

The Ethical Environment of Local Government Managers

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Abstract: Empirical research on ethics in government is growing rapidly. One area that has been largely overlooked, however, is the ethical environment of the public manager. This paper examines the ethical environments of local government managers in two states—Florida and Texas—with an interest in assessing how hospitable those environments are to the adoption of a “trust and lead” strategy advocated by the Winter Commission to revitalize local and state public service. Three research questions are addressed: (a.) To what extent do local government managers perceive themselves to be working in an ethical organization and community? (b.) What might explain why they adopt a more or less ethical view of their workplace and communities? And (c.) how might a manager’s own ethical self-esteem condition or influence how he/she assesses one’s ethical environment? The findings, based on survey responses of more than 200 municipal managers, suggest that a “trust and lead” strategy can be effective in local public service.

Introduction

The “R” words—reinventing, right-sizing, rebuilding, revitalizing, and restructuring government—have captured the attention of citizens and public officials throughout the United States. From the nation’s capital to Tallahassee to Dallas and reaches beyond, governments at all levels are transforming themselves into more efficient, responsive, and, hopefully, ethical enterprises. Consistent with this effort, many elected officials and public administrators are, among other things, privatizing operations and adopting managerial approaches such as Total Quality Management and Continuous Quality Improvement.

The success of these initiatives hinges heavily on the extent to which trust rather than distrust, and rightdoing rather than wrongdoing permeates the environment of change. As stated forthrightly in the Winter Commission’s (1993, p. 9) call for revitalizing state and local public service, the path to high-performance government must be based on a “trust and lead” strategy. A “trust and lead” strategy engages citizens as “active participants in the ongoing process of government.” Further, it “requires strong and positive relationships between the leaders of state and local government, public employees, citizens, and the many diverse groups essential to the governmental process” (1993, p. 2).

Laudable? Certainly. Doable? Depends on the extent to which the relationships described above either exist or can be created. More broadly stated, the ethical environment in which public officials carry out their day-to-day duties can be viewed as providing the parameters whereby a "trust and lead" strategy can work or, if pursued, can be developed. The purpose of this paper is to examine the ethical environments of local government managers (LGMs) in two states—Florida and Texas, with an eye toward assessing how hospitable those environments are to the adoption of a "trust and lead" strategy for revitalizing local public service.

Empirical Research on Ethics in Government

Empirical research on ethics issues and problems is growing rapidly (Berman, West, & Cava, 1994; Bowman, 1990; Ghere, 1992; Menzel, 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1995; Menzel & Benton, 1991; Overman & Foss, 1991; Stewart & Sprinthall, 1993; West, Berman, & Cava, 1993; Wittmer, 1992). Much work, however, remains to be done. Among other things, very little is known about the ethical or not-so-ethical environments in which local government managers carry out their duties.¹

There is empirical research that attempts to (a.) map the extent to which organizations embrace ethical values (Berman & West, 1994; Bowman, 1990; West, Berman, & Cava, 1993; Near, Baucus, & Miceli, 1993), (b.) document the relationship between an organization's ethical climate and work values such as efficiency, effectiveness, and teamwork (Burke & Black, 1990; Menzel, 1993a), and (c.) determine how the presence or absence of organizational codes of ethics and ethics training make a difference in how members of the organization carry out their duties and responsibilities (West, Berman, & Cava, 1993).

Near, Baucus, and Miceli's (1993, p. 205) study of organizational climates for wrongdoing is noteworthy in that it attempts to examine the "effect that the organization or subsystem has on the whistle-blowing process." Using the construct of organizational climate (i.e., the collective description of the organization's environment assessed through perceptions of individuals in the organization), they compare the incident of wrongdoing across 15 large U.S. government departments and agencies. Their major hypothesis, that the incident of wrongdoing is negatively related to positive values such as protection from retaliation for blowing the whistle, was not validated. However, they point out that the results should be regarded as suggestive.

