Research on Ethics and Integrity in Public Administration:
Moving Forward, Looking Back*

_The Journey Continues . . ._

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Research on ethics and integrity in public administration has become a vigorous enterprise over the past two decades. But where has the journey taken us? And, what might be ahead in the coming decades? More specifically, this article examines the research paths taken and not taken over the past ten years (2005-2014) while looking back at the journey described in reviews published in this journal. This review and assessment seeks to (a) map the current ethics research contours as evidenced by publications appearing primarily in two American journals—Public Integrity (PI) and the Public Administration Review (PAR)—and (b) move research forward by identifying issues either overlooked, neglected, or in need of additional study.

Such research stocktaking is very important for several reasons. First, it is always healthy to make an effort to track what is happening in a professional field of study in order to develop recommendations and ideas for further research. Second, journal publications are typically narrowly focused thereby challenging readers to make sense out of the “big” picture. A review and assessment is a “big” picture undertaking that would benefit academic and practitioner communities. Third, and most obvious, no PI review has been undertaken for the past decade. Thus it is timely to do so.

BACKGROUND

In 1999 Menzel with Carson reviewed the state of public administration ethics research published in the United States. That review, among other things, called for “greater cross-fertilization of ideas and study approaches among fields such as business, psychology, education, and engineering.” It also pointed to the need for public administration ethics research to be more firmly grounded in methodological rigor that should include contextually rich case studies. A half-dozen years later (2005), Menzel conducted a second review and assessment that documented the growth of ethics research in public administration, even suggesting that it was
“astonishing” with more scholars engaged than at any other period in recent memory. The 2005 review concluded that substantial progress toward building a considerable body of knowledge about ethics and integrity in governance had occurred. It also pointed out that the field of policy ethics had blossomed but developments in the areas of performance and ethics management were still at an embryonic stage. Neither review claimed closure.

The reviews noted above prompted others across the Atlantic to join the journey in 2005-2006 with the publication in Public Integrity of “Researching Ethics for Public Service Organizations: The View from Europe” by Alan Lawton and Alan Doig. Their review involved searching a half-dozen English language journals published in Europe for the period 1999-2003. Their research focus was on two topics: 1) public sector ethics in general and 2) fraud and corruption in particular. Their findings on the first topic resulted in the following themes: the public service ethos, the regulation of conduct, trust, individual behavior, professionals, and context. The findings on the second topic—corruption—led them to conclude that there is a growing body of practitioner material to use for description and analysis but there is an absence of any significant core of scholars who regularly meet and publish on corruption (2005-06). However, they note that a small number of academics publish across a range of journals but “only a few demonstrate the cumulative knowledge that informs wider academic discussion” (27).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Four questions guided the 1999 and 2005 reviews and serve as benchmarks for the current review:

1. What is the primary focus of empirical research on ethics in (government 1999) (public administration and governance 2005)? What research questions are being asked?
2. How well does empirical research inform ethics theory? How well does ethics theory inform empirical research?

3. Are the research findings cumulative? Is progress being made toward building a body of knowledge?

4. Are their neglected or overlooked areas of study (1999)? Are there new avenues of research (2005)?

The answers to these questions resulted in five inter-related themes: (1) ethical decision making and moral development, (2) ethics laws and regulatory agencies, (3) organizational performance, (4) ethics management, and (5) the ethical environment. This article returns to these themes along with two new themes—(6) policy ethics, and (7) globalization. Articles published as conceptual essays or commentaries are not included.¹ (See Figure 1)

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

STUDY METHOD

As noted above, articles published in two peer-reviewed journals owned by the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)—the Public Administration Review (PAR) and Public Integrity (PI)—are the primary sources for this review.² Both journals seek to publish research that bridges theory and practice, thus targeting both the academic and practitioner communities. PAR, with a 75-year history, is widely regarded as the journal of record for research on public administration issues broadly construed. PI is a relatively new journal launched as an annual publication in 1996 and transformed into a quarterly in 1999.

PI has become the journal of choice for many American and non-American public
administration ethics scholars. Indeed non-American contributors for the 10 year period under study are drawn from 16 different countries—The Netherlands (20), England (7), Canada (6), Australia (6), Denmark (3), Germany (2), Finland (2), South Korea (2) with one each from China, Israel, Romania, Hungary, Estonia, Singapore, Sweden, and Belgium. While this diversity is not necessarily representative of ethics contributors across the globe, it can certainly be concluded that research published in PI over the past decade is not limited to the American experience.

A similar conclusion can be asserted for PAR. A recent (2011) stock taking of PAR published research by Jos C. N. Raadschelders and Kwang-Hoon Lee reported that foreign academics authored or co-authored 131 articles among the 904 total publications for the period 2000-2009. “Foreign contributions mostly came from the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, China, Hong Kong, and South Korea” (2011: 22). And, as suggested previously, PAR topics range from management (n=112) to ethics (n=22) to terrorism (n=5) and more. Ethics articles ranked 10th in the number of publications with 22 counted among the 601 in the total set.

Definition of Research

While a definition of research might seem obvious, it is not so. Some might contend that if the scientific method is not used the research does not pass the test of being research. No research question, no hypothesis, no data disqualifies a paper or article as research. Others might argue for a much broader definition, perhaps one that encompasses conceptual papers, field reports, or literature based papers that advance knowledge in the field. As Public Integrity’s Founding Editor James S. Bowman (2014) puts it, there is no single best definition. He prefers the following: "Research" includes any scholarly effort to advance the literature regardless of
method. A commentary, in contrast, is an opinion or advocacy piece. Stuart C. Gilman (2014a) favors a broad definition to include “any published work that adds to the knowledge of the field.” The “slippery slope” with the broad definition is the matter of determining if knowledge has been added to the field. Of course, the peer review process is, in principle, the filter for determining “new” knowledge.

For purposes here, a research article is defined as one that involves the systematic investigation of a problem or issue (implies a research question) and draws on empirical observation that may or may not include quantitatively oriented data. The matter of judging whether or not knowledge has been added to the field is not included. This definition encompasses a variety of research methods—case studies, surveys, and experimental or quasi-experimental methods—but excludes commentaries, essays, and concept papers that are advocacy in nature.

After a careful inspection of research articles, featured papers, cases, and field reports in the journal Public Integrity, 123 pieces were judged to be “research” and are the subject of the review and assessment that follows. Nineteen PAR ethics articles published for the period 2005-2014 were similarly judged to be “research”, a number consistent with that (n=22) reported by Raadschelders and Lee for the overlapping period 2000-2009. A handful of articles dealing with ethics education or methodology are excluded because they did not fit a given theme (see Jacobs 2014; von Maravić 2008-9; de Graaf and van Exel 2008-9).

**FINDINGS**

Table 1 shows seven research themes, broadly defined, in PI and PAR for the ten-year period 2005-2014. The themes are neither mutually exclusive nor categorical in nature. Thus a given article might fit in more than one theme. Consider the research by Hassan, Wright, and Yukl
(2014). Their study of the effect of ethical leadership on organizational commitment, absenteeism, and willingness to report ethical problems bridges primarily the themes of ethics management and organizational performance.

So what might the theme data in Table 1 and its companion Figure 1 suggest? First, there is no consistent progression of research effort within a given theme over time. Second, nonetheless, the totals over time indicate that two themes, the “ethical environment” and “policy ethics”, received the greatest attention with “ethics management” trailing in the number three spot. The theme “ethical decision making and moral development” received the least research attention in this period, a somewhat surprising finding given the attention focused on this theme in previous reviews.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Figure 2 also illustrates the interest in the several themes, with an understanding of the ethical environment gathering most attention for the period under study. Additionally, there appears to be a clear correlation between thematic patterns in both PI and PAR. In other words, while PI is the more specialized journal and therefore likely to publish more ethics research than PAR, the ethics research published in PAR touches on every theme except globalization.

