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Perceived Leadership Practices of Female Superintendents in North Carolina

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Perceived Leadership Practices of Female Superintendents in North Carolina

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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Deardre J. Gibson under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

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This dissertation was designed to add to the general existing body of literature which
examines women's work lives as North Carolina school superintendents. This study
investigated the perceived leadership practices of North Carolina female superintendents
during the 2008-2009 school year. According to the literature on female superintendents,
women comprise the majority of teaching positions, but are underrepresented in the top
leadership position in U.S. public schools. Gender inequality and barriers to the
superintendency for women may account for disparities among women in the position.
The provision of this study may serve to enlighten women who may aspire to the
superintendency, as well as provide insight to those females who have already acquired
the role, giving them the vision necessary to effectively lead in their positions.

This study surveyed the female superintendents in North Carolina who were listed on the
roster of North Carolina superintendents as published by the North Carolina Department
of Public Instruction for the 2008-2009 school year. Using the Leadership Practices
Inventory-Self Survey and a demographic questionnaire to gather descriptive statistics,
the researcher used analysis of variance to assess the perceived leadership practices of
female superintendents based on age, administrative experience and size and structure of
their districts.

The findings of this study indicated that neither age nor years of administrative
experience had any impact on how North Carolina female superintendents perceived their
leadership practices. All of the respondents were aged 50 or older and 77% were aged 55
or older. The respondents' average number of years of administrative experience was 8
years. The structure of the school district was found to be significant in regards to
perceived leadership practices for North Carolina female superintendents. The district
structure was defined as the ratio of central office personnel to the number of school
buildings within the district. When the district structure was 1.59 or less, superintendents
perceived themselves to utilize the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act most
often. The findings also indicated that the majority of North Carolina female
superintendents described effective leadership practices as having a shared vision and
mission, setting goals, communication and having high expectations. The results of this
study were compared to a similar study of female superintendents in four midwestern
states conducted by Susan Katz in 2004. The female superintendents in both studies
perceived themselves to utilize the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act most
often.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The top leadership position in American public schools is the superintendency. "Since the creation of the public school superintendency in the United States in the mid 1800s, few women have held this public leadership position" (Katz, 2004, p. 1). This phenomenon is overtly illustrated in school districts across the United States. Women comprise a very small percentage of school superintendents as compared to men in the nation. In the 2000 study by the American Association of School Administrators of the American School Superintendent, female superintendents comprised only 13.1% of the total superintendent group. Of the 2,262 respondents reporting their gender in the 2000 study, 1,953 were male and 297 were female (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). According to the Mid-decade Study of the State of the American School Superintendency in 2006 by Thomas Glass and Louis Franceschini, "the national average of female superintendents leading public schools was 20 percent" (Pascopella, 2008, p. 32). The percentages of female superintendents in United States public schools increased seven percentage points from the 2000 study to the 2006 study of the American superintendent. Although women superintendents are increasing in number, disparities still exist. Given the fact that most of the literature supports the findings that the teaching force is 70% female, one can begin to conceptualize the scope of disproportionality in men occupying the top leadership positions in American public schools. The lack of women as superintendents demonstrates a clear equity gap between the female teaching force and female executive level leadership. "According to a 1999 study conducted by Ann Siegal for the American Association for School Administrators, females held only 20 percent of top school executive positions" (McCreight, 1999, p. 3). This gap may discourage qualified women from the superintendent's job due to a lack of role models or mentors, a lack of female

superintendents in general, both nationally and locally, and present barriers for women who seek to aspire to the top leadership position in public schools. The lack of female superintendents in public schools is a problem because other women may become discouraged from applying for the job because of a lack of role models. In addition, with a shortage of educational leaders, society should not exacerbate the problem by appealing only to white males.

The superintendency has been and continues to be a white, male-dominated position, while female superintendents remain an underrepresented group. This phenomenon still persists even though women have made great strides in educational leadership. In the 2000 study of the American School Superintendent, Glass et al. noted that 56.8% of female superintendents held doctoral degrees, compared to 43.7% of male superintendents. This finding is consistent with the research that indicates that there is an "increase in female enrollment in graduate programs in educational administration" (Katz, 2004, p. 1). Of the 117 school superintendents in North Carolina, 19 positions are held by females. This 16% of female superintendents in North Carolina represents a lower percentage of female superintendents than the current national average of 20%. "Although more women are entering the superintendency, they still remain an underrepresented group," which signifies that females may face barriers to accessing the superintendency and causes this researcher to investigate the appalling level of underrepresentation of women in the superintendency (Clisbee, 2003, p. iii).

Nature of the Problem

Differences in the socialization of males and females in the United States may contribute to the disparities among male and female superintendents in public schools and may contribute to gender-specific role stereotyping, such as women should teach and

men should manage. The teaching profession is largely comprised of women, while the top leadership position in public schools is largely comprised of men. Societal views of women are that of nurturer and/or caregiver while views of men are dominant and managerial. In addition to the differences in socialization of males and females, barriers exist for women who aspire to acquire the position of superintendent. "Some of the major barriers women encounter in pursuing the position of superintendent involve marriage and family obligations, lack of mobility, and time demands" (McCreight, 1999, p. 4). Other research by Katz (2004), Polleys (1999) and Logan (1998) also found that the lack of role models and mentoring contribute to the barriers women face in pursuing the top leadership position in American public schools.

Historically, women enter school administration much later than men. This may be due to the fact that women raise families and tend to family obligations. The 2000 study of the American School Superintendent indicated that "about 60 percent of female superintendents spent at least 10 years in the classroom, when almost half of male superintendents spent about five years as a teacher" (Glass et al., 2000, p. 99). In addition, women perceive a lack of mobility as the greatest barrier limiting career opportunities. Most women do not wish to disrupt their home and family routines for a career advancement, especially when that advancement entails uprooting their family and moving to an unfamiliar place. Changing homes and geographic locations may be viewed as painful or disruptive to most women. According to McCreight (1999), time demands of a superintendent are also a huge barrier for women, who are not willing to pay the high price of family time or privacy, especially when raising a family.

Polleys (1999) studied a sample of female superintendents and found that female superintendents lacked mentors and needed mentoring from powerful men or women.