Data detailing local government managers' perceptions and assessments of their ethical environments are sketchy. Bowman's (1990) survey of practitioner members of the American Society for Public Administration provides some insight into the ethical environment of managers. One major conclusion, although a discouraging conclusion for those who believe that ethics in public organizations is important, is that most public managers believe that their organization has "no strategy whatsoever for dealing with ethics" (Bowman, 1990, p. 348). In other words, public administrators appear to have little awareness of their ethical environment and have few strategies for encouraging a strong ethical presence or climate in their organizations.

A somewhat contrary view is offered by Berman and West (1994). They report that most municipalities make explicit efforts to "manage" values, although a shift in management strategies is underway. "Values management," they assert, "is shifting from minimizing wrongdoing to building trust among employees and customers of public services" (1994, p. 16). Greater emphasis, according to their survey results, is being placed on employee empowerment, family support for employees (e.g., day care centers), and client/customer satisfaction. Traditional practices intended to minimize wrongdoing (e.g., whistle blowing and codes of ethics that define unauthorized gifts, conflicts of interest, etc.) are viewed as less effective strategies to meet emerging needs.

The studies examined above are suggestive. There is, however, a more broad-based set of studies that examine the work behaviors, attitudes, and motivations of local government managers, including city managers (see Newell & Ammons, 1987; Stillman, 1974; Streib, 1992). Still, few studies examine the interface between managers' values and the environment in which they live and work. One exception is the research reported by DeSantis, Glass, and Newell (1992). Their national survey of city managers found that, among other things, city population size has an important influence on managers' perceptions of community problems. Managers of larger cities are more likely to perceive social problems and issues (e.g., drug prevention, education, etc.) as having a higher priority than are managers of smaller cities. Other variables such as job tenure and council support have little or no impact on managers' perceptions of community problems.

Ethical Environments

An ethical environment can be conceptualized in terms of several components. First, it can be viewed as "enacted," to employ Weick's (1979) concept that distinguishes perceptions of reality from presumed facts of reality. To know what a local government manager's enacted ethical environment is, of course, suggests a capacity to get inside the head of the manager. One way to do this is to provide the manager with a set of reference points, a practice often employed by students of organizational climates and, to a lesser extent, cultures. Near, Baucus, and Miceli (1993), for example, explore organizational climates for wrongdoing in this manner. The organizational climate is then operationalized as the perceived incidence (averaged across members) of wrongdoing behavior in one's organization.

Second, an ethical environment can be viewed as having observable entities or, what organizational culture researchers refer to as "cultural forms" (Trice & Byer, 1993). The presence or absence of written codes of ethics, rules/guidelines/committees for enforcing codes, ethics training, awards for rightdoing, and so forth would fit into this category.

Third, an ethical environment can be conceptualized as containing attitudes and values that structure in some consistent fashion right and wrong behavior. This attitudinal dimension was tapped by Carnevale and Wechsler (1992) to examine organizational trust in public organizations. Their research treated the ethical environment as an independent variable that contributes to

higher levels of organizational trust. More specifically, they described the ethical environment as a feeling on the part of state agency employees that their organization was worthy and managed in an ethical manner.

For purposes of this paper, an LGM's ethical environment can be said to consist of perceptions, attitudes, and cultural forms concerned with right and wrongdoing behaviors. It would be misleading to suggest that there is a single, overarching dimension of a manager's ethical environment. Like the construct "organizational climate," an ethical environment must be referenced in some fashion. Moreover, it is analytically helpful to describe one's ethical environment as having two separate yet related elements—a proximate element associated with the manager's workplace, and a distant element associated with extra-organizational actors and agencies (e.g., community, state, and nation).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Three questions guided the research: (a.) "To what extent do local government managers perceive themselves to be working in an ethical organization and community?" That is, what is the enacted ethical environment? (b.) "What might explain why local government managers adopt a more or less ethical view of their workplaces and communities?" That is, what are the correlates of an enacted ethical environment? (c.) "How might a manager's own ethical self-esteem condition or influence how he/she assesses the ethical environment?" That is, how might a manager's own sense of ethical standards frame, perhaps filter his/her description of the ethical environment?