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Further, while all research pieces meet the criteria to be labeled “research,” they do so in a variety of ways. For example, 47 explicitly state the research question(s) and 18 specify an
hypothesis (see Behnke 2007-8; Caillier 2012-13; Gómez-Vilchis 2012; Grobman 2007; Lavena 2013; Jung, Strate, Leidlein 2007; van Montfort, Beck, Twijnstra 2013; Peters, Filipova 2009; Strate, Jung, Leidlein 2009-10; Wong 2007; Yeager, Hildreth, Miller, Rabin 2007). The scientific research design is employed but in a modest manner.

**Study Methods**

Qualitative and quantitative methods are used in ethics research with both used quite often in the same study. A qualitative case study involving a single unit of analysis such as a country, state, or city may also include a survey with statistical analysis (see Gómez-Vilchis 2012—Mexico; Kaptein, Huberts, Avelino, Lasthuizen 2005—United States; Moldovan and van de Walle 2013—City of Târgu Mures, Romania).

Qualitative studies involving cases have grown considerably in number and complexity with 56 of the 109 studies including cases. The cases are quite diverse and range from a study of a single individual(s) (see Dryburgh 2009—two prison guards at California’s Corcoran State Prison; Lyon 2006-7—United Nation’s Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold; Wheeland 2013—township manager Gregory G. Smith) to a single state, county, or organization—(see Koven 2007—Kentucky; Menzel 2009—Pinellas County, Florida; Sulzner 2009—the Canadian Office of Public Service Integrity Officer). There is little question that ethics scholarship employing cases has traveled a huge distance over the past fifteen years. Ethics scholars have responded to the 1999 call for “contextually rich case studies” with energy and enthusiasm.

The question of whether or not the field has moved “far enough” in methodological rigor remains a matter of debate. Menzel’s 1999 review called for greater methodological rigor and pointed to the absence of trend or longitudinal analysis. A more recent review by Patrick von Maravić (2008-09) asserts that “the methodology of administrative ethics research is dominated
by descriptive hypotheses, small-and medium-n analysis, single-country/single-shot research
designs and document analysis as data collection instruments” (2008-09:9). Von Maravić calls
for greater methodological rigor and pluralism, perhaps drawing on research designs and
approaches used in other disciplines (e.g., business ethics, sociology, economics, anthropology,
political science) (26).

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

The 2005 review found that the research underway in this thematic field focused
primarily on the individual decision maker. A handful of studies over the past ten years continue
with this focus. Consider Pamela A. Gibson’s (2009) study of the moral reasoning of federal
ethics advisors and counselors in the United States government. What level of moral reasoning,
she asks, do Designated Agency Ethics Officials (DAEO) exhibit? After all she notes DAEOs
are charged with teaching and counseling thousands of federal employees annually about how to
resolve dilemmas they may experience. Shouldn’t we, she queries, have a greater understanding
of the moral development of DAEOs considering the influence they may have on others in their

Her study utilized the Stewart-Sprinthall Management Survey (SSMS) instrument to
measure the moral reasoning of a sample of ethics officials drawn from a population of 231
identified officials. One hundred officials returned surveys. Her key finding was that the
majority of DEAOs reason at the Kohlbergian Stage 4 (law and order). The principal factor that
contributes to this level of reasoning, she contends, is the organizational culture. Other possible
influences such as age, gender, or length of years working in the public or private sector do not
contribute to the DAEOs moral development Her study, while exploring an important
population, did not track the influence that DAEOs may have on those they instruct—surely an
important, neglected matter.

A different approach to exploring ethical decision-making is reflected in Susan E. Zinner’s (2014) ideographic study of the historical figure Florence Nightingale (1820-1910). Born into wealth and social standing in British society, she led a life dedicated to improving the lives of the poor and uneducated and, along the way, became an innovator that improved health services at many European hospitals. Zinner concludes that Florence Nightingale was an extraordinary example of a moral exemplar in her community and in her profession” (420). She was driven by a passionate belief that she could make a difference in the lives of others and “spoke of her profession [nursing] in near-religions terms” (414). Religious inspiration served as the motivation for her work.

Gibson and Zinner’s studies, and others that will surely follow, serve as a potent reminder that the moral self resides within the individual. Nonetheless, there has been a discernable shift in research in this thematic area over the past decade. A much greater emphasis has been placed on the context or circumstances in which ethical decision-making occurs (see de Graaf 2010; O’Leary 2009; Miller, Yeager, Hildreth, and Rabin 2005; Newbold 2005).

Consider Boin and Nieuwenburg’s (2013) study of ethical and moral decision issues in crises situations. First responders (those who are first to arrive at the scene of a horrific event such as the World Trade Center attack on 911 or Hurricane Katrina’s land fall in New Orleans) and others must act with speed and discretion to do whatever is necessary to save lives and minimize damage. Encountered along the way are most likely questions of ethical or moral judgment. Consider the nurse at the scene of mass casualties who has to triage victims or the firefighter who has saved a child from a burning house having to decide whether to enter the burning building again to search for more children. Boin and Nieuwenburg (2013) draw on the New
Orleans Memorial Hospital tragedy in which hospital officials had to decide whether to remove or keep in place patients, many who were frail or in near death condition. After the hospital was finally evacuated, forty-five patients were found in and removed from a makeshift morgue. This nightmarish situation placed hospital staff in the dual role of medical professional and first-responder confronted by the horrifying dilemma of hasting the demise of dying patients or abandoning them in inhumane conditions.

This example, of course, raises the question of “how do first-responders make a moral judgment to resolve a painful dilemma?” Boin and Nieuwenburg (2013:379) conclude that while it is impossible to provide first-responders with step-by-step guidance on how to approach and resolve moral dilemmas in advance of a crisis, organizations and institutions can, if they take seriously the task of identifying the potential for insoluble dilemmas, prepare employees for the challenge of making a decision in a crisis situation (380).

A second example of new directions in research on ethical decision-making is suggested by Leslie E. Sekerka and Roxanne Zolin (2007) in their intriguing study of rule-bending. Rules, of course, are everywhere including those that prescribe right behavior and proscribe wrong behavior. How many times are we told to “stay out of trouble by following the rules?” Yet rules can and are broken but is there a middle ground? Can rule-bending justify a lack of compliance and also be consistent with values held by the individual or embraced by one’s organization? This is the fascinating domain investigated by Sekerka and Zolin.

The research questions posed by Sekerka and Zolin are: 1) When and why do employees bend rules? 2) Do they use prudential judgment in their decision-making process? 3) Do people who bend the rules see rule-bending as a threat to the organization? Their exploratory study examined the responses of ten randomly selected Department of Defense acquisition
managers enrolled in a graduate course at a government educational institution. The study respondents were asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions concerning rule-bending in the workplace. “The responses were studied to see whether the respondents applied prudential judgment in their decision-making process and whether they viewed their rule-bending as a threat to their organization” (2007:231). Their findings are too detailed to summarize here.

Suffice it to say that among the key findings is the centrality of prudential judgment in making ethical decisions. What is prudential judgment? Sekreka and Zolin note it is based on virtue ethics and has two key features: 1) practical deliberation and 2) consideration of others (232). “Employees who use prudential judgment,” they assert, “are more likely to recognize the threat to their organization posed by rule-bending.” And, conversely, “employees who view rule-bending as a threat to their organization are more likely to use prudential judgment” (239).

Yet another example of contextual influences on ethical decision making is a study of whistleblowing by Heumann, Friedes, Cassak, Wright, and Joshi (2014). Their research explored the “goals, motivations, and contexts that define whistleblowing” (25). Drawing on both quantitative (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board data) and qualitative data (interviews), they built a typology that differentiates five types of whistleblowers that, in their judgment, “defines whistleblowing more precisely than earlier studies . . . [and] allows for a more complex portrayal of the world of whistleblowing” (45).

ETHICS LAWS AND REGULATORY AGENCIES

Research on ethics laws and regulatory agencies continue to occupy the time and attention of investigators with twenty-two articles appearing in PI-PAR for this study period. Of course, neither Public Integrity nor the Public Administration Review are law journals. Thus, the articles in PI-PAR on law accent law as public policy, not legalism. They typically coalesce around—
corruption, reform, laws, and codes of ethics, with one new subtopic in the mix—integrity systems.