Polleys' study found that mentoring must be increasingly available for women superintendents and should be addressed on four fronts: by institutions, by gatekeepers to the superintendency, by women in need of mentors, and by those in positions to mentor such as current superintendents, who are mostly male. Polleys contended that "women with leadership potential must be encouraged, mentored, and empowered to exercise their influence" (p. 17). According to Polleys, "mentors usually guide the newcomer along career paths, opens doors to new opportunities, provides entry into certain social circles through connections and introductions and often informally recommends the protégé for upcoming positions" (p. 9). More research that explores how female school superintendents perceive their leadership practices is needed so that women who aspire to the superintendency are able to learn about various leadership practices and how women go about influencing others.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership practices of the female superintendents in North Carolina and compare those perceived leadership practices with the female superintendents in a 2004 study of female superintendents in four midwestern states conducted by Susan Katz. Out of 117 school superintendents in the state of North Carolina, at the present time approximately 19 are female (16%). North Carolina's average number of female superintendents is slightly below the national average. This study has added to the general existing body of literature which looked at women's work lives as superintendents through an investigation of their leadership practices. This study has also given voice to the women who work as school superintendents in North Carolina. Actual names and specific geographical locations of the female superintendents in North Carolina have remained anonymous.

This researcher was granted permission by Susan Katz to model this study after Katz's (2004) study which examined the perceived leadership practices of female superintendents in four midwestern states (Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan). Katz used the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-Self) to measure the perceptions of women superintendents regarding their leadership practices. The Leadership Practices Inventory-Self is a list of five leadership practices developed by James Kouzes and Barry Posner, who define leadership as "the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations" (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 30). Kouzes and Posner developed the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self after asking leaders to describe their personal best times while leading their organizations. "Their data revealed themes that eventually developed into the five leadership practices incorporated into the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self" (Katz, p. 16). The five practices are challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way and encouraging the heart. The two fundamental behaviors that characterize leaders who challenge the process are the constant search for opportunities and willingness to experiment and take risks. Inspiring a shared vision involves gaining the support of the followers to carry out the work of the organization. "Enabling others to act involves building trust and offering support as followers develop competence" (Katz, p. 9). Modeling the way involves leading by example and being consistent with the belief of shared values. Encouraging the heart involves celebrating success. "Leaders recognize contributions that individuals make so leaders celebrate accomplishments" (Kouzes & Posner, 2001, p. 9).

In Katz's (2004) study, women superintendents in large school districts most often perceived themselves to be using the leadership practices of Challenging the Process and Inspiring a Shared Vision. Women superintendents in mid-sized school

districts most often perceived themselves to be using the leadership practice of Modeling the Way. No other significant differences were found. For the purposes of Katz's study, large school districts consisted of student populations of 10,000-29,999; mid-sized school districts consisted of student populations of 2,500-9,999; and small school districts consisted of student populations under 2,500.

The researcher is a high school assistant principal in a large, urban school district in North Carolina. The researcher is a female who aspires to lead a school district as a superintendent, but because of the time demands, family obligations and job stressors, will consider that possibility only in the distant future. This topic is important to the researcher and other female leaders in education because of "women's historical contribution to education and their status at its highest levels" (Keller, 1999, p. 2). This study will inform prospective female superintendents of effective leadership practices needed to perform the role of superintendent and give current female superintendents the insight needed to effectively maintain their positions.

Research Questions

Special emphases were placed on providing answers to the following set of research questions:

1. How is the age of the female superintendents in North Carolina reflected in their reported leadership practices?

2. How do years of administrative experience reflect perceived leadership practices of the female superintendents in North Carolina?

3. How is the size and structure of school districts in North Carolina reflected in the female superintendents' perceived leadership practices?

4. How do women superintendents in North Carolina describe effective leadership

practices?

5. What are the differences or similarities in perceived leadership practices for female superintendents in North Carolina in 2008 as compared to the perceived leadership practices of female superintendents in the four midwestern states from the 2004 study?

Limitations and Delimitations

This study was limited to the population of approximately 19 female superintendents in the North Carolina school districts during the 2008-2009 school year. It only involved full-time and currently active superintendents. A survey was used to collect information on the perceived leadership practices of the female superintendents in North Carolina. There are several limitations in using survey research. Open-ended questions were not feasible due to the many demands upon superintendents' time. In addition, the researcher was not able to judge the quality of the responses or explain the study in person to the respondents. In using a survey, the researcher had no personal contact with the respondents, which resulted in a moderate response rate of 63%. The findings of the study should not be generalized beyond the field of education. The female superintendents in North Carolina comprise a fixed number of available subjects in this study, which limited the sample size to less than 20. The small sample size may have had an effect on the validity of this study. However, the study is important because it can help to inform prospective female superintendents about effective leadership practices, which in turn, may lead to more females seeking and securing the top leadership positions in public schools.

Summary

There is a disproportionate number of men who occupy the top position of

superintendent in U.S. public schools. Women are increasingly acquiring the role of

school superintendent. The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership practices

of the female superintendents in North Carolina and compare those perceived leadership

practices with female superintendents in a 2004 study in four midwestern states

conducted by Susan Katz. This study may serve to enlighten women who may aspire to

the superintendency, as well as provide insight to those females who have already

acquired the role, giving them the vision necessary to effectively maintain their positions.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Leadership continues to be a popular topic in professional and educational literature. This literature review examined leadership research with a specific focus on the educational leadership of females at the level of superintendent in public education, along with the barriers and constraints of the job. From a review of the literature, several themes have emerged regarding women superintendents: gender inequality in the role of superintendent, access and barriers to the superintendency for women, and gender-based differences in leadership style.

Gender Inequality in the Role of Superintendent

C. Cryss Brunner studied gender inequality of female superintendents in 1999 when she interviewed 12 successful women superintendents from the northeast, midwest, and southeast regions of the United States with the expressed aim of determining if their conversations about their superintendency experiences contained events or episodes of inequality. In addition, Brunner (2000) interviewed two additional people within each of the prospective school districts for purposes of triangulation. Brunner was interested in successful women because of "the often heard myth that successful women either do not believe that they experience gender bias or are unwilling to discuss it" (p. 79). Five topics emerged from Brunner's narrative data, but three will be reviewed to illustrate gender bias: power, silence and style. The other two topics in Brunner's study were responsibility (responsible talk) and people (using other people, most often men, as spokespersons). Women who acquire the position of superintendent are expected to speak out and be responsible for "communicating in multiple settings under myriad circumstances" (Brunner, p. 98). In Brunner's study, women used tactics, such as "quiet persistence or dumbing down their speech so that men felt superior" (Brunner, pp. 98-

99). Furthermore, the subjects in Brunner's study used men as mouthpieces when faced with an adversarial political figure, such as a mayor, who would not listen to a woman. North Carolina superintendents are more accountable to local boards of education rather than to a political figurehead. In addition, superintendents are judged and evaluated by their verbal interactions with others. The gender biases of responsibility and people found in Brunner's study may not be known biases for all female superintendents. However, power, silence, and style may be more conducive to illustrating gender bias in the role of superintendent.