The first question is primarily descriptive. Thus no hypotheses are offered for this question. The second and third questions suggest several hypotheses.

- H1:** LGMs whose sense of ethics are strong are likely to characterize their ethical environments as strong. Humans tend to enact their environments through their own personal value sets. Managers who feel that they have high ethical standards are likely to view their environment as also being populated by highly ethical persons.
- H2:** LGMs whose proximate ethical environments include cultural forms such as codes of ethics are likely to characterize their ethical environments as strong. Codes of ethics in particular are often thought to make a difference in the behaviors of organizational members.
- H3:** LGMs whose organizations emphasize values such as efficiency, effectiveness, quality, and teamwork are likely to characterize their ethical environments as strong. Previous research has indicated that high performing organizations are also organizations that tend to support and foster ethical workplaces.

Study Populations

All regular members of the Florida City and County Management Association (FCCMA) and all regular members of the Texas City Management Association (TCMA) were the study populations. Both Associations endorsed the

project and cooperated fully to encourage participation by their members. Mail questionnaires were sent in late 1991 to 358 members of the FCCMA, with 141 local government managers returning usable questionnaires for a response rate of 39.5 percent. In early 1992, the same questionnaire was mailed to 518 members of the TCMA, with 236 members returning usable questionnaires for a response rate of 45.5 percent. All study participants were assured anonymity and informed that their responses would be confidential.

To insure greater similarity among the study respondents, the decision was made to focus exclusively on local government managers who were city managers, deputy city managers, or assistant city managers. Among Florida local government managers, 92 persons fit into this category. Among Texas local government managers, 189 persons fit into this category. Part of the analysis that follows combines the two samples for an $N=281$. Prior to doing this, however, difference of means T-tests were computed for all variables, including personal background and demographic variables. The results indicated that Florida and Texas LGM samples are similar, indeed nearly identical in certain respects. For example, the average age of the Florida respondent is 45.5 compared to 44.3 for the Texas respondent. Other similarities include gender, race, education, years in current position and current organization, and city size. The only differences of any statistical significance are membership in the International City/County Management Association and the American Society for Public Administration. Florida LGMs were more likely than their counterparts in Texas to belong to these professional associations.

Regarding attitudes and ethical outlooks, few differences exist between Florida and Texas respondents. These differences, where relevant, are presented and discussed in the findings section.²

Variables and Indicators

A manager's enacted ethical environment was operationalized by asking him/her to respond to the following question: "How much wrongdoing³ do you believe there is by (elected/appointed/public employees/high-ranking public managers) in your (city/county/state/national government)?" Five response categories ranging from "a great deal" to "none" were provided. These response categories, when summed and averaged, define a "strong-to-weak" ethical environment, with high scores representing perceptions of little wrongdoing and thus a strong ethical environment and low scores representing the converse.

Managers' responses to a set of 7-point scales regarding the ethical standards of one's organization, city, and community also provide information about their ethical environments. Specifically, respondents were asked to circle a number from 1 to 7, with 1 being "very low" and 7 being "very high," that characterizes the ethical standards of (a) "the organization where I am employed," (b) "elected officials in my city," (c) "of my community."

The second component of an ethical environment—observable entities or forms—was determined by responses to the question: "Does your city have a code of ethics that employees are expected to follow?"

The third component of an ethical environment—attitudes and values—was determined by responses to the items listed in Table 1. These Likert weighted items formed the basis for a scale (as described in the table) labeled CLIMATE.