**Corruption and Reform Studies**

There is near universal agreement that corruption undermines public trust and confidence in government placing a stain on the body politic that is very difficult to remove. Corruption, to put it plainly, is a huge impediment to good governance. That being said, the good news is that ethics scholars are conducting comparative studies that indeed may lead to new knowledge and understanding about what can be done to abate if not stop corruption. Consider the Ryan, Alatorre, and Schreckhise (2006) comparative case study of the states of Jalisco, Mexico, and Arkansas. Their study compares the trigger events and policy evolution that brought about the Arkansas Ethics Commission and the Transparency Law of Jalisco. Both states experienced rising popular disgust with persistent corruption and “the failure of policymakers to address ethical concerns with anything more than half-hearted and ineffective measures” (2006:360). Thus, the context for reform was set. The study stops short of producing evidence that the reforms have brought about a reduction in corruption, but the authors are optimistic that a foundation has been built for a different future.

Another comparative American state study by Liu and Mikesell (2014) examined how corruption impacted U.S. state spending. Their hypotheses testing research used an econometric model to find that “States with higher levels of corruption are likely to favor capital, construction, highways, total salaries and wages, borrowing, correction, and police protection, at the expense of social sectors such as total education, elementary and secondary education, health, and hospitals” (352-353).
**Code Studies**

There is certainly no shortage of interest in studying codes of ethics within and among different populations—professional associations, non-profits, and governments. What specifically are code studies focusing on and what are we learning? Grobman’s (2007) study of nonprofit, tax-exempt membership associations examined 150 association ethics codes in order to understand if the code contents differed because of the nature of the principal constituencies. The primary research question was: “do the codes of ethics of U.S.-based national and international membership associations . . . differ from each other based upon whether their memberships consist of principally nonprofit, for-profit, or government organization or those employed by these sectors?” (2007:249). Following a statistical analysis in which 34 hypotheses were tested, he found that “the role of a professional or trade association clearly affects the content of its code” (257). Among the findings, for example, he reports that “no government code had a direct reference to sexual misconduct” whereas nonprofit codes often do have such a reference (257).

Another code study conducted by Jolanta Palidauskaite (2005-6) compared ethics codes among ten Central and East European countries that are in transition to democracies. The research questions included: “What is the purpose of ethics codes and how clearly is the purpose stated in documents? What are the central values or principles in the codes? How are conflicts of interest addressed? Do the codes have sanctions? How are they implemented?” Her extensive study of enabling laws and documents found that a) conduct codes rather than ethics codes were adopted in some countries such as Bulgaria, b) the majority have clearly formulated objectives, c) a few codes (Romania and Slovakia) attempt to strike a balance between inspiration, guidance, and regulation, d) there is wide variation in the topics such as sanctions covered in the codes, and e) codes are administered either through an impartial
council or board (Slovakia, Romania, Lithuania) or “individuals can be left on their own to interpret and apply the code of ethics” (Poland, Bulgaria, Czech, Estonia, Latvia) (45). These countries, she concludes, remain in transition to more mature democracies and have not altogether cast aside the guiding values of the former Soviet-type regime: loyalty, serving the state and party interest, and obedience. Yet, the values embodied in the codes as a whole are suggestive that change is happening in line with common practices in Western countries that stress professionalism, rule of law, and public interest values.

Code studies that compare and contrast similarities and differences across countries, organizations, and public service professions rightly have their place in ethics scholarship. The thorny question, if not bottom line, however, is: do ethics codes make a difference? Do they matter? Efforts to answer these questions typically fall on shallow empirical grounds for several reasons. First, measurement is complex. Second, the ability to ferret out multiple causes is also complex. Consider, for example, the challenge to demonstrate that an intervention such as the adoption of a code produces less unethical behavior. Could not the same difficult to measure result occur because of efforts to recruit employees with higher ethical standards or a determined effort by management to foster a stronger ethical culture or just plain chance?

Then there is the matter of what constitutes ethical competence. This issue has received scant attention in the public administration literature. One exception is the effort by Manfred F. Meine and Thomas P. Dunn (2013) to examine the content of ethics codes across public service professions. They ask, “Do ethics codes facilitate the development of ethical competence or improve ethical behavior?” Their study focused on two categories of codes—aspirational and operational—adopted by professional associations whose members are typically public administration practitioners. The International Association of Chiefs of Policy and the American
Society for Public Administration have adopted aspirational codes (e.g., do good, be good codes) while the International City/County Management Association, the American Planning Association, and the National Association of Social Workers possess operational codes (e.g., directly regulate behavior often with sanctions for violations). After examining these codes and others, Meine and Dune (2013) conclude that the verdict is still out regarding whether or not codes, regardless of their aspirational or operational qualities, contribute to achieving ethical competence defined as:

1. Having subject matter knowledge of codes and standards;
2. Strengthening reasoning skills and the ability to identify difficult ethics situations;
3. Strengthening problem solving skills in situation where ethics standards and codes and various interests must be considered;
4. Strengthening the ability to advocate for principled decisions;
5. Building self-awareness and consensus building skills; and
6. Strengthening ethics focused attitudes and commitment. (May, et. al., 2010)

“In the final analysis,” Meine and Dune (2013:164) contend, “the intuitive notion that codes play an important role in achieving ethical competence must be tempered by the realization that they are but one part of the overall effort . . . both aspirational and operational codes can play a meaningful role in the development of ethical competence . . . “ Their study brings welcome attention to the matter of ethical competence but stops short of reaching a more definitive conclusion about codes and competence. That being said, understanding the conditions and circumstances that encourage public administrators to strive for ethical competence is a glaring omission in public administration ethics research.
Laws and Regulatory Bodies

Ethics laws often create ethics commissions and boards whose purpose is to encourage ethical behavior and discourage unethical behavior. All too often, however, the emphasis is placed solely on “discouraging” unethical behavior through a laundry list of rules, regulations, and penalties. This compliance approach often fosters “low road” behavior and sometimes, leads to creative rule dodging. Still, the intent is meritorious even if the results are not always so.

The ethics laws and regulatory bodies that have been studied over the past decade are plentiful and diverse. Among those that take aim at ethics laws, Robert Roberts’ study (2012) explores the Skilling v. United States (2010) ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court that limited the use of the honest service doctrine of the federal mail fraud statute to prosecute state and local officials on public corruption charges. Kelly Saunders and Joanne Thibault (2010) examine the Canadian Public Servants Disclosure Protection Acts’ amendments in 2007 that “protect” federal whistleblowers. Stan Hok-Wui Wong (2007) turns his attention to British common law in a cross-national analysis to determine whether jury trials and professional judgeship affect the level of corruption. He concludes “it is the common law institutions, not the common law itself, that predict perceived corruption” (133). Further, his study of two judicial institutions—jury trials and professional judgeship—found that jury trials reduce corruption by decentralizing judicial power whereas professional judgeships have the opposite affect because political leaders have the power to appoint (corrupt) judges (148).

Studies of regulatory bodies range from local agencies to national institutions and reach across national borders (see Cowell, Downe, Morgan 2014; Bradbury 2007; Pelizzon and Ang 2008; Ryan, Alatorre, Schreckhise 2006; and Segal 2010). Mark D. Bradbury’s study examined U.S. state government ethics enforcement with data drawn from the Pennsylvania State Ethics
Commission. His study looked at the issuance of advisory opinions, the investigation of alleged violations, and the formal orders containing findings of fact and conclusions of law. He concludes that cost effectiveness analysis of state ethics regulation is much amiss, even if done on a state specific basis as he did in Pennsylvania. The Pelizzo and Ang (2008) study surveyed a different kind of regulatory body—the Indonesian parliament. Their survey compared Indonesian MPs’ responses with similar responses of British MPs (see Mancuso 1993, 1995). Pelizzon and Ang conclude “Indonesian MPs have lower levels of tolerance for corruption and other forms of misconduct than their British counterparts” (268). More importantly, Indonesian MPs with their more heterogeneous standards compared to the British are not likely to support the “adoption and effective enforcement of a code of legislative conduct in Indonesia” (268).