"The women in Brunner's study spoke about power as collaborative, inclusive, and consensus-building with their own voices heard in concert with others rather than from a position of authority or dominance over others" (Brunner, 2000, p. 88). Some women in the study explained how some school board members, who were uncomfortable with a "powerful" woman, asked them to check with others before making a decision, or how it was not safe for women to assert their strengths and successes, for fear of being viewed negatively. Male superintendents typically do not face these kinds of obstacles as society generally views the male species as dominant and powerful. Given the fact that the women in Brunner's study occupied a position that is viewed as powerful (the superintendency), it was clear that "women have been victims of patriarchal power" and preferred to down play their authority (Brunner, p. 85).

The female superintendents in Brunner's (2000) study also spoke about silence, which is a form of inequality for women. Some of the female superintendents experienced negative body language when speaking, had their ideas ignored in meetings with male colleagues, had board members who did not listen while they made presentations, and even male colleagues who dominated, interrupted, or completely left

women out of their conversations. These are all forms of unnatural silencing and experiences of gender bias. The women in the study had to hide their expressions and emotions to survive, and as one respondent indicated, "If they know they are making you bleed, it gives them more power" (Brunner, p. 91). Although all of the respondents admitted that unnatural silencing occurred, they also acknowledged that people generally listen to superintendents. Superintendents are a voice in the community, so indeed, they are not silenced. In addition, listening was an important part of communication for the respondents in this study, and they felt it was essential for gaining knowledge.

The third topic in Brunner's (2000) study, style, also touched on gender inequality. "Although it seems natural to expect superintendents to be direct and decisive, to have ideas and opinions, and to be assertive, the women in the study stated that they had to be aware of their style because a direct style was not acceptable" (Brunner, p. 94). There were negative consequences for being direct or too aggressive. The women in Brunner's study upheld gender assumptions, and social rules were openly declared and supported, such as being "soft" and "ladylike" (pp. 95-96). The respondents made the choice to be "soft" and "ladylike" to avoid negative consequences and labels. This intentional focus on women's choices in relation to structural constraints blames women for whatever consequence they experience (either positive for being soft and ladylike or negative for being direct and decisive), rather than examining the structural constraint itself.

Brunner's (2000) study documented the existence and pervasiveness of gender inequality in the role of the superintendency and demonstrated in certain ways how female superintendents participated in their own experiences of inequality, by perpetuating bias. In an earlier study of female superintendents by Chase and Bell (1990),

three strategies were identified that both men and women used to avoid explicitly

ideological conversations about inequality: "Using women's successful performances to

debunk others' gendered assumptions, resisting the charge of gender bias through the

discourse of gender neutrality, and focusing on women's choices in relation to structural

constraints" (pp. 167-170). Grogan (1999) studied historical trends that have impacted

women in educational leadership and concluded that women's success in administration

has been hampered by influences external to education. "The push for equal pay, for

instance, robbed women of the slight advantage they had at a time when some boards

could get women as administrators for less than they would have to pay for men"

(Grogan, p. 521).

In a study by Skrla, Reyes, and Scheurich (2000), three former female

superintendents were interviewed because of a need for additional research on the sexism

and discriminatory treatment that female school superintendents experience. "Their

findings indicate that although women superintendents reject stereotypical notions of

femininity in respect to their own behavior, others with whom they interact in their

professional roles often hold traditional, culturally biased expectations for their

comportment and performance" (Bjork, 2000, p. 12). This situation is exacerbated by

unwritten societal and professional rules that discourage female superintendents from

publicly acknowledging unequal treatment and by the unyielding silence of those in the

profession. The discrimination faced by the three former female superintendents in Skrla

et. al's study on sexism, silence, and solutions included questioned competence (not

knowing particular areas of school district operations, not being business-minded or

doubting whether what a female superintendent said needed to be done actually did need

to be done), and silence (personal silence--not speaking up, silent preparation programs--

academic professors who never discussed how the experiences of the superintendency would be different for females, and silence of the profession--women's issues were largely ignored by state legislatures, state education agencies, and professional organizations).

According to Sharp, Malone, Walter, and Supley (2000), discrimination may exist as a result of societal role expectations. The lack of female role models in positions of authority may serve to subconsciously validate young people into viewing gender differences as perfectly normal. Sharp et al. conducted a three-state study (Indiana, Illinois, and Texas) of female superintendents to investigate female superintendents' perceptions about forms of discrimination they faced. A questionnaire was prepared and sent to all female superintendents in the states of Indiana, Illinois, and Texas, the states in which the researchers worked. In Illinois, there were 102 female superintendents and 50 returned usable surveys. In Indiana, there were 26 female superintendents and 23 responded to the survey. Texas had 84 female superintendents and 45 returned the surveys. Overall, out of 212 female superintendents, 118 returned the surveys for a response rate of 55.7%. The average number of cumulative years that respondents had been a superintendent was 5.3 years. The average number of total years that respondents had been in the field of education was 25.9 years. Fifty-five percent of respondents in the three-state study of female superintendents had earned a doctoral degree and 18% of respondents had earned a specialist degree.

The women surveyed were asked to state what position they held prior to their first superintendency. Almost 54% of women responded that they had been assistant/associate superintendents, while almost 20% reported that they had been elementary or middle school principals and 13% indicated that they had been high school

principals. Additionally, 77.8% of respondents were married, 6.8% were single, 12.8% were divorced and 2.6% were widowed. Almost 66% of those surveyed had no school-age children at the time of the survey. Twenty-seven percent of respondents in Sharp et. al's (2000) study worked in districts with student enrollment of 500 or fewer students, 21% worked in districts with enrollments between 1,001 and 2,000 students and 27% served as superintendents in districts with over 3,000 students. Sixty-two percent of those respondents reported that they worked in a rural or small town, while 8.5% indicated that they were superintendents in an urban area and 29% reported that they were superintendents in a suburban area.