Table 1
Ethical Climate Scale

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1. It is not unusual for members of my department to accept small gifts for performing their duties.
 2. Some members of my department use their position for private gain.
 3. Members of my department have misused their position to influence the hiring of their relatives and friends in (city/county) government.
 4. My supervisor encourages employees to act in an ethical manner.
 5. Managers in my department have high ethical standards.
 6. The people in my department demonstrate high standards of personal integrity.
 7. There are serious ethical problems in my department.
 8. Members of my department sometimes leak information that benefits persons who do business with the city.
 9. My superiors set a good example of ethical behavior.
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Respondents could select the following response categories: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. The maximum score a respondent could receive on this scale is 36, which indicates a very strong ethical climate. Items 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8 are reverse scored for scaling purposes. The alpha reliability coefficient is .86.

Two sets of independent variables are suggested by the hypotheses. The first set has to do with organizational values that are operationalized by the respondents level of agreement or disagreement with the values listed in Table 2. When summed and averaged, a scale labeled ORG-VALUES is created. (See Table 2 for a description of the procedures.) A second independent vari-

Table 2
Org-Values Scale

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1. Effectiveness is given a high priority in my department.
 2. The people in my department constantly strive for excellence in carrying out their job.
 3. Efficiency is given a high priority in my department.
 4. Quality is given a high priority in my department.
 5. I feel that I am a member of a well-functioning team.
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Respondents could select the following response categories: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. The maximum score a respondent could receive on this scale is 20, which indicates strong agreement on all values reflected by the five items listed. The alpha reliability coefficient is .85.

able is a manager's self-described sense of ethical standards. The responses to a seven-point scale, with 1 being very low and 7 being very high, was used to measure one's ethical standards.

One other variable, city population size, is included in the analysis that follows as a rough proxy for the extent to which LGMs may interact with others, particularly state and federal authorities. It is conceivable that more interaction occurs between LGMs of larger cities and higher level authorities which, in turn, could result in more positive assessments of the behaviors/environments of those actors.

Findings

Turning first to the descriptive findings, Table 3 shows that LGMs perceive the ethical environments of those more distant from them as more troublesome.⁴ For example, LGMs perceive more wrongdoing by county officials than by city officials, more wrongdoing by state officials than by county officials, and more wrongdoing by national officials than by state officials. Similarly, when one inspects LGMs' characterizations of the ethical environments in which various public officials carry out their duties, the pattern is distinctive—LGMs perceive more wrongdoing by elected officials than by appointed officials, more wrongdoing by appointed officials than by public employees, and more wrongdoing by public employees than by high-ranking public managers. Although differences exist across officials from city-to-county-to-state-to-national, the patterns are clear and consistent.

Table 3
LGMs Perceptions of Wrongdoing Behavior
by Type of Official and Jurisdiction^a

	<i>City</i>			<i>County</i>			<i>State</i>			<i>National</i>		
	N/ VL %	L %	C/ GD %	N/ VL %	L %	C/ GD %	N/ VL %	L %	C/ GD %	N/ VL %	L %	C/ GD %
Elected	65	23	12	25	43	32	8	35	57	3	21	76
Appointed	74	21	5	49	36	15	21	42	37	13	38	49
Public Employees	75	21	4	46	39	15	28	52	20	22	46	32
Public Managers	89	9	2	70	20	10	37	43	20	26	42	32

N/VL = None/Very Little L=Little C/GD=Considerable/Great Deal

^aN's vary between 257 and 280, depending on the number of non-responses.

Local government managers were also asked to assess their own ethical standards and the ethical standards of their organization, city officials, and community as a whole. Those assessments are reported in Table 4. Local government managers perceive themselves to have higher ethical standards than city officials and the community at large. While taking a more positive view of

their work organization, LGMs also perceive their organizations to have lower ethical standards than themselves.

The "cascading" effect suggested in H1, that LGMs with a higher self-perceived ethical standards are likely to rate their environments as highly ethical, is validated in part by the simple product moment correlation coefficients between the ethical standards scales. All coefficients for the combined study groups, as well as the Florida and Texas samples separately, are positive and significant at $p < .01$. More specifically, the coefficients between "My ethical standards . . ." and "organization," "city," and "community" for the combined study groups are .39, .23, and .34, respectively. On balance, then, H1 is supported by the data.

