlue Local
Vermilion Local
Wapakoneta City
Washington Local
Wauseon Exempted Village
Wayne Trace Local
Waynesfield-Goshen Local
Western Reserve Local
Willard City
Woodmore Local
APPENDIX B. OSBA NORTHWEST REGION BY COUNTY

Allen
Auglaize
Defiance
Erie
Fulton
Hancock
Hardin
Henry
Huron
Lucas
Mercer
Ottawa
Paulding
Putnam
Sandusky
Seneca
Van Wert
Williams
Wood
Wyandot
APPENDIX C. PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent

My name is Brad Contat, a doctoral student at Bowling Green State University, and I am conducting my study under the guidance of my advisor Dr. Chris Willis, assistant professor in the School of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Policy. I am conducting a qualitative study regarding the ethical leadership of principals. The purpose of this research study is to explore the phenomenon of the ethical leadership of principals through acts of virtue. This study will directly benefit scholarly literature related to principal leadership and indirectly the staff, students, and community of the school’s they lead. You as the participant will benefit from having the opportunity to share your experiences as an educational leader.

Data sources for this study will be collected through interviews, observations, and artifacts. Two interviews will take place, with the first interview taking approximately ninety minutes at a time to be determined. An approximately sixty-minute follow-up interview will also take place following the first interview, at a time a time to be determined. Total interview time should take no more than one hundred and fifty minutes. All interviews will take place at the school in which you lead when possible. Interviews will be audio recorded. A contracted third party will transcribe recordings. You will be provided transcripts of interviews for your review and feedback. Review of transcripts will be at your leisure, but may take up to ninety minutes.

Physical artifacts will be collected. These will come in the form of your personal “code of ethics” along with documents accessible to the general public electronically or otherwise. Artifacts may include, but not limited to, school handbooks, curriculum guides, vision statements, school and district report cards, or information posted on school and district websites, Twitter, and Instagram. The development of your personal “code of ethics” will be done at your leisure, but sixty minutes would be an appropriate amount of time to plan for this activity. Your activity related to this study should take approximately six hours. This activity will include interview time, possible communication via email or telephone, any time spent reviewing transcripts of interviews or providing feedback to myself either in written or oral form, and the development of your “personal code of ethics”.

You will not ever be directly identified within the study, as a pseudonym of your choosing will be used. All observations will be informal and collected as personal notes by myself in a field notebook. This notebook will be maintained in a secure location. Observations made within the study will never use names or descriptions that would provide readers unnecessary information related to participants or the buildings they lead.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip questions during interviews or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Choosing to participate or not will not affect your standing or relationship with myself, your employer, Bowling Green State University. Your school district's superintendent has granted permission for participation.

All data collected will be kept in a secure location, including a password protected computer and a secure safe. Data will only be accessed by myself, the participant (only data related directly to yourself), my advisor Dr. Chris Willis, and advising methodologist for this study Dr. Tracy Huziak-Clark, assistant professor in the College of Education of Bowling Green State University, and a third party transcription service. Data will be securely maintained for no less than five years at which
time it will be destroyed. All paper documents will be professionally cross-shredded, and digital data will be deleted from the hard drive of the computer in which it had been stored.

Your name will be collected on this document of consent; therefore this consent document will also be maintained securely and produced for no one other than you upon your request. You will also be provided a personal copy of this consent. This document will also be securely maintained for no less than five years at which time it will be destroyed with other data related to this study.

The risk of participation is no greater than that experienced in daily life, as the research being conducted is related to the daily duties of a school principal. Nothing noted or discussed within this study will place you at undue risk related to your job or status within your profession. As noted previously, all data related to your participation will be securely maintained, and pseudonyms will be used in the study to avoid your direct identification.

If you have any questions about the research being conducted or your participation in the study I can be contacted directly 404-702-2168 or via email at bcontat@bgsu.edu. Dr. Chris Willis, the advisor of this study, may be reached at 419-372-7401 or via email at wchris@bgsu.edu. Any communication requiring mail service can be directed to 444 Education Building, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43402 care of Dr. Chris Willis. You may also contact the chair of the Institutional Review Board at 419-372-7716 or orc@bgsu.edu if you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research.