When asked if gender issues were discussed in university preparation programs, 71% of the female superintendents stated that they had not been discussed. Almost 58% of respondents agreed that society, in general, felt that the superintendency was a male field. One of the respondents from Indiana stated that "women dress more in suits, rather than a frilly dress because of other's perceptions about the role of superintendent" (Sharp et. al, 2000, p. 16). When given the statement that female superintendents do not handle finance or facilities as well as superintendents, 95.7% of respondents indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. All respondents in the three-state study felt very strongly that men would not manage better than women.

Access and Barriers to the Superintendency for Women

Maienza (1986) suggested that access to the superintendency is influenced by an interaction of individual behavior and organizational structures and that "opportunity and power are structural elements in organizations that individuals must have to move into top management positions" (p. 63). Certain variables for women including marital status, family status, interrupted participation in the labor market, and perceived occupational

structures were expected to alter the time frame of women's career paths. In her study of access to the superintendency for both men and women, Maienza studied 20 superintendents (10 men and 10 women), their background characteristics, career paths, and visibility and sponsorship for the purpose of determining predictors of access to the school superintendency, with a particular focus on access for women.

In Maienza's (1986) study of school superintendents, certain characteristics emerged. More of the men were married than the women. The women superintendents were older than their male counterparts when they obtained their first superintendency. All of the superintendents were largely from white-collar backgrounds and most were first-generation college graduates. Forty percent of the male subjects were firstborn in their families, as compared to sixty percent of the female subjects. A large number of the subjects in this study were raised either in a single-parent home or in a family in which both parents worked outside of the home. As a result, respondents reported that an unusual amount of responsibility was placed upon them early in life.

Patterns of visibility and sponsorship were also identified in Maienza's (1986) study. Respondents participated in extraordinary activities and identified with people who held high level leadership in their organizations. The respondents were class officers, athletes and school editors during their years of formal schooling, which support the notion that individuals learn to respond to opportunity and power very early in their lives. "Three kinds of sponsorship in gaining access to the superintendency were reported by the subjects: university professors, professionals on the state level and consultants" (Maienza, p. 74). The male subjects indicated that they were mostly sponsored by university professors and professionals operating on the state level, whereas the female subjects indicated that they were sponsored by consultants. "Women reported feeling

denied the support of the 'network' which comprised the other types of sponsorships"

(Maienza, p. 74). In addition, women reported that they were discouraged by university

graduate programs, who denied access to women for doctoral study prior to 1968. Thus,

women have experienced inequality in gaining access to the superintendency at the

gatekeeper level (universities). Maienza posited that visibility and sponsorship determine

access to the superintendency. "Maienza's study of the characteristics of access to the

superintendency for men and women reveal multiple, interacting influences" (Tallerico,

2000, p. 22).

Tallerico (2000) conducted a study over a 2-year period (1996-1998) to examine

superintendent headhunting from a feminist perspective. Tallerico asserted that accessing

the superintendency is influenced by four levels: "gatekeeping decisions based on power-

holders' personal criteria, the routine practices that characterize headhunting for

superintendents, norms embedded in the educational administration profession, and the

dominant ideologies and socio-cultural values of American society" (p. 21). According to

Tallerico, each of these levels is interactive, and shapes the dynamics at the other levels

to determine how and when gates are opened or closed.

Tallerico (2000) interviewed 75 subjects in New York (25 headhunters, 25 school

board members, and 25 recent applicants for superintendencies). Her purpose was to

demystify search and selection procedures for current and prospective superintendent

candidates, and included such details as how school boards prepare for a superintendent

search, why they employ search consultants (or headhunters) for the identification,

recruitment, and promotion of superintendent candidates, and what school boards and

headhunters do to both help and hinder diversity in candidate pools. Tallerico's findings

illustrated three elements in the hiring process that can limit the advancement of women

and people of color: "(a) how best qualified is defined, (b) stereotyping and other cultural dynamics that come into play, and (c) the role of 'good chemistry' in determining interview success" (p. 29).

The gates are open widest for those superintendent applicants with prior experience as superintendents, assistant superintendents, or high school principals, for they are viewed as best qualified. The gates are closed or only partially open to applicants whose experience consists primarily of elementary school principalships or other administrative roles. Tallerico (2000) termed this concept as "narrow constructions of ideal prior experience" (p. 29). However, consultants and other gatekeepers believe that high school and other direct line experiences are tougher, more demanding, and are better preparation for the high stress role of the superintendency. According to Tallerico, this warrior mentality may dominate board members' conceptions of what it takes to be a superintendent, oftentimes to the disadvantage of female candidates.

Social prejudices and gender stereotyping also narrow the flow channels to the superintendency for those applicants who are not white males. Tallerico (2000) found ample evidence of gender stereotyping in her study. Female candidates' competencies were questioned with considerable scrutiny. Board members doubted that females could handle discipline, the budget, or be tough enough to do whatever needed to be done. Even if the female candidate became a finalist, the question then was did she have to be paid as much as a male contender. Female candidates corroborated these biases based on their experiences with school board members and consultants. Female subjects responded that they were told that a particular school district was not ready for a woman or inquiries were made about child care arrangements that might limit a woman's ability to devote sufficient time to the job.

Tallerico (2000) asserted that candidates' interviews with consultants and school board members for the superintendency are the most crucial, most critical and most influential piece of recruitment and selection decisions. School board members look for the candidate they want to interact with on a daily basis and the kinds of personalities that can get along (good chemistry). Since the majority of headhunters and school board members are white males, then the reliance on interpersonal feelings of connection and ease fosters preferences for affiliations with those most like headhunters and school board members. Who school board members can relate to best is more likely to disadvantage female candidates for the superintendency. Tallerico termed the concept of good chemistry as "hypervaluing feelings of comfort and interpersonal chemistry with the successful candidate" (p. 36). According to Grogan (1999), "this affinity for sameness extends to the various processes of mentoring, networking and sponsorship within the field" (p. 529). Women who aspire to leadership positions are not automatically included in networks that have grown out of male organizations. "The unwritten selection criteria that guide superintendent search and hiring practices are invisible because they do not appear in advertisements of desired qualifications, but they manifest themselves behind the scenes" and limit access to female candidates (Tallerico, p. 37). Grogan believes that women's organizations are having a positive impact for aspirants to the position of superintendent. Some of the women's organizations "provide opportunities for women to meet, offer workshops on how to prepare academically and personally for leadership positions, give practical advice to women, such as how to interview for administrative positions, how to present resumes and how to get important exposure through work on state committees and task forces" (Grogan, p. 530).