Table 4
Ethical Standards

My ethical standards are . . .

The ethical standards of the organization where I am employed are . . .

The ethical standards of elected officials in my city are . . .

The ethical standards of my community are . . .

	MY STDS			ORGANIZATION			CITY OFFICIALS			COMMUNITY		
	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
FLORIDA (n=91)	0	8	92	4	29	67	8	40	52	3	42	55
TEXAS (n=188)	0	2	98	1	22	76	11	31	58	6	37	57
FL/TEX (n=279)	0	4	96	2	22	76	10	34	56	5	39	56

L - Low = 1-3

M - Middle = 4-5

H - High = 6-7

Respondent was asked to circle a number on the scale below which most closely represents his/her views. Average score is the mean of the responses for each category of respondents for each standard.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
very low _____ very high

The statistics reported above do not necessarily mean that local government managers "see no evil" or are oblivious to wrongdoing in their own ranks or organization.⁵ For example, nearly one of every two Florida LGMs said they had observed on-the-job unethical behaviors by employees over the past 12 months. Among Texas LGMs, one of every three respondents reported similar observations. Some managers commented, for example, that they had observed:

- staff members providing information to prospective purchaser/bidder without authority (giving "inside" information to the bidder);
- employees accepting gifts from vendors;
- bid specs prepared in a manner that will allow only one bid to qualify.

Other managers cited examples of personal benefits improperly received. These included employees accepting reimbursements for trips to job-related meetings only to discover that the employees spent little time at the meetings; using city property or vehicles for personal benefit; reporting fraudulent work hours or falsifying time sheets to show overtime work; paying for personal cellular telephone calls with petty cash; leaking confidential information (sometimes for political purposes); rumormongering; leaving early from work; misusing city credit cards; and using city postage meters for personal mail.

It is conceivable, as stated in Hypothesis 2, that the extent to which LGMs characterize their proximate ethical environment is due directly to the presence or absence of a local code of ethics. Thus the question was asked: "Does your city have a code of ethics that employees are expected to follow?" Two follow-up questions were asked of those who said that their organization had a code: (a.) "How effective do you believe it is in deterring wrongdoing?" (b.) "How effective do you believe it is in encouraging ethical behavior?"

A majority (53 percent) of all respondents reported that their organization does not have a code of ethics. Among the 47 percent ($n=122$) of the respondents who said that their organization has a code of ethics, nearly eight of every 10 respondents believe that their code is somewhat or very effective in deterring wrongdoing and in encouraging ethical behavior.

Few differences were found to exist between LGMs in the two states with regard to their attitudes toward codes of ethics. Moreover, cross-tabular analysis of the responses indicated no statistical relationship between the presence/absence of a code and the observance of wrongdoing by employees. Collectively, 65 percent ($n=79$) of those who say their city has a code of ethics report that they observed no instances of wrongdoing whereas 60 percent ($n=80$) of those who say their city has no code of ethics report that they observed no instances of unethical behavior. Similar findings can be reported for both Florida and Texas samples, separately. These findings lend no support to the hypothesis that ethical forms such as a code of ethics influence how LGMs describe their proximate ethical environment. It is, of course, prudent to remind the reader that only one form was examined in this study.

Table 5 reports simple product moment correlation coefficients between CLIMATE, ORG-VALUE, city population (CITYPOP), and "wrongdoing" scales that characterize the ethical environments of various actors. As this table shows, LGMs who say that they work in an organization with a strong ethical climate and that their organization promotes the values of quality, teamwork, and effectiveness perceive less wrongdoing in their city and community than do LGMs who report that they work in an organization with a weak ethical climate and with less emphasis placed on values such as quality, teamwork, and effectiveness.

Local government managers' perceptions of wrongdoing by state and national government officials follows a similar pattern with one important exception. Namely, the correlations are weaker and inconsistent. For example, the

correlation coefficients for Florida LGMs' perception of wrongdoing at the national level are statistically insignificant and in the "wrong" direction compared to similar coefficients for Texas LGMs.