Lydia Segal’s (2010) research focused on ten offices of inspector general in the United States to determine the independence that these offices possess from political influence. Her findings indicate that inspectors generals enjoy some integrity protection but not as much as one might surmise.

**Integrity Systems**

A handful of ethics scholars have opened a new line of inquiry by focusing on the “big” picture—the ethics infrastructure or system—with linkage to reform. Interest in conceptualizing and building “good” societies with a strong ethics infrastructure was undoubtedly prompted in part by the breakup of the Soviet bloc in the late 1980s and 1990s. The democratization movement, as it is sometimes labeled, found fertile ground in emerging countries around the globe in the decades that followed. Thus early efforts to describe and account for integrity reform and desired change found expression in the metaphor of the “Greek Temple” whose pillars (institutions, laws, values) needed to function effectively to ensure a satisfactory quality
of life for the masses (Pope 2000).

The Greek Temple metaphor spawned interest in National Integrity country studies sponsored by Transparency International. Since 2001, more than 70 National Integrity System (NIS) country studies have been conducted (Lewis, Shacklock, Connors, and Sampford 2013:244). One NIS country study has been published in Public Integrity. Melea Jane Lewis and colleagues (2013) describe the study methodology and assessment of the National Integrity System of Georgia. They note that the Georgia country study builds on their experience conducting an NIS study in their home country Australia.

Dutch scholars were also busy during the past decade in conceptualizing and studying Local Integrity Systems (LISs). Leo W.J.C. Huberts and Frédérique E. Six (2012) sketched out a framework to assess LISs from their inductive study of seven cities around the world—Hong Kong, Sydney, New York, London, Antwerp, Hamburg, and Amsterdam. Their framework contains nine elements grouped in three clusters: setting the stage, how the system works, and performance.

Alain Hoekstra and Muel Kaptein (2013), also Netherlands’ based scholars, have been equally interested in local government integrity and have studied Dutch local government organizations. They asked: “What does it take to institutionalize integrity in local government?” One size does not fit all, they conclude. Indeed, they note that while local government integrity plans in the Netherlands have been obligatory for some years, there is considerable diversity in their implementation. Still, they identify three key elements of an integrity plan: 1) ambition including mission and vision, 2) organization including strategy and means, and 3) efforts including monitoring, reporting, evaluating.
ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Are high performing organizations infused with strong ethical cultures? Does an organization’s ethical culture, for better or worse, matter? Does ethical leadership make a difference in workplace behavior? These important, demanding questions have certainly drawn the attention of ethics scholars but, that being said, what more do we know now than we did a decade ago? The 2005 review closed the discussion in this area by noting, “The studies reported here are promising, but much more needs to be done” (Menzel 2005:156). Indeed, much more has been done over the past ten years. Let’s take a look at a set of studies completed since the previous review.

Three studies in particular explore the connection between the ethical culture and organizational performance. James P. Pfiffner (2005) examines the evidence on the abuse and torture of prisoners by U.S. military personnel at Abu Ghraib, Iraq, in 2003. Torture and abuse was not merely a product of a few bad apples but rather a bad barrel. His examination of official actions including memoranda, policy changes, and command changes “set the conditions for the abuse and torture of detainees” (314). Stated differently, the ethical culture was so weak, perhaps nonexistent, to encourage lower echelon soldiers to perform in a morally objectionable manner. Peter Verhezen (2008) explores organizational culture in terms of integrity viewed as both an end and a means to an end. As an end, the pursuit of integrity contributes to improved organizational reputation that, in turn, may contribute to higher organizational performance in delivering goods and services to stakeholders. That being said, the “positive image of integrity as good reputation may have an empowering influence that has the risk of simply becoming a buzz word to justify utilitarian, if not “fashionable ethical discourse that does not really foster a higher standard of organizational ethics” (143).
Two other studies point even more directly to the linkage between a strong ethical culture and organizational performance. Samuel J. Yeager, W. Bartley Hildreth, Gerald J. Miller, and Jack Rabin (2007) studied the effects of a supervisory emphasis on ethical guidance versus political responsiveness in a sample of public finance employees. Higher ranked members of an organization are often role models that lower level members look to in their pronouncements and behavior. The authors mail-back survey to nearly 2,000 government finance officers yielded a response rate of 22.47 percent. The responses enabled the researchers to measure the emphasis placed by supervisors to encourage employees to act ethically and track the emphasis supervisors placed on political responsiveness in employee evaluation. The results clearly document the fact that supervisors are important actors that set the tone for the organization (277). And, most importantly they conclude “a supervisor’s effort to encourage employees to act ethically overwhelms any simultaneous emphasis on political responsiveness” (277). The bottom line: “only ethical guidance yields consistently positive work outcomes” (278).

A study by Ruth Ann Strickland and Shannon K. Vaughan (2008) draws on Maslow’s theory of human psychological development to build a model that explains how not-for-profit organizations develop an ethical culture. The authors claim that key ethical ideals and procedures must be internalized in the organization’s everyday operations. An organization that lacks a strong ethical culture, they further assert, can “damage their own interests as well as donor interests and may indirectly harm all others in the third sector” (235). While they do not directly test empirically their model, they do make numerous references to cases and situations in which nonprofits experienced ethical failures.

Perhaps the study with the most compelling results is the Hassan, Wright, Yukl (2014)
investigation of the impact of ethical leadership on workplace behavior. They surveyed 161 managers in a large state (American) government agency and reviewed reports and personnel records. They hypothesized that ethical leadership (1) increases the willingness of public sector employees to report ethical problems to management, (2) strengthens the organizational commitment of employees, and (3) reduces the frequency of absenteeism. Ethical leadership was defined in terms of “being a role model for others, treating people fairly, and actively managing ethics in the organization” (334). All hypotheses were found to be supported by the statistical findings. These compelling results are limited, of course, to one organization and await confirmation by other studies that will surely follow.

The studies reported here are promising, although a good deal more needs to be done to understand the critical links between ethics and organizational performance.

ETHICS MANAGEMENT

Ethics management might be considered either “new” wine in an “old” bottle or “old” wine in a “new” bottle. It’s probably some of both, although closer to the former than the latter. The phrase “ethics management” is new wine but the practice is not new. Ethics laws, rules, and regulations and more recently, ethics codes, constitute the “old” ethics management—a passive-aggressive approach with the accent on “do’s” and “don’ts.” Compliance is another name for this approach, typically driven by an ethics failure usually in the form of an egregious act or scandal. In the American experience, decade piled upon decade to make this approach work have led some observers to suggest that the pursuit of absolute integrity can produce just the opposite, i.e., rule dodging, manipulation, corruption, rationalizing unethical acts (see Anechiarico and Jacobs 1996).

Public administration ethics researchers have been aggressive over the past decade
building a body of results and literature that has propelled ethics management to the fore. The emerging consensus is that ethical behavior can be achieved by example and positive inducements (e.g., recognition, training, education) applied at the level of the individual and the organization—good apples and good barrels can be built and sustained. Let’s take a closer look at research that informs us about the what, why, and how of ethics management.

**Leadership**

The search for ethical leaders—who they are and how they become so—continues unabated. One line of promising “new” research in this field focuses on cultural differences in leadership style and effectiveness. Consider the study of Chinese public leadership by Xiao Mingzheng and Wu Xinhui (2014). Their comparative literature study identifies two indigenous research streams developed by Chinese scholars (1) paternalistic--a blend of authoritarianism, benevolence, and morality rooted in the country’s culture, and (2) differential leadership—subordinates are treated differently by leaders “depending on whether or not the subordinate belongs to a favored group” (168). Three factors influence how a leader interacts with followers: *guanxi* (relationship derived from a commonality such as birth place or regional language), loyalty, and competence. Ethical/moral leadership is considered a subtype of paternalistic leadership reflected by Confucian values—harmony, respect, and virtue. “Moral behavior,” assert Mingzheng and Xinhui (169), “has always been regarded as an important factor in the selection and appointment of public leaders . . . the outcome of China’s long tradition of rule not by law but by people . . . [and is] reinforced by the lack of effective legal remedies in modern Chinese society.”