O'Connell (2000) conducted a longitudinal study of applicants for the

superintendency in the state of New York by comparing the applicant pool data in 1999

to the applicant pool data in 1995. His study documented the success rate of female

applicants through the search process and was unique in that it assessed the applicant

pool by surveying the gatekeepers. In 1995, a collaborative research initiative was

undertaken by Raymond O'Connell and the New York State Council of School

Superintendents.

> As one part of that initiative, a survey was sent to all superintendent search
>
> consultants actively operating within New York to determine whether they
>
> believed that a shortage of qualified applicants existed and, if appropriate, to
>
> document the extent of that shortage. A secondary purpose was to establish
>
> baseline data so that longitudinal patterns could be examined through the
>
> administration of subsequent surveys. (O'Connell, pp. 2-3)

The 1995 survey revealed that women and minorities were still underrepresented in the

superintendency and that starting salary and district socio-economic status continued to

be important factors in attracting applicants to the superintendency.

In early 1999, O'Connell (2000) mailed the second superintendent search survey

to 63 superintendent search consultants. Responses were received from 38 consultants

(60.3%). The search consultants were asked to report on their most recently completed

superintendent search. The 1999 survey contained many of the questions as the original

survey, but it also asked consultants to provide data on the gender and race of all

applicants, first round candidates, finalists and those actually appointed by the board of

education so that selection bias could be examined. O'Connell's study compared two

samples of respondents reporting on two different sets of school district searches

predominantly conducted in 1995 and 1998. Each group of search consultants reported an

average of over 8 years of experience as a consultant. For the 1995 survey, 96.2% of search consultants in New York were male and 3.8% were female. For the 1999 survey, 89.5% of search consultants in New York were male and 11.5% were female.

The average number of superintendent applicants in O'Connell's (2000) 1995 study was 40. The average number of applicants that were deemed minimally qualified for the position of superintendent was 26.3% and the average number of applicants that were judged highly qualified for the position of superintendent by the search consultants was 7.8%. The average number of superintendent applicants in O'Connell's 1999 study was 27.7 applicants. The average number of applicants that were deemed minimally qualified for the position of superintendent was 21.3% and the average number of applicants that were judged highly qualified for the position of superintendent by the search consultants was 7.4%. Women comprised nearly 21% of the applicant pool and 27.6% of those women were actually appointed to the position of superintendent. O'Connell's data showed that women applicants were slightly more likely to emerge as the successful candidate than were their male colleagues, yet women applicants were still underrepresented in the applicant pool. O'Connell suggested that "search consultants and school district boards of education need to increase their efforts to attract female applicants since they represent higher percentages of the potential applicant pool" (p. 12). O'Connell acknowledged that there are women educators who hold certification in school administration, and are not serving as school leaders. O'Connell believed that "women administrators represent an important resource and must be effectively recruited in future years" (p. 12).

According to Grogan (1999), women in leadership positions manage to arrange their work schedules in such a way that they can also take care of family responsibilities.

However, for many women, "it is the clash of priorities and values inherent in the different discourses that takes its toll" (Grogan, p. 526). Women still experience the tension created when they try to meet the demands of family obligations and school leadership equally well. In contrast, the traditional male administrator is free to concentrate on school leadership because his spouse meets the family demands and obligations.

In a three-state study of female superintendents conducted by Sharp et al. (2000), 55% of respondents indicated that a lack of a professional network was somewhat of a barrier and 12% indicated that it was a serious barrier. The respondents also indicated that they felt men were more mobile than women were in pursuing superintendencies, with 74% agreeing or strongly agreeing with that statement. Additionally, 51% of respondents felt that women may not apply for a superintendent's position because too much time would be spent away from home. Factors rated as not a barrier to the female superintendents in the three-state study included negotiations with teachers' unions, dealing with school budgets, lack of confidence in managerial abilities and reluctance to take risks. However, barriers to the superintendency reported by respondents were lack of professional networks, encouragement, formal and informal training, membership in the good old boys' network and influential sponsors.

Logan (1998) believed that there are favorable conditions for advancing gender equity in school leadership positions. She asserted that because of "a convergence of school reform, supply and demand for administrators and societal changes" opportunities for women to become school leaders are enhanced (p. 2). Logan identified six specific circumstances related to greater access for women: 1) school-site governance structures that emphasize local accountability for student achievement, 2) essential leadership skills

in restructured schools that promote collaboration, consensus building and empowerment of others, 3) an increasing number of vacancies nationwide and a dwindling applicant pool for principals and superintendents that may create high-demand conditions for qualified applicants, 4) anti-discrimination legislation which has fostered a more open environment for hiring women in nontraditional roles, 5) increased female composition of educational administration program enrollments and 6) an increase in the percentage of women in the educational administration professorate as well as mentoring programs for women administrators which provide role models that validate school and school system administration as a career choice for women.

Logan (1998) asserted that "school governance reforms such as school-based decision making and teacher empowerment change the rules for who makes hiring decisions" (p. 3). Although school boards officially hire all employees, selection of school-based personnel increasingly reside at the school level. According to Logan, "changes in who occupies the principal position will in the long run have an effect on the staffing of the superintendency" as career patterns that lead to the superintendency generally come via the principalship route (p. 3). With nationwide accountability measures in place, the emphasis shifts from who does the job to the job that has to be done. High stakes accountability for student achievement is another factor that can contribute to open access for women administrators who demonstrate the instructional leadership characteristics to get the job done. Logan also believes that the shortage of administrative applicants will mean that search committees and school boards will be hard pressed to find sufficiently qualified applicants. Opportunities will exist for well qualified applicants because the job openings will be there. Logan is very optimistic about the possibilities for women to move into top-level school administrative positions

because of Title IX and supporting legislation that extended employment protections to include gender.

"A noticeable increase in the percentage of women faculty members in university preparation programs has been an encouraging influence for women to become educational administrators" (Logan, 1998, p. 6). Logan believed that women professors can serve as role models, mentors and can create a network for aspiring women administrators to help validate females in their decision to become a school administrator.