I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered, and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. I agree to participate in this research.

____________________________  ______________________
Participant Signature        Date
APPENDIX D. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL #1

Interview ID number:

Researcher name:

Time:

Date:

Location:

Participant name:

Pseudonym:

Current position:

Years of experience:

Total length of interview:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today, and assisting me with my study. How did your school year go? Any big plans for the summer? (Engage in any small talk as it arises, continuing to build rapport with the participating principal as to put them at ease and develop a collegial relationship) (Moustakas, 1994). Briefly go over study and purpose, answer any questions they may have, receive signed consent form, and remind them of how long I foresee the interviewing taking (90min.). Ask if it is ok for me to begin recording.

| RQ 1. How do principals describe their ethical leadership experiences through acts of virtue? |
| RQ 2. How do the ethical leadership experiences through acts of virtue of principals influence student preparation for 21st Century citizenship? |

<p>| What do you see your role being as the principal of your building? |
| How would you describe your leadership style? |
| How has your leadership style developed over time? |
| What guides your daily decision making as a principal? |
| How do you plan for major decisions? |
| How you reflect upon your leadership? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are some of the major challenges you face as a leader in education?</td>
<td><strong>What are some of the major challenges you face as a leader in education?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you work through the challenges you face as a leader in education?</td>
<td><strong>How do you work through the challenges you face as a leader in education?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe student learning in your building?</td>
<td><strong>How would you describe student learning in your building?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you feel you influence student learning in your building?</td>
<td><strong>How do you feel you influence student learning in your building?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe some of the “big” decisions you had to make this past year, or will have to make this upcoming year, in regards to student learning.</td>
<td><strong>Describe some of the “big” decisions you had to make this past year, or will have to make this upcoming year, in regards to student learning.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a new change comes from the state (new testing/SLO/new curriculum) what is your initial response? How do you typically process and then help this change move forward in your building?</td>
<td><strong>When a new change comes from the state (new testing/SLO/new curriculum) what is your initial response? How do you typically process and then help this change move forward in your building?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your ultimate short term and long-term goal for the students in your building?</td>
<td><strong>What is your ultimate short term and long-term goal for the students in your building?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are some of the biggest challenges you see your students facing as future citizens, and how do you go about preparing them as their principal?</td>
<td><strong>What are some of the biggest challenges you see your students facing as future citizens, and how do you go about preparing them as their principal?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Incorporate follow-up questions as they arise
*Notes and observations taken in journal
APPENDIX E. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL #2

Interview ID number:
Date:
Location:
Researcher name:
Beginning Time:
Ending Time:
Participant Pseudonym:
Current position:
Years of experience:
Total length of interview:

| How long have you been an educator? This can include years spent teaching etc. |
| How many years have you been in position of leadership within education? |
| How many years have you been a principal / AP / or equivalent? |
| Could you please share your current age? |
| How many different school districts etc. have you served for? |

How do you use your PCOE within your leadership to ensure students in your building grow socially, emotionally, and academically?

It was noted throughout interviews a commonality was exhibited that there is a necessity to balance a number of items to ensure students remain the focus. How do you go about balancing student needs, staff needs, parent needs, and district and state demands?

A common virtue exhibited within principal leadership practices among all principals interviewed has been the virtue of perseverance. How do you see perseverance playing a role in your success as a principal?

How do you see your ability to persevere impacting students in your building?

What do you draw upon that you feel allows you to persevere through the difficulties of balancing all that is required of you as a principal?
## APPENDIX F. OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>S/W</th>
<th>Not Observed</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inviting Feel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of energy and vitality</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clean and Orderly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rules and Expectations Posted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Work Hanging on Walls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written Communication Posted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visible Celebrations of Success</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of Focus on Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning of Students Within Building</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Genuine Interaction b/w principal and others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genuine engagement among staff</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genuine engagement among staff and students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive tone and demeanor among individuals observed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Engaged throughout interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seemed Interested in topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asked Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seemed Particularly Interested About……or Focused On….</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Date:     Time:     Researcher:     Observation ID:
APPENDIX G. PERSONAL CODE OF ETHICS PROMPT

Personal Code of Ethics

Thank you for showing interest and taking time out of your busy schedule to participate in this study. Your thoughts and perspective will assist greatly in generating knowledge regarding ethical principal leadership.