Culture based (see also Bai and Morris 2014; Yang and van der Wal 2014) and contextual studies of leadership are certainly welcome additions to the literature. Much
overlooked yet, however, is what leaders do and can do to cultivate a strong ethical culture that is central to the art and practice of effective ethics management. Indeed, one might go so far as to assert that many in leadership positions in public agencies and nonprofits have limited, perhaps little, awareness of their responsibility to build and sustain organizations of integrity. This deficiency has not gone unrecognized by professional associations.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has been in the forefront of promoting ethics management. Robert D. Eskridge, P. Edward French, and Mary McThomas’ (2012) study of violations by ICMA members of the association’s code of ethics makes it clear that ICMA encourages city managers to live and work more by aspirational, virtue-based tenets than by deontological or act-based tenets. Stated differently, city managers that view their ethics and the ethics of those around them mostly in terms of rules or consequences are likely to fall far short of managing ethically or fostering a strong ethical culture.

A second study conducted (Kaptein, Huberts, Avelino, and Lasthuizen 2005) also draws attention to the importance of managerial awareness of ethics management. Their survey of 344 U.S. public employees found that while the first step in managing ethics may be “to establish a code of conduct, or a document . . . that articulates the organizational values, principles, and standards,” additional steps include providing employee training, setting up a hotline, improving communication about potential ethical problems, and encouraging speaking out about ethically bothersome situations (301).

The summaries above certainly suggest that ethics management is very important and makes a positive difference in workplace behavior and organizational productivity (also see previous theme on organizational performance and Hassan, Wright, Yukl 2014).
**Compliance-Integrity Models**

Much of what passes for ethics management in practice is compliance driven. Why? It is much easier to write laws, regulations, and rules than it is to motivate employees and colleagues to do the “right” thing because, well, it’s the “right” thing to do. Stevulak and Brown (2011:108) add: “It is much easier to develop, promulgate, and apply a new law than to build the character of a public service.” Nonetheless, there has been an increasingly louder call for integrity-driven ethics management. Indeed, there is even growing evidence that practitioner communities are heeding the call. Do these developments come as an either/or option? No—a compelling case can be made for a balance or blend of tools and approaches that embrace both compliance and integrity models.

Jeroen Maesschalck (2005) offers an alternative to the all too often deterministic thinking that presumes a compliance-integrity continuum. He draws on grid-group theory developed in anthropology by Mary Douglas (1978) to expand the compliance-integrity continuum. Grid-group theory when applied to ethics management results in a four-fold typology of management by: 1) contrived randomness (compliance qualities), 2) competition (discourages practices such as nepotism), 3) oversight and review (codes and enforcement), 4) mutuality (integrity qualities and an emphasis on values) (2005:27). He applies this framework to gifting practices and policies to illustrate how it works from an ethics management perspective. He argues that the grid-group approach has two important advantages for both academics and practitioners: 1) it goes beyond the compliance-integrity dichotomy and therefore encourages a creative search for alternatives and 2) the typology “is especially helpful for assessing the consistency of ethics management instruments with other management instruments, the organizational culture, and the environment” (36).
The staying power of the compliance-integrity continuum is substantial as evidenced by research published in *Public Integrity* on efforts to stem corruption in eight countries of the former Soviet Union. Catharine Stevulak and M. Paul Brown (2011) observe that while it is hardly any surprise that—Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Ukraine—would resort to compliance based measures given the authoritarian history of the Soviet Union Yet, the “compliance-based approaches, on their own, were not up to the task of developing ethical public service or good governance” (99). Consequently, they call for an integrity-based approach as the way ahead for building a strong ethical culture in transitional societies. A similar assessment is offered by Peter Fuseini Haruna’s (2008) study of the compliance-integrity continuum and approach taken in Ghana. The experience there with its emphasis on obedience, neutral competence, and performance has not stemmed the downward slide of integrity. Like Maesschalck, Haruna contends that the continuum is too limited. He concludes his study with an endorsement of community-based ethics that can “expand the boundaries of the compliance-integrity model and anchors it in the broader society” (125).

**Training**

Just as ethics codes have found their place in ethics management, training has arrived in full force in many jurisdictions. Yet questions of the content, style, frequency, and effectiveness of training remain problematical. Of course, there is no “one size fits all” training model. The minimalist approach, some might label the low road approach, aims at preventing unethical behavior through ignorance. Employees who do not know or understand what ethic rules and laws say are the primary targets. And, given the complexity of conflicts of interest or disclosure laws, there is certainly justification for a minimalist approach. But a more robust approach seeks
to provide employees with the decision tools to sort through challenging ethical dilemmas and typically attempts to motivate individuals to aspire to a higher standard.

Demonstrating that ethics training makes a difference, as noted, is a challenging task. Consider the research conducted by Heather Wyatt-Nichol and George Franks (2010). They surveyed chiefs of police in 100 U.S. cities with populations ranging from 100,000 to 500,000 (34 responded) to identify the “frequency and administering of ethics training, content and instructional strategies, and perceptions of the value of training” (44). The police chiefs responded with a strong endorsement of the value added by training, indicating that training reinforces written policies of the organization, promotes discussion of ethical issues, and helps officers recognize ethical issues as they arise. They also believe that ethics instruction reduces infractions among officers and encourages officers to be more willing to report unethical behavior. These positive perceptions of training are just that—perceptions.

A study of Dutch training programs involving several hundred municipal civil servants offers a more sobering outcome. Andre Van Montfort, Laura Beck, and Anneke Twijnstra (2013) used both an experimental research design (pre-test/post-test) and postal surveys to determine the effectiveness of ethics training conducted in two Dutch municipalities. Both programs aimed to stimulate the participants’ moral awareness, contribute to their level of moral reasoning, and provide methods to burnish the moral quality of their behavior (120). Did the ethics training, they asked, result in short-term effectiveness? Long-term effectiveness? They defined effectiveness as increasing the level of moral awareness, improving moral reasoning, and elevating the moral quality of the participants behavior (124). The results led them to conclude that the training programs had no long-term effectiveness but did have some short-term effectiveness. They are careful to note that their study results are limited and future
research should focus primarily on the question of whether the ineffectiveness of the Dutch programs can be generalized to all similar integrity-training programs (129).

Workshops are some times used for ethics training. One survey of the 100 largest U.S. local governments found that slightly more than 3 out of 10 said that they regularly conducted ethics workshops (Feldheim and Wang 2004). And, to add uncertainty to the mix, their effectiveness “remains elusive for some organizations, and others prefer not to know the answer at all” (Kaptein, Humberts, Avelino, and Lasthuizen 2005:301).

These studies beg for considerable more research on the value added of ethics training as an ethics management tool.

Public Values

Ethics has been values infused for centuries and normative theories are replete with values. Yet, a close look at *PI-PAR* articles over the past decade would certainly suggest that values have been rediscovered as central to nearly all public administration matters and most certainly a centerpiece in ethics management. So what is new compared to a decade or more ago?

Two items stand out—treating and studying values as a 1) common core and 2) multi-national if not multi-cultural. Zeger Van Der Wal, Aive Pevkur, and Karsten Vrangbaek’s (2008) study of value congruence among old and new European Union member states illustrates both points. In particular, they describe an empirical study of public sector values in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Estonia, a new member of the European Union. Their two-part principal research question is: “How similar or dissimilar are the public sector value orientations among these three countries, and how consistent are those values with those of European Union member states? Their study methodology involved surveys of public sector managers in the Netherlands (n=231), Denmark (n=290), and Estonia (n=297). The results identified similarities
and differences but overall a “considerable amount of congruence . . . “ (329). The differences turned primarily on the influence of the New Public Management with its emphasis on business values (e.g., Denmark). With regard to consistency with European Union values at large, the investigators conclude there is more consistency than the inconsistency.