> Equal access in hiring practices for qualified school administrator candidates can be advanced through information and training for school board members through a relevant, rigorous administrative preparation program appropriate for the context of today's schools and through continuous efforts to focus public attention on respect for diversity and desirable leadership skills for schools. (Logan, p. 7)

Gender-Based Differences in Leadership Styles

Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) defined leadership style as "relatively stable patterns of behavior that are manifested by leaders" (p. 781). Leaders occupy roles defined by their specific position in an organization, but gender roles may exert some influence upon leadership style. According to Yoder (2001), "leadership does not take place in a genderless vacuum" (p. 815). The leadership literature often paints two different pictures of leadership style. The first is highly masculine, evaluated almost exclusively for its goal attainment and describes leadership behavior in terms of power over and power from. A second picture of leadership style, which has a more contemporary vision of leadership " proposes transformation or charismatic leadership by emphasizing influence, not power, and empowerment of self and others" (Yoder, p. 817).

In a three-state study of female superintendents conducted by Sharp et al. (2000), respondents were asked if they felt that women tended to be more collaborative than men and 67.8% agreed that they were.

Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) described male leadership as "primarily assertive, controlling, aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, daring, self-confident, and competitive" and described female leadership as having "communal characteristics: concerned with the welfare of other people, affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing, and gentle" (p. 783). Because men have long held superintendent roles, they have defined the styles to which people have become accustomed. Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) asserted two distinct approaches to leadership from earlier classic work on leadership introduced by Bales in 1950 and further developed at Ohio State University: task-oriented style and interpersonally-oriented style. The task-oriented style, labeled initiation of structure, is defined as "a concern with accomplishing assigned tasks by organizing task-relevant activities" and the interpersonally-oriented style, labeled consideration, is defined as "a concern with maintaining interpersonal relationships by tending to others' morale and welfare" (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, p. 786). In the task-oriented style, subordinates are encouraged to follow rules and procedures, maintain high standards for performance, and leader and subordinate roles are explicitly defined. In the interpersonally-oriented style, leaders help and do favors for subordinates, look out for subordinates' welfare, explain procedures, and are friendly and available.

Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt (2001) also contrasted transformational and transactional leadership styles. They defined a transformational leader as one who "sets especially high standards for behavior and establishes themselves as role models by

gaining the trust and confidence of their followers" (Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, p. 787). Transformational leaders innovate, mentor and empower followers by encouraging followers to develop their full potential so that they may better contribute to the organization. Transformational leadership has communal aspects and may be more aligned with female gender roles. "The behavior of female leaders may be more interpersonally-oriented, democratic and transformational" as compared to men (Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, pp. 787-788). In contrast, transactional leaders "manage by clarifying subordinate responsibilities, monitoring their work, rewarding them for meeting objectives and correcting them for failing to meet objectives" (Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, p. 787). "The behavior of male leaders may be more task-oriented and autocratic" as compared to women (Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, p. 788).

Many studies have compared the leadership styles of males and females. The most common method to assess leadership style is to ask each leader's subordinates to rate their leader on items that describe critical features of leadership style. As reported by Eagly and Johannessen-Schmidt (2001), in 1990, Alice Eagly and Blair Johnson reviewed studies that compared men and women on task and interpersonal styles and democratic and autocratic styles. The researchers divided the studies into three groups according to their context: (a) "laboratory experiments, which compared the leadership styles of male and female leaders of laboratory groups, (b) assessment studies, which compared the leadership styles of people not selected for occupancy of leadership roles, such as non-managerial employees or business students, and (c) organizational studies, which compared the leadership styles of male and female managers who occupied the same organizational role, such as an elementary school principal" (Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, p. 788).

In the laboratory and assessment settings, participants exhibited gender-specific leadership styles (women were interpersonally-oriented and males were task-oriented). In the organizational studies, no gender specific leadership styles in task and interpersonal orientation were noted. However, the study showed in all three groups (laboratory, assessment, and organizational) that women tended to be more participative and democratic than men. In fact, women scored higher than men on a measure of perceived leadership effectiveness. With so many men dominating the role of superintendent, taken with men's greater likelihood of manifesting ineffective styles of leadership, Eagly and Johannessen-Schmidt (2001) suggested that "men may have greater leeway to remain in leadership roles despite poor performance" (p. 793). Research on leadership style has very favorable implications for women's increasing representation in the ranks of school superintendents.

Clisbee (2003) examined gender-based differences in the leadership styles of school superintendents in Massachusetts. Clisbee surveyed 100 Massachusetts superintendents and the school administrators who reported to the superintendents. Of the 100 superintendents, 76 were male and 24 were female. Data were also gathered from 425 school administrators who reported to the 100 superintendents. Of the 425 school administrators, 212 were male, 202 were female, and 11 did not report their gender. Clisbee used three surveys to collect data. School administrators who directly reported to the superintendent were given the Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer survey, and received a second survey which contained personal data. The third survey used was for school superintendents and it contained personal and organizational data.

Clisbee's (2003) study explored the perception of gender-based differences in the leadership styles of Massachusetts school superintendents and examined other variables

to determine if gender differences influenced the superintendents' leadership styles. The other variables that Clisbee examined were the size of the district, number of years the administrator has worked with the superintendent, age of the superintendent, years since superintendent received his/her highest degree, cumulative number of years serving as superintendent both in their current district and any district, administrator's job title and gender of the administrator.

No gender-based differences in the leadership styles of Massachusetts school superintendents were found. However, superintendents who received their highest academic degree within 5 years prior to the study scored higher on two of the three transformational scales (Challenging the Process and Inspiring a Shared Vision) than did their colleagues who received their highest academic degree more than 15 years before the study. On the transformational scale, Enabling Others to Act, no differences were found. Administrators (observers of superintendents) who chose not to identify themselves by job title scored their superintendents lower than their colleagues who identified themselves by job title. Clisbee (2003) found no other variables to impact the perceived leadership practices of Massachusetts superintendents. Clisbee attributed the lack of gender-based differences in leadership styles of Massachusetts superintendents to the organizational structures and positional expectations of public school systems in Massachusetts. She believed that the similarities leveled the ratings for the gender of the superintendents.