These findings, although with some qualification, tend to confirm H3 that LGMs who say they work in organizations that stress the values of efficiency, effectiveness, quality, and teamwork also characterize their ethical environments as strong.

The small and statistically insignificant correlation coefficients between CITYPOP and the several wrongdoing scales suggest that the extent of interaction between LGMs and higher level authorities has little influence on how they characterize those ethical environments.

Table 5
Simple Product Moment Correlation Coefficients

	CITY WD			COMMUNITY WD			STATE WD			NATIONAL WD		
	FL	TX	FL/ TX	FL	TX	FL/ TX	FL	TX	FL/ TX	FL	TX	FL/ TX
Climate	-.62**	-.54**	-.56**	.60**	.51**	.54**	-.15	-.26**	-.23**	.10	-.20**	-.11
Org-Value	-.41**	-.37**	-.40**	.47**	.36**	.36**	.09	-.09	-.06	.22	-.11	-.04
CityPop	.13	.03	.06	.03	.04	.04	-.28	-.12	-.16	-.19	-.10	-.12

* significant at $p < .01$, two-tailed test FL (n=68) TX (n=163) FL/TX (n=247)

** significant at $p < .001$, two-tailed test

CITY, STATE, NATIONAL Wrongdoing scales are derived from adding each respondent's score assigned to the perceived wrongdoing by elected and appointed officials and public employees and managers at each level. Thus, the maximum score that could be assigned by a respondent to a given scale is 16, with the following values placed on the five response categories: none=0, very little=1, little=2, considerable=3, a great deal=4. Therefore, a high score reflects the perception of greater wrongdoing. A negative correlation for all entries above, except the COMMUNITY scale, should be interpreted substantively to mean that two sets of values (e.g., strong ethical climate and the perception of less wrongdoing) are associated.

COMMUNITY=response to "The ethical standards of my community are (1=very low . . . 7=very high)."

CLIMATE=Ethical Climate scale (See Table 2) ORG-VALUE=Organizational Values scale (See Table 3)

CITYPOP=city population size of respondent's workplace

Discussion and Conclusion

Local government managers view their ethical environments somewhat differently as they shift their gaze outward from their organization, city, and community. Local government managers are likely to perceive state-national environments as more troublesome than they are local environments. Moreover, LGMs are quite consistent in how they view their local ethical environments, although a similar consistency does not hold as their view shifts toward state and national levels.

Among the more interesting findings is the linkage between ethical self-esteem and a manager's characterization of his/her local ethical environment—organization-wide, city-wide, and community-wide. High ethical self-esteem apparently conditions one's ethical assessment of the workplace, municipal officeholders, and the community as a whole. This relationship raises a number of interesting questions and implications.

First, is there a "spillover" effect in the workplace? That is, are others in the workplace who come into contact with a manager who has high ethical self-esteem likely to be positively influenced? It certainly seems plausible to suggest that this could be the case. Second, is the converse likely? Is a workplace or organization whose members, on the whole, possess high ethical self-esteem likely to have a positive influence on managers? Again, it certainly seems plausible to believe so. Third, what are the interactive dynamics of self-ethics-environment? Environment-ethics-self? Is there an interactive process at work? This possibility seems quite plausible.

These questions and others have potentially profound implications for municipal workplaces and communities that wish to pursue a "trust and lead" strategy to revitalize local public service. Among other things, efforts to raise the ethical self-esteem of employees, managers, and elected officials through educational programs or training workshops is likely to have valuable paybacks. These paybacks could be greater job satisfaction (Vitell & Davis, 1990), reduced stress levels in the workplace (Waters & Bird, 1987), higher levels of productivity (Menzel, 1993a), more responsible behaviors, and greater trust and respect among organizational members. Carnevale and Wechsler (1992) echo Bowman's (1983) assertion that "where an organization takes ethical behavior seriously, an atmosphere conducive to organizational trust is likely to emerge." Municipal organizations that foster ethical environments are likely to be more successful in serving their communities than are municipal organizations that ignore this important factor.