Values were also the centerpiece of a study of how business and government managers in the Netherlands perceive each other’s value orientations. Zeger Van Der Wal and Gjalt De Graaf (2007) surveyed more than 200 top-level government officials and 151 business executives to map value orientations. The main research question was: “Which organizational values are deemed most important for the public sector by private sector managers, and which organizational values are deemed most important for the private sector by public sector managers?” (46) This question was followed by: “How do government and business managers themselves actually perceive one another’s morality?” (49) The answer to this last question is consistent with the conventional view in the public administration literature that civil servants view private sector managers as less honest and prone to corruption. “Private sector managers view the public sector as less effective, accountable, and guided by expertise . . . and more in favor of transparency than government managers perceive it” (56).

These studies suggest that managers may need to keep a watchful eye on a workforce that may (self) presume to be ethnically superior to those they serve. Moreover, sound ethics management requires recognizing that private sector actors, especially in the business world, often do not share common core values with public sector actors and organizations.

The study of public values, including businesslike values, also served as the central focus of Evan Berman and Jonathan West’s (2012) investigation of senior managers in U.S. special districts, public organizations that are largely invisible to citizens and often overlooked
by public administration scholars. A mail survey was conducted among 485 large special districts in the United States with responses received from 217 agency directors. “Public values,” Berman and West assert, “give government organizations their distinctive public purposes, such as commitment to accountability, openness, inclusiveness (stakeholder participation), equity, and the pursuit of community and public benefits” (44). Values such as these are associated with ethical considerations, decision-making styles, and achieving outcomes. Their study results documented that among special district managers there is a strong commitment to public values, despite the commonly held view that “special districts are overly responsive to and influenced by business and other private interests” (50).

Several investigators explored the religious/spiritual values held by those in public service occupations to determine how religious they might be and to speculate about the impact of religiosity on the delivery of public services. Houston, Freeman, and Feldman (2008) analyzed responses to questions contained in the 1998 General Social Survey (1,322 respondents) about the religiosity of public servants and non-public servants. Among other things, their findings indicate that individuals employed in public service occupations, especially those typically found in government, are more religious than those in other occupations. While the data did not enable them to assess the impact that religiosity may have on the delivery of public services, they contend that it is a positive impact, especially in building public trust in government.5

THE ETHICAL ENVIRONMENT

Individuals, organizations, and institutions are subject to a myriad of tensions, pressures, and influences in their socio-economic-political environments. Therefore, it is not surprising that
ethics scholars have a deep seated interest in exploring that part of the environment that may shape one’s ethical worldview and create practical limits on the operational definition of right and wrong behavior. Nor is it altogether surprising that so many articles (n=61) published in *PI-PAR* focused in part or entirely on the ethical environment over the past decade (See Table 1). The range of topics include ethics as contributing to good governance, public trust, responsible citizenship, democracy, community, transparency, and whistleblowing. The 2005 review concluded, “There can be little argument . . . about the need to more fully understand what community leaders can and should do to foster ethical and trustworthy government. And, by the same measure, what government leaders need to do to build trustworthy relationships with members of their communities” (Menzel:162).

**Trust, Community, Citizenship**

Public trust and confidence in governments at all levels in the United States and in some countries abroad is at an all time low. The reasons are many with perhaps the foremost being the one-two punch of 1) the perception if not reality that those in public office have lost their way ethically and morally and 2) the commodification of citizenship. The establishment and growth of walled communities (gated housing subdivisions) and privately managed communities enables residents to buy into a form of commoditized citizenship. Martijn van der Steen, Mark van Twist, and Philip Marcel Karré (2011) present an intriguing assessment of 129 privately run communities in the Netherlands. “In private communities,” they note, “citizens subject themselves to their own rules and decide who they want to live with (and who to keep outside the community)” (324). This view of citizenship treats citizens as primarily consumers of security, norms, and values that may not coincide, most likely do not coincide, with the citizen as a contributor to the commonweal. Disengagement from the community and public life offers
little in the way of trustworthiness toward government or governance. “Privately managed communities,” assert van der Steen, van Twist, and Karrê, “are criticized based on the idea that groups of citizens retreating from society and establishing their own rules is in itself unethical” (327).

The matter of whether public trust and confidence in government has diminished because public officials have lost their way ethically and morally is a more controversial issue as it is freighted with political ideology, moral ambiguity, and social divisiveness. Still, there is certainly some evidence that lends credence to this proposition. Consider Donald C. Menzel’s (2009) case study of ethical illiteracy in local governance. The case involved educated, politically astute elected and appointed county officials in a professionally managed local government who found themselves invoking the oft used “5th amendment” when there was no other direction to turn—“I didn’t do anything unethical, illegal, or immoral.” Suffice it to say that the story turned on the actions of the property appraiser to sell his private property to the county. And, when the story played itself out, there was much blood on the floor; the county attorney and administrator resigned, the property appraiser forgoes running for a 5th term of office, and a Grand Jury presentment concludes that “the breath of scandal surrounding this affair . . . will have a lasting impact on how the citizens of Pinellas County view its officials and government” (376). A distraught citizen chimes in, this “sort of back-door deal causes residents to distrust the commission . . . a wink and a nod won’t do” (375). Did Pinellas County officials lose their way ethically? So it would seem. Was public trust diminished? Most likely.

The downward slide in public trust and upswing in citizen cynicism in public affairs are certainly troubling matters. Moreover, as Curtis Ventris (2012) pointedly notes the resurrection of democratic citizenship and public ethics will not be accomplished by
“managerial approaches, technical competency, and adherence to procedural rules” (283)

Rather, a serious approach is needed that will infuse the “values of trust, respect, openness, obligation, and adherence to the highest ethical standards in public service” (295). Debating and building such an approach, he acknowledges, will not be easy and is fraught with many difficulties. Yet, “at this propitious moment when public trust in government is at a long-time low, such a debate is urgently overdue” (295).

David J. Houston and Lauren Howard Harding’s (2014) study of public trust in government administrators offers a positive note toward resolving the trust-building challenge. “How much trust do citizens have in government administrators, and what explains the variation in their attitudes?” (53) Drawing on General Social Survey data, they find that “the trustworthiness of administrators is more positive than what might be generally thought.” (53) The link between public trust placed in civil servants to do their job competently and the trust placed in government more generally, they conclude, must be built on a vision of public service grounded in democratic values. Houston and Harding do not believe that efforts to enhance the competency of government administration alone are sufficient to overcome citizen distrust of government.

Still, there is little question that, as Wang and Van Wart’s (2007) national survey of large U.S. cities found, “public trust increases when public officials demonstrate integrity, honesty, and moral leadership and when ethics are institutionalized in government through the process of participation” (276).

Transparency, Disclosure, and Good Governance

Research on these topics is not plentiful but is robust and growing (see Justice and McNutt 2013-14). Carolyn Ball (2009) brings attention to the multiple definitions of transparency from a
post-modern perspective. Three metaphors encompass the full meaning of transparency as: 1) “a public value embraced by society to counter corruption, 2) synonymous with open decision-making by governments and nonprofits, and 3) a complex tool of good governance in programs, policies, organization, and nations (293”). Stated differently, transparency is connected with accountability in the first metaphor, with concerns for secrecy and privacy in the second, and with efficiency and effectiveness in the third metaphor.

Thomas C. Ellington (2013) takes on the challenge of assessing the transparency commitment, or lack thereof, of the Obama administration. Presidential candidate Barack Obama promised that if elected he would have the most transparent administration in history. Ellington zeros in on how the Obama administration treats decisions to classify, declassify, or over classify documents as secret. He then examines the effort by the Obama administration to prosecute accused leakers. Leaking classified information is common practice in Washington, although the Edward J. Snowden controversy in leaking more than a million classified files is unusual in magnitude. The data assembled by Ellington’s study points to a mixed record by the Obama administration. “The Obama administration,” Ellington concludes, “has taken some steps toward greater transparency . . . [but] the aggressive pursuit of leak suspects in criminal court went beyond anything seriously contemplated by even the very opaque Bush administration” (144). Is the Obama administration becoming the most transparent administration in history? Not likely, Ellington writes.