According to Logan (1998), some of the essential leadership skills necessary to lead schools and districts are placing importance on relationships, interpersonal skills, consensus building and negotiation for solving problems. This type of leadership is "facilitative leadership that empowers others and values diverse discourse as a means of

reaching better decisions" and are skills that are traditionally and culturally defined as desirable feminine behavior (Logan, p. 4). Grogan (1999) contended that many women are relational leaders. They "strive to get to know students, teachers, and other members of the school community" (Grogan, p. 524). Grogan believed that women leaders see themselves in relationships that are facilitative of others' efforts rather than in control of others. Grogan asserted that "women in educational leadership positions tend to be problem solvers, task oriented and have high expectations of self and others" (p. 523). Grogan's research on female leaders found that women have strong instructional backgrounds and they focus on curriculum and student achievement. Grogan characterized women leaders as "collaborative, caring, courageous and reflective," noting that they share power, create shared visions and are change agents (p. 523). However, Grogan acknowledged that these attributes needed to be elevated to the level of highly desirable.

Discussion and Conclusion

The lack of females in the role of superintendent in the United States suggests questions about whether appropriate leadership talent is being fully utilized. Differences in the socialization of men and women may contribute to the disparities between males and females securing the top leadership position in public schools. Research indicates that gender inequity exists in the role of superintendent. Not only are women leaders stereotyped by their colleagues as possessing certain attributes, but women may sometimes uphold gender assumptions and stereotypes in their quest to refrain from being viewed negatively. Access to the superintendency for women may be restricted by gatekeepers (consultants, school board members, professional organizations/agencies, and universities) who determine the kinds of experiences that are necessary for the best

qualified applicants. Gender-based differences in leadership style indicate that women

leaders are generally more democratic and transformational than males, which make

female leaders highly effective. Yet, according to Grogan (1999), "women's ways of

leading are considered secondary or subordinate to men's ways" because women occupy

a subordinate or a support position (p. 527). However, because women have historically

held things together, performed the tasks behind the scenes that have enabled men to be

in the forefront and shine, women's strengths are often highly valued. Consequently,

because women are historically in support positions, such as assistant superintendent and

other central office roles, their "skills can be so highly valued that they hamper

opportunities for career advancement if the subordinate's contribution to the organization

is seen by the superintendent as vital to the district's continuing welfare" (Grogan, 1996,

p. 140). Nevertheless, several conditions are favorable which may enhance opportunities

for women to become school superintendents. The findings of the research may serve to

enlighten women who may aspire to the superintendency as well as provide insight to

those females who have already acquired the role, giving them the vision necessary to

effectively maintain their positions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Women comprise a very small percentage of school superintendents as compared to men in the United States. In order to increase this percentage, more research that explores how female school superintendents perceive their leadership practices are needed. To understand more about the perceived leadership practices of female superintendents in North Carolina, a study which surveyed current female superintendents in North Carolina, was conducted. The study assessed the perceived leadership practices of female superintendents in North Carolina using the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI) survey created by Kouzes and Posner (1995), now in its third edition. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived leadership practices of the female superintendents in North Carolina and compare those leadership practices with the female superintendents in a 2004 study of female superintendents in four midwestern states conducted by Katz (2004). In addition, this study sought to provide demographic characteristics of North Carolina female superintendents. This study has added to the general existing body of literature which looked at women's work lives as superintendents through an investigation of their leadership practices. This study has also given voice to the women who work as school superintendents in North Carolina. The study was descriptive in nature, and utilized a mixed methods research methodology.

The descriptive statistics used in this study refer to the measures of central tendency for a variety of variables, including age, age at first superintendency, number of years in present position, total number of years as superintendent, marital status, highest academic degree earned, years spent teaching, number of school buildings and administrators, etc. Mean, median and mode were reported in this study's descriptive statistics. The study utilized a mixed method approach, in which it was quantitative

through the use of the LPI survey, yet also qualitative through the comments that participants gave on the supplemental questions.

A directory of superintendents was obtained from the North Carolina Association of School Administrators' website and cross-referenced with the list of superintendents from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The North Carolina Association of School Administrators annually lists all of the school districts in North Carolina as well as the names and contact information of all district superintendents in the state. All female public school superintendents whose names appeared on the superintendent list in North Carolina were contacted and asked to complete a survey of perceived leadership practices and a demographic questionnaire. The researcher included all female superintendents from this directory list in the initial mailing and requested each North Carolina female superintendent's participation. In order to get a response rate of at least 60%, the researcher made multiple contacts through mailings, phone calls and emails to solicit participation from the North Carolina female superintendents. Sixty-eight percent (13 out 19) of North Carolina female superintendents participated in this study.

Instrumentation

The researcher used one questionnaire and one rating instrument in this study. The questionnaire was demographic in nature and entitled, "Profile of the Superintendent and her District," which was completed by the participating North Carolina female superintendents. The questionnaire was a basic survey of organizational and personal questions. The questionnaire also contained supplemental open-ended questions. The researcher requested that the respondents answer all of the supplemental questions. The supplemental questions were used for the qualitative portion of this mixed methods study.

The rating instrument this researcher used was the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI) survey developed by Kouzes and Posner (1995). The responses on the LPI survey gave the researcher quantitative data to determine leaders' reported leadership practices. Kouzes and Posner "developed the LPI through a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research" (p. 341). Initially, in-depth interviews and written case studies were conducted of 42 middle and senior level managers of their personal best leadership experiences. A questionnaire was then developed and over 2,500 long surveys and over 5,000 short surveys were collected. The analysis of the interviews, case studies and surveys produced five key leadership practices that characterize Kouzes and Posner's leadership framework:

    1. Challenging the Process

    2. Inspiring a Shared Vision

    3. Enabling Others to Act

    4. Modeling the Way

    5. Encouraging the Heart

These five leadership practices became the five constructs rated by the LPI. Leaders who challenge the process thrive on and learn from adversity and difficult situations. Leaders who inspire a shared vision are able to motivate people, not by fear or reward, but by communicating the vision so effectively that others take it as their own. Leaders who enable others to act empower people and build trust in their organization, which allow followers to develop competence. Leaders who model the way actually live the behaviors that followers should adopt. Leaders who encourage the heart unleash the enthusiasm of their followers with stories and passions of their own.

Kouzes and Posner (1995) translated the five leadership practices into behavioral

statements. A 10-point Likert scale was developed to represent the use of each leadership

behavior, with the largest number reflecting greater use of the leadership behavior. Over

20 years, more than 75,000 people have been surveyed for the use of ongoing analysis

and refinement of the instrument. The original purpose of the LPI survey was to provide

feedback to leaders to help them develop their leadership practice. The researcher used

this instrument to determine the perception of each of the North Carolina female

superintendents regarding her leadership practices. Each of the five leadership practice

scales is measured with six statements for a total of 30 questions. The average length of

time to complete the LPI survey is 8 to 10 minutes. "Computer scoring software can be

used as well as hand scoring" (Kouzes & Posner, p. 343). The researcher utilized the

computer scoring software to score the instrument.