Before our initial interview (DATE, TIME, LOCATION) if you could please take a moment to reflect and provide me with a written personal code of ethics. Your code does not need to be long or conform to a particular format, feel free to be creative. Essentially, think about who you are and how you go about making decisions and live your life?

A few questions that may assist in getting you thinking: What do you see moral and ethical decision-making being? What has influenced or currently does affect your ethical behavior? (Family? Friends? Religion? Racial/Ethnic Heritage? Personal History? Employment History?) How do you attempt to incorporate ethics into your daily life personally and professionally?

If you could please email me your code to bcontat@bgsu.edu in the form of a pdf document at least twenty-four hours before our interview it would be greatly appreciated.

Please be aware after printing off your code of ethics the email containing the code will be deleted and emptied from the trash to assist in maintaining your privacy.

Once again, your participation is greatly appreciated, and I look forward to meeting with you (DATE AND TIME) at (LOCATION).

Sincerely,
Brad Contat

Personal Code of Ethics prompt borrowed with permission from Dr. Pauken, Professor, Bowling Green State University EDLS 7110 Spring 2017.
APPENDIX H. PARTICIPANT TEXTURAL DESCRIPTION OF SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS AND RESULTING STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTIONS BY THEME

Responsibility-textural descriptions of significant statements:

• Principals exhibit a sense of responsibility for not only those within their building but for the greater community.
• Principals illustrate a sense of responsibility not only for student learning but also for their overall general well-being and safety.
• Principals feel a sense of responsibility to stay actively engaged in the decision-making process within their building to ensure students are protected from the self-interests of others and provide an equitable learning environment.
• Principals are responsible for a significant workload related to evaluating teachers that must be conducted with great care and consistency to ensure staff are treated fairly.
• Principals are responsible for not only goal accomplishment for their building but effective communication of those goals and ensuring staff work collaboratively to achieve goals.
• Principals feel a sense of responsibility to provide their staff perspective.
• Principals feel a strong sense of responsibility to ensure students are prepared to have productive lives and must work through their staff to accomplish this.
• Principals feel they are responsible for taking on challenging situations in order to ensure a productive learning environment is present for students.
• Principals feel they be responsible for being visionary and innovative.
• Principals are responsible for hiring high quality staff who will meet their expectations.
• Principals feel responsible for others are appropriately meeting the needs of the students in their building.
• Principals feel responsible for caring that their students are provided the same educational opportunities and treated in the same manner as their own children.
• PCE

Structural Description of Responsibility:
A strong sense of responsibility is deeply rooted in the daily actions of principals and strengthened through their connections with students, staff, and their community. This virtue provides them the drive to take action and lead strategically with a vision in an effort to enhance the lives of those around them, particularly the students in their building not only academically, but socially and emotionally as well.

Authenticity-textural descriptions of significant statements:

• Principals develop a greater sense of who they are as leaders and develop greater confidence with time and experience allowing them to bring greater authenticity to their leadership.
• Principals connect with their authentic self-leading to a sense of purpose related to their role.
• Principals reflect assisting them to lead in a manner that authentically represents who they are as an individual.
• Principals exhibit a sense of honesty that brings out their authenticity.
• The authentic self of the principal exhibits itself in their leadership by them tapping into their core beliefs providing them balance and clarity when facing varying perspectives and opinions.
• Principals incorporate the authentic self into the planning and execution of their daily routines.
• When principals allow others to connect with their true authentic self-connections are made that inspire others to act and take the lead.
• The authenticity of principals assists them when facing challenges.
• Principals rely on the authentic self to have the confidence to seek understanding to assist in problem solving rather than making decisions without proper understanding.
• Principals exhibit authenticity by being honest with themselves related to the impact they are having on student learning.
• Principals bring their full authenticity self to the work they do.
• Principals rely on their authenticity to assist them in seeing the greater good in what they are doing as educational leaders.
• Principals rely on their authenticity to guide them at the deepest level regarding how they proceed as a leader.
• Experiences principals have had throughout life assist in developing their authenticity, which forever impacts who they are as a leader.
• Authenticity fuels the necessary emotion needed within a principal's leadership.
• PCE

**Structural Description of Authenticity:**
Principal authenticity is a combination of historical and recent experiences that are used by the principal to reflect upon and monitor interactions they have within their personal and professional environment. These dynamic interactions bring about a state of equilibrium that provides principals a sense of clarity and confidence that assists them in connecting with others to positively impact students.