Transparency, disclosure, and high ethical standards are surely the ingredients of good governance. Maybe, maybe not but it is difficult to imagine governance that anyone would define as “good” without these ingredients. To be certain, governance that improves the living standards of ordinary people (think China), provides and produces public services that are
affordable and cost effective, and promotes justice and fairness is surely good governance as well. Are there common principles of good governance, Veerle van Doeveren (2011) asks in “Rethinking Good Governance.” His study reviewed the meaning attached to good governance by the World Bank, the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations (UN), and a handful of leading scholars. While there are some conflicting ideas about good governance, there are five principles around which there is some convergence. The five principles that constitute a common core are 1) accountability, 2) efficiency and effectiveness, 3) openness and transparency, 4) participation, and 5) rule of law. Other principles beside the common core identified by the organizations and scholars include: the absence of corruption, equity and inclusiveness, human rights, and devolution. He notes that only the scholars in his review identified human rights and devolution as components of good governance.

A second study of good governance by Torben Beck Jørgensen and Ditte-Lene Sørensen (2013) examined fourteen national codes of good governance—Italy, Spain, Denmark (codes in 2005 and 2007), Norway, Estonia, Poland, Romania, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Korea, South Africa, and Turkey. They also compared the country codes with the “Model Code of Conduct for Public Officials” published by the European Council (2000) and the “International Code of Conduct for Public Officials” published by the United Nations (1996). While there is national variation among the codes, Jørgensen and Sørensen find that “they match with the international model codes from the UN and the European Council and the conceptions of good governance launched by the OECD, IMF, World Bank, UN, and EU” (87). Did their study identify a set of global public values? They believe the answer is “yes.” Further confirmation is offered by Carol W. Lewis and Stuart C. Gilman (2005) who contend that “the
core values of honesty, transparency, and professionalism” are shared by professionals across the globe and is “associated with their role and training rather than with cultural particulars” (331).

**POLICY ETHICS**

As reported in Table 1 research on policy ethics occupies the number two spot in the number of articles appearing in *PI-PAR* over the past decade. The 1999 review did not discuss policy ethics in any depth for the simple reason that there was little in the literature. The review did note in closing that there is a rapidly growing body of research literature on this subject. Further, the review asserts, “the terrain here is most intriguing but largely unmapped” (Menzel 1999:163). Neither the times nor the literature stand still. Much change is evident in publications in *Public Integrity* and *PAR* as the policy topics listed in Table 2 illustrate.

**TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE**

Given the diversity in policy topics, what can be said about the substance of the research from an ethics perspective? First, the methodologies are as diverse as the topics ranging from historical documents to case studies to surveys to hypothesis testing. Second, the normative foci include utilitarianism, moralism, public interest, and virtue/character building. Perhaps a better way to answer the question raised above is to take a closer look at a handful of studies (see also French and Raymond 2009; Lawton and Macaulay 2014).

Saundra J. Reinke’s (2006) study of moral and administrative failure in the shocking case of torture at Abu Ghraib, Iraq, begins with an assessment of the failure of the Department of Defense to provide adequate training in detention or prison operations. Soldiers who abused
prisoners also suffered from leadership oversight, including leaders who were indifferent to the needs and concerns of their subordinates (141). Further administrative complications added confusion to the situation as the relationship between the 800th Military Police Brigade commander, Brigadier General Janis L. Karpinski, and the commander of the 205th Military Intelligence Brigade, Colonel Thomas Pappas, was unclear. While the military police were placed under the command of the military intelligence unit, this put the ranking officer (Karpinski) under the authority of a lower ranked officer (Pappas). These failures and others “resulted in an untrained, undisciplined, and undermanned unit” (143). Furthermore, while the soldiers who abused prisoners were not without fault, the Justice Department’s narrow definition of torture justified the use of coercive interrogation policies and contributed to the conditions that “led to the torture and abuse of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison” (144).

James P. Pfiffner’s (2005) analysis of torture and public policy at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib lends additional credence to moral failure. Pfiffner points to several key legal memoranda that set the conditions for torture: 1) the suspension of the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war and 2) the 50-page, single spaced document written in 2002 by Assistant Attorney General Jay S. Bybee dealing with the question of what would constitute torture under U.S. law. While there is no public evidence that President Bush or Secretary Rumsfeld ordered or condoned the torture of prisoners, civilian and military leaders took seriously the legal memorandum justifying “actionable intelligence” that “set the tone that allowed abuse to occur” (323).

Another study of policy ethics conducted by Norma M. Riccucci (2007) touches on a quite different issue—welfare reform set in motion 1996 with the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). This law brought drastic
changes to welfare policy in the United States, “leading to the complete dismantling of the safety net for poor and needy persons and families” (155). Riccucci asks, can social workers meet their ethical obligations to “enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people,” as called for by the National Association of Social Workers? (155). She collected data through direct observations of the encounters between street-level workers and applicants in county-level welfare agencies in four states: Georgia, Michigan, New York, and Texas. Data were also collected with “paper-and-pencil surveys administered to all workers who had face-to-face contact or interaction with welfare applicants or clients” (159). The survey of 286 workers resulted in 200 responses for a 70 percent response rate.

The findings paint a reassuring picture of how welfare workers view their clients indicating that while welfare workers spend a great deal of time processing applications for aid, as called for by a “host of new and very arduous requirements,” they are also serving the needs and interests of those seeking welfare benefits (170). In other words, welfare workers are finding ways to balance their responsibility to abide by the law and their professional responsibility to address the needs and interests of the clients. They are not, Riccucci concludes, “hiding behind the law to avoid helping their clients receive welfare benefits” (171).

A fourth sampler of policy ethics is Rick S. Kurtz’s (2011) case study of the 2006 British Petroleum (BP) oil spill on Alaska’s North Slope, the largest pipeline incident in a decades-long operating system. How could this spill have happened, Kurtz asks. Why was there such weak regulatory oversight? What happened to the industry’s commitment to environmental protection? These questions motivated Kurtz to examine the relationship between organizational culture, integrity, and a weak regulatory regime (25). A key factor in this incident was the failure of BP’s leadership to embrace the culture of integrity it purported to uphold. Rather,
BP’s modus operandi was reputation management, i.e., a focus on symbolic stories, icons and image building (33). Kurtz’s study provides evidence of the “instrumental role leadership plays in the development or deterioration of organizational integrity” (36). Bluntly put, BP’s emphasis on excessive cost cutting, risk-taking, ignoring of safety concerns, and supposed intimidation, describes an “organizational culture significantly deviating from integrity” (34).

GLOBALIZATION

In 2005, Thomas L. Friedman’s book *The World Is Flat* triggered a wide-ranging discussion and soul searching that captured the attention and imagination of policy makers and ordinary people worldwide. The age of instantaneous communication and high-tech driven information has arrived, and it is flattening political borders and breaking down economic barriers across the globe. Globalization, however, is much more than an economic phenomenon; it is also a cultural phenomenon. And, when the two are fused, as Friedman believes they increasingly are, globalization is transformed into “glocalization” i.e., the absorption of foreign ideas and practices by a culture (325).

Globalization and its stepchild—glocalization—may well be the motivating influence that has resulted in an upsurge of ethics research that explores

- accountability in diverse cultures (Michael 2005),
- shifting images of politics and administration viewed through the Eastern philosophical lens of Yin-Yang (Yang and Holzer 2005),
- integrity systems in the Netherlands (Six, van der Veen, and Kruithof 2012),
- the absorption or rejection of Western compliance-integrity models in Ghana (Haruna 2008),
• ethics norms and infrastructures in Germany and the United States (Behnke 2008),
• regulatory ethics failure in Canada and Israel (Schwartz 2008),
• public sector value congruence in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Estonia (van der Wal, Pevkur, and Vrangbaek 2008),
• differing perspectives on democracy and corruption in Bulgaria (Emerson 2006),
• trust and corporate social responsibility in Portugal (Rego, Sarrico, and Moreira 2006),
• ethics reform and standards in Indonesia (Pelizzo and Ang 2008)
• global standards built on honesty, transparency, and professionalism (Lewis and Gilman 2005).