Fostering trust and respect in the workforce is certainly important. Equally important, however, is generating trust and respect between those elected to public office and those appointed to high-ranking management positions. The comments written by some LGMs who responded to the study survey indicate some misgivings about elected officeholders. Those perceptions, however, may well be due to diminished levels of mutual trust and respect. But, insofar as there may be a "trust and respect" gap, strengthening the ethical self-esteem of managers and municipal leaders could build a strong foundation for closing it.

There is more "good" news than "bad" news reported in this paper. Although the ethical looking glass of local government managers may be described as clouded, if not troubled at more distant viewing points, it is quite positive at more proximate points. Most LGMs characterize their local environments as ethical. Moreover, even though they have high self-regard for their own ethical standards, there is no evidence to suggest that LGMs perceive themselves to be morally superior to those around them. Nor do LGMs perceive themselves as knights in armor battling the forces of evil in their organizations and communities.

These findings suggest, among other things, that interventions through ethics training and education could make a significant contribution toward building trust and respect between and among public officials, managers, and employees. This in turn could be important for strengthening democracy at the grassroots—the community. For as Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1991) cogently note, "democracy requires a degree of trust that we often take for granted."

The findings reported in this paper argue well for the revitalization of public service through a "trust and lead" strategy. As Chester Barnard (1938) reminded us more than 50 years ago, executives must exert moral leadership if they are to be effective managers. Barnard's words echo loudly and promisingly for America's communities as a new century approaches.

Notes

¹There is, however, literature that has investigated the incident of political corruption in a state in relation to the political culture of a state. Several authors (Johnston, 1983; Peters & Welch, 1978) have employed Daniel Elazar's typology of moralistic, individualistic, and traditional political cultures for this purpose. This research, while suggestive for comparative state level analyses, has methodological limitations for municipal level analyses. Moreover, there is some disagreement among scholars as to the extent to which corruption research informs ethics research (see Denhardt, 1988).

²Neither Florida nor Texas is classified as a "moralistic" or "individualistic" political culture by Daniel Elazar. Rather, they are broadly classified as "traditionalistic"—cultures where social and family ties are paramount along with a paternalistic and elitist conception of the commonwealth (Elazar, 1970). Political subcultures within each state could condition a respondent's characterization of his/her ethical environment. It would be, however, extremely difficult to measure this influence given the diversity of communities represented by the respondents. Moreover, when aggregated at the state level, respondents' views are likely to be homogenized.

³The term "wrongdoing" can, of course, have many referents. Among this study population—municipal city/deputy/assistant managers—wrongdoing is typically interpreted to mean such things as being dishonest, doing favors for friends or associates, accepting gifts or gratuities, using one's official position for personal gain, engaging in partisan activities (especially within one's community), and so forth. The study respondents were invited to provide examples of

wrongdoing and some of those comments are reported in this paper for purposes of illustrating what "wrongdoing" means. It is likely that there is more agreement among this study population about what wrongdoing means than would be the case with a more diverse population. The ICMA and state level professional associations such as the Florida City and County Management Association and the Texas City Management Association frequently address issues of wrongdoing in their publications and conferences.

⁴This finding is consistent with what Frederickson and Frederickson (1995) refer to as the "paradox of distance" to explain why the public holds negative views of government generally but favorable views of governments and bureaucrats with which they interact.

⁵The city management profession through the International City and County Management Association is widely recognized as a leader in advocating ethical behavior by its members. The ICMA is frequently cited as having one of the most effective and enforceable codes of ethics of any professional organization. The ICMA has long recognized that its members have a special responsibility to serve the public in an ethical manner and to protect themselves from unfounded allegations of wrongdoing. Thus when accusations of unethical behavior are made, thorough investigations are conducted and if an unethical breach is found, sanctions are typically invoked.

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