**Presence-textural descriptions of significant statements:**

• Principals exhibit the virtue of presence through communication and modeling.
• Principals want to be viewed as an individual and available to others who can be relied on as a resource.
• Principals make an effort to be present in classrooms to show students and staff they care about the teaching and learning that is taking place in their building.
• Principals are present on a daily basis regarding matters of curriculum.
• Principals feel the greater presence they have in the various aspects within their building the more they are able to positively influence outcomes.
• Principals look to be strategically present as a way to assist others.
• Principals view their presence as a way to connect with stakeholders such as parents in an effort to show they care by being present to their needs through support.
• Principals proactively engage in positive interactions with students, staff, and community as a way to motivate themselves and others.
• Principals illustrate presence through listening to and problem solving with others in a collaborative manner. Principals feel the demeanor of their presence sets a tone for the interactions they have and the overall environment within their building.
• Principals are present with students throughout the day in various contexts and make an effort to know them as individuals.
• Principals attempt to have their presence a part of the daily functioning of their building as to not be viewed as having their presence in a classroom etc. be viewed as unusual, distracting, or superficial.
• Principals believe that by being present illustrates they have a genuine concern for not only the academic achievement of their students but for their overall well-being all in their building.
• Principals believe that their presence assists in developing connections with students, staff, and community that create a sense of belonging.
• Principals find importance in their presence and how that is viewed.
• By illustrating curiosity and asking questions principals exhibit being present to the needs of others.
• Principals feel a need to be present within the community they serve
• PCE

Structural Description of Presence:
Principal presence moves beyond casual interaction. Presence of a principal is a necessity and a constant in their role and life. Their presence facilitates the development of interconnected relationships among students, parents, staff, and community that support the social, emotional, and academic development of the students in their building.

Student Centrality-textural descriptions of significant statements:

• Principals place a priority on leading for their students.
• Principals see their role as ensuring all is in place so students can be successful.
• Principals’ leadership has evolved from more transactional to transformational placing greater emphasis on the success of the whole child.
• Principals’ leadership has evolved from more transactional to transformational placing greater emphasis on the long-term success of students and providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to have as many opportunities to them as possible.
• Principals view an important aspect of their role as serving the students in their building and their families and use their role to facilitate that viewpoint among their staff.
• Principals view an important aspect of their role as one to facilitate a productive learning environment for students and expressing the need for this to their staff.
• When principals make decision, they use the filter of "how does this benefit students?" in an effort to develop a culture that focuses on both academic learning and genuine care for students.
• Principals place the students in their building above all else; including staff.
• Principals care that students are learning.
• Principals see the need to remind staff that student needs come first.
• By keeping students as the central focus principals are able to mitigate various distractors and use this focus to develop common ground among staff, parents, and community.
• Principals focus on the talents and abilities of students and make efforts to expose them to opportunities through various venues that allow them to expand upon their talents and abilities, grow academically, socially, emotionally, and build confidence.
• Principals will only bend so far due to external factors, and attempt to balance so much, in an effort to not compromise doing what is best for students.
• Principals collaborate with others regarding programming to gather diverse perspectives that will ensure the needs of the whole child are being met.
• Principals care deeply about the success of their students, staff, school, and how they are all perceived and feel this care must be genuine.
• Principals are honest regarding their student population allowing them to remain focused on their needs to ensure they are receiving what they need to be successful.
• Principals feel obligated to provide students opportunities that they would not otherwise have if they were not attending their school.