MOVING FORWARD
The 1999 and 2005 reviews of ethics research in public administration explored primarily empirical research published in several journals. The review and assessment discussed in this article also focuses on research defined broadly as “observable.” Thus articles that contain both qualitative and quantitative data and analytics are included in this review. Given this definition, the answer to the question “what is the primary focus of empirical research on ethics in public administration?” is straightforward. Namely, there is not one primary focus but multiple foci: (1) ethical decision making and moral development, (2) ethics laws and regulatory agencies, (3) organizational performance, (4) ethics management, (5) the ethical environment and two new foci, (6) policy ethics and (7) globalization. Insofar as more attention has been given to one or the other of these, studies of the ethical environment and policy ethics have moved to the fore. The explanation for these trends may well be the result of a greater appreciation for the complexity and interconnectedness of ethics in public governance.

A second question asked at the outset of this review was: “How well does empirical
research inform ethics theory? How well does ethics theory inform empirical research?” The answers to these questions have changed little from the previous reviews. The evidence is mixed. Perhaps this is to be expected given the applied nature of public administration ethics. Still, as recounted in the above pages, theory is not the stepchild to practice but neither is it the driver of research in this field. It is worth restating in this article what was put plainly in the 2005 review: “More theory-observation bridge-building remains to be done by future investigators.”

A third question pursued in this review was: “Are the research findings cumulative? Is progress being made toward building a body of knowledge?” This is a troublesome question to answer given the proliferation of study topics and issues. What we may be witnessing is not the accumulation of knowledge as a linear process but more of a building block approach that resembles attempting to put the pieces of an indeterminable puzzle together. As noted in the early pages above, many studies are not confined to a single focus or theme but span several. The study of ethics, as reviewed herein, does not lend itself to the conclusion that a scientific paradigm is evolving. So, if this is indeed the case, does it matter? Not necessarily—there is no compelling reason to believe that ethics research in public administration should look like research paradigms that have evolved in the natural and some behavioral sciences.

The fourth question asked was: “Are their neglected or overlooked areas of study (1999)? Are there new avenues of research (2005)” The answer to both questions is a resounding “yes.” One thinly researched area is the ethical implications associated with the incredible growth and development in information communication technology (ICT). Only one article in PI-PAR over the past ten years focused on ethical conflicts and solutions involving government acquisition of information. George M. Zinkhan, Denise E. de Lorme, Cara O. Peters, and Richard T. Watson
(2007) examined the gathering of information via the U.S. census and the Internet. Data mining, or the mapping of information patterns in vast storehouses of information collected by social media giants such as Twitter and Facebook, is freighted with ethical issues in access, privacy, and confidentiality. Consider Sara R. Jordan’s (2014) study of the ethics for the future of “Big Data” governance. She asks, what are “the appropriate ethical principles for government use of large-scale data-gathering exercises . . . ?” (376) The “conversation” she has started has a considerable distance to go before we can be confident of a) the appropriate principles and b) evidence based findings are in place.

Another research gap is the paucity of ethics studies that investigate the astonishing growth of networking and public-private partnering in the public sector in the United States and abroad. There are, however, a few exceptions. One is the work of Richard K. Ghere (2011). In “Network Legitimacy and Accountability in a Development Perspective,” Ghere draws on a case study to raise questions about accountability when a business dominant network exhibits ethically questionable behaviors at the expense of the community in Dayton, Ohio. He borrows Beverly Cigler’s (2001,77) question that asks, “When government is the ‘weak sector’ within a collaboration, what are the effects on accountability traditionally defined as linkages and responsiveness to citizens?” Another exception is Pierre-André Hudon (2011) who has taken a close look at public-private partnerships in Quebec and the potential for unethical procurement practices.

Two other research gaps mentioned earlier merit repeating: 1) the effectiveness of ethics training and 2) practical and theoretical knowledge of becoming ethically competent. The few studies that examine both subjects are just that. These gaps are concerning and surely will attract and challenge future investigators.
Among the interesting new avenues of research is the attention increasingly given to building and testing integrity systems and sorting through the promise of good governance. Conceptualizing and measuring both integrity infrastructures and “good” governance are work-in-progress. Future findings in these areas are likely to yield valuable insight into 21st Century public governance (see Rothstein 2011).

Another new development is the application of innovative tools and techniques for conducting ethics research. Gjalt de Graaf and Job van Exel (2009), for example, call for the use of Q methodology by academics and practitioners in the field of administrative ethics. They note that Q methodology is widely employed in other administrative sciences. Q methodology is “the systematic study of subjectivity—a person’s viewpoint, opinion, beliefs, attitudes, and the like” (Brown 1993). As they explain, “Q methodology gives the investigator the opportunity to examine and build theory without pre-developed categories“ (67).

One final but important “missing research” to note is the effort by international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to offer data based studies that serve as an operational guide for developing countries that wish to build effective barriers to corruption and firm foundations for ethical governance. This kind of research, as evidenced in publications by the World Bank, the InterAmerican Development Bank, the Council of Europe, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs along with NGOs Transparency International, Global Integrity, and U4 Anti-corruption Resource Centre, remains to be reviewed and assessed. As suggested by Stuart Gilman (2014b), this body of work consists of a massive amount of research that is having a significant impact in the development community. Future investigators are encouraged to review and assess this research. Such an assessment would be a
valuable companion piece to this article’s review and assessment.

This review and assessment points to a healthy, robust enterprise that has taken hold in the United States and Europe with contributions from other world regions. Yet the end is not in sight. The decades ahead will surely witness more contributions rich in diversity and promise. The journey continues . . .
Works Cited


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_____. (2014b). E-mail message to Donald C. Menzel, March 3.


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Verhezen, P. (2008). The (Ir)relevance of Integrity in Organizations. 10(2), 133-149.


Table 1
Research Articles by Themes & Year
2005-2014

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ethical Decision Making &amp; Moral Development</th>
<th>Ethics Laws &amp; Regulatory Agencies</th>
<th>Organizational Performance</th>
<th>Globalization</th>
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PI=Public Integrity  PAR= (Blank cells=0)  Count does not equal total articles because some articles share more than one theme.

Table 2
Policy Topics in PI & PAR Articles, 2005-2014

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Figure 1
PI-PAR Research Themes
2005-2014

Ethical Environment

Globalization

Ethical Decision Making & Moral Development

Laws & Regulatory Agencies

Organizational Performance

Ethics Management

Numbers indicate how many articles give attention to theme
FIGURE 2--PI/PAR THEMES, 2005-2014

#Articles

EDM--ETHICAL DECISION MAKING & MORAL DEVELOPMENT
LAWS--ETHICS LAWS & REGULATORY AGENCIES
ORG--ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE
GLOBAL--GLOBALIZATION
MGT--ETHICS MANAGEMENT
POLICY--POLICY ETHICS
ENVIRON--ETHICAL ENVIRONMENT

2 Previous reviews published in PI by the author included more journals and a shorter time span (five years). Consequently, it should be emphasized that the PI-PAR combined review does not claim the results are generalizable to all ethics/public administration research in American and/or international journals. That being said, the author did survey other relevant American journals to identify articles that contained “ethics” in their title. The journals are (number of articles in parentheses): Journal of Public Administration Research & Theory (2), State & Local Government Review (0), Administration & Society (11), American Political Science Review (2), Public Administration Quarterly (1), American Review of Public Administration (2).

3 ASPA is the owner of Public Integrity and describes PI as “the touchstone journal on ethics and leadership for public service.” PI is affiliated with ASPA’s Ethics Section and co-sponsored by the International City/County Management Association, the Council of State Governments, and the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws.

4 While Public Integrity publishes articles clearly designated as “research”, it also publishes commentary, case studies, symposia, exemplar profiles, field reports, and an occasional “point/counter-point”. The journal lists 115 as research articles, 45 commentaries, 7 cases, 4 exemplar profiles, 3 field reports, 1 point/counter-point, and 21 concept papers (primarily in symposia) for the 2005-2014 period. Among the total of 37 issues of Public Integrity eleven are symposia that contain a mix of research articles, concept papers, and commentary.

5 A related but different approach taken to examine religion and spirituality in the public workplace is Stephen M. King’s (2007) studies of court cases and normative models that integrate religion and spirituality.

6 I am indebted to Stuart Gilman for bringing this to my attention.