**Structural Description of Student Centrality:**
The primary functioning of the principal revolves around the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students. By establishing students as the central focus within their buildings, principals can direct the energy of others, such as staff and parents, collectively to ensure student success. Principals are consciously aware of the various external pressures placed upon schools and work as a filter to mitigate the challenges posed by such forces to ensure students remain the central focus.

**Perseverance—textural descriptions of significant statements:**
• Principals model perseverance when facing challenges for their staff in an effort to motivate them.
• Principals use problem solving and creativity to persevere through the external demands they are faced with that are out of their control.
• Principals communicate with others the necessity to adapt and change as a way to lead others in persevering.
• Principals focus on the importance of their physical health and mental health to assist them in persevering.
• Having goals assists principals with persevering.
• Principals must be able to accept defeats gracefully and have the ability to connect with their personal code to find comfort in an effort to continue to persevere or the role of principal will be too much for them to handle.
• Knowledge, experience, and reflection assist principals in persevering.
• A positive attitude assists principals in persevering.
• Principals feel that the challenges they face provide them opportunities to persevere which can provide motivation for them and when harnessed properly for others around them.
• Perseverance is not always an easy.
• Principals rely on their code of ethics to assist them in persevering and take great pride in do so for the students in their building.
• Students are external motivators that assist principals to be willing to face challenges and take calculated risks in order to be innovative and meet the needs of their students to ensure their success.
• Principals connect their perseverance to their morality in an effort to seek the greater good for their students.
• A focused vision assists principals in persevering.
• Principals feel perseverance is important and is fueled by approaching challenges as learning opportunities and the genuine relationships they have with those around them.
• Principals feel that perseverance assists them in developing the ability to empathize with their students and see things from their perspective.
• Being a principal is a difficult job and one must be able to persevere through the difficult times to be able to do it.
• It's important for principals to be able to view situations from various perspectives and be able to adapt when needed while also staying true to their convictions if they believe in something and persevere in order to accomplish it.
• Embracing small victories assist principals in persevering.
• Principals feel you must have an idea of where you are headed in order to stay the course and persevere.
• Principals feel that perseverance is a necessity in their role as a leader and without it one will not continue working in an effort to ensure their building and organization are moving in a positive direction and productivity will decline.
• PCE

Structural Description of Perseverance:
Perseverance for a principal is a necessity for them to be able to move forward personally and professionally during challenging times productively. This virtue is intimately connected to who they are as an individual and works in conjunction with other core values to motivate them to seek a higher good not only for themselves but others around them as well; especially the students they serve. Due to the difficulty associated with being a principal without perseverance principals would not be able to effectively function as an ethical leader.
APPENDIX I. CONNECTION BETWEEN TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP, ETHICAL LEADERSHIP, AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP THROUGH ACTS OF VIRTUE

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP (ROST, 1993)

Leader ← · · · · · · · · · · → Follower (s) · · · · · · · → Common Good/ Greatest Good
(HOW)

- SYMPTOMATIC IN NATURE / RELATIONAL
- MUTUAL BENEFIT
- TOWARDS A COMMON GOOD / GREATEST GOOD

ETHICS / ETHICAL LEADERSHIP (ARISTOTLE, TRANS. 1952)

Individual / Leader ← → Happiness ← → Greatest Good
(END)

Virtues

- SEEKING HAPPINESS
- HAPPINESS ACHIEVED BY ACHIEVING GREATEST GOOD
- ACCOMPLISHED BY LIVING IN LINE WITH VIRTUES AND FOCUSING ON MEANS TO THE END

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP (STARRATT, 2004)

Principal ← → Happiness ← → Greatest Good

Student Centrality ← · · · · · (STUDENT PREPARATION FOR LIFE)
(END)

Virtues

- PRINCIPALS SEEKING GREATEST GOOD TO BE (STUDENT PREPARATION FOR LIFE)
- MUST LEAD IN LINE WITH VIRTUES FOCUSING ON THE MEANS TO THE END HOW VS. WHAT
- MAINTAINING A CENTRAL FOCUS ON STUDENTS
- TRANSFORMATIONAL IS ETHICAL AND ACHIEVED THROUGH VIRTUOUS ACTS