A number of tests were conducted to determine whether the LPI survey had sound

psychometric properties. The findings determined that the LPI is internally reliable. The

six statements pertaining to each leadership practice are highly correlated with one

another. "The developers reported internal reliabilities using Chronback alphas ranging

from .82 and .92" (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 343). Kouzes and Posner reported their

own test-retest reliability had been at .93 level and above for the five scales, and .80 and

above from reports from other researchers (Kozues & Posner, p. 344). The face validity

of the LPI survey was based on information gained through quantitative and qualitative

research of thousands of managers and their personal best leadership experiences.

Through the use of factor analysis, Kouzes and Posner found that the LPI contained five

scales and each item of each scale related more to each other than they did to any of the

other items of the four scales. Thus, the five scales are independent and have predictive

validity.

Many studies have been conducted in the field of education using the LPI survey. Wesson and Grady (1994) used the LPI survey in a national study of women superintendents. Their study examined the leadership practices of female superintendents to determine if their leadership behaviors fit a new leadership paradigm, transformational leadership. Katz (2004) used the LPI survey to measure the perceptions of women superintendents regarding their leadership practices in four midwestern states (Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan). Clisbee (2003) used the LPI to survey all superintendents in Massachusetts in order to understand more about the perceived gender-based differences in leadership styles of school superintendents.

Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was granted through Gardner-Webb University. The researcher mailed a letter to each of the female superintendents in North Carolina, which outlined the purpose of the study and invited participation in the study. A profile of the Superintendent and her district (a demographic questionnaire) along with the LPI survey and instructions was mailed to every North Carolina female superintendent. The profile of the Superintendent and her District questionnaire was stapled to the LPI instrument and coded in the upper right corner to assure a match in the event that the two documents became separated. All documents mailed to the North Carolina female superintendents contained coding in the upper right corner, which linked the rating instrument and questionnaire to the female superintendent of origin. The coding allowed the researcher to identify each superintendent's results; however, each participant remained anonymous. The coding also eliminated the need for the researcher to follow up unnecessarily with superintendents who had already submitted their surveys and participated in the study.

The instructions stated that the North Carolina female superintendent should complete the demographic survey (A Profile of the Superintendent and her District) which included the following information:

1. Age of superintendent

2. Age at first superintendency

3. Number of years in present position

4. Total years as superintendent

5. Marital Status

6. Number of years teaching prior to administration

7. Number of administrative positions before superintendency

8. Number of superintendent jobs applied for before first job

9. Highest academic degree obtained and year

10. Size of district

11. Number of school buildings

12. Number of building administrators

13. Number of central office staff

14. Structure of district (Ratio of the number of central office staff to the number of buildings in the district).

The instructions asked that each participating North Carolina female superintendent place her completed demographic questionnaire and LPI survey in a self-addressed, stamped envelope which was provided, and mail back to the researcher, in order to protect the confidentiality of the respondents. A second mailing was utilized, along with follow-up emails, for the non-responding female superintendents in North Carolina. A cover letter was included (Appendix A), which reminded each participant of

the initial request for participation in the study. All individuals with access to surveys or survey data were asked to sign a form of confidentiality. All surveys were kept by the researcher in a locked file cabinet.

Data Analysis

This study, modeled after Katz's (2004) study, incorporated a mixed methods approach and utilized the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) survey and a demographic questionnaire, with supplemental questions to gather data from female superintendents in North Carolina. The LPI survey has 30 leadership behaviors that have been reduced to five leadership practices scales. The findings of this study were compared to Katz's study of female superintendents in four midwestern states, (Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin).

Descriptive statistics were gathered and identified using a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B) completed by the North Carolina female superintendents. The demographic questionnaire gathered data about the age of the female superintendents in North Carolina, cumulative years that the superintendent had served in the role of superintendent, number of years since the superintendent received her last highest academic degree and size and structure of the school district. Analysis of variance was used to determine if there were differences in the perceptions of women superintendents regarding their leadership practices based on age, years of administrative experience, and size and structure of their districts. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to store and organize data and perform statistical functions, such as means and percentages.

Supplemental open-ended questions at the end of the demographic questionnaire were used to gather narrative information about effective leadership practices, advise

other women who may aspire to the superintendency, explain any experiences of gender bias that may have occurred during one's career, discuss life experiences, if any, which prepared each respondent to become a superintendent and identify sources of inspiration, if any, for the respondents. The supplemental questions were analyzed by the identification of common themes. The researcher first identified common themes for each supplemental question. Then the researcher trained another colleague, who is also a doctoral student at a local university, to identify common themes for each supplemental question (Appendix C). All individuals with access to surveys or survey data were asked to sign a form of confidentiality. The researcher then compared her analysis with her colleague's analysis in order to determine congruency with both analyses. The researcher and her colleague agreed upon the identified themes that were found to be common among respondents for each of the supplemental questions in Appendix C. Common themes were color-coded and frequencies were hand-counted. Themes mentioned one to two times by respondents were considered to have a low frequency. Themes mentioned between three and five times by respondents were considered to have a moderate frequency. Themes mentioned more than six times by respondents were considered to have a high frequency. Names were reported as pseudonyms to protect identities.

Limitations

This study examined the perceived leadership styles of female superintendents in North Carolina only. The researcher did not extend its boundaries beyond this region into other regions of the nation or other countries, however, the findings were compared to Katz's (2004) study of female superintendents in four midwestern states. Although this study cannot be generalized beyond female superintendents in North Carolina, it can provide useful information to those states that may have similar district composition. The

findings should not be generalized outside the field of education. This study looked specifically at female superintendents in North Carolina and not at a variety of leaders. The female superintendents in North Carolina comprise a fixed number of available subjects in this study, which limits the sample size to less than 20. The small sample size may have had an effect on the validity of this study.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived leadership practices of the female superintendents in North Carolina and compare those leadership practices with Katz's (2004) study of female superintendents in four midwestern states. This study has added to the general existing body of literature which looked at women's work lives as superintendents through an investigation of their leadership practices. This study has also given voice to the women who work as school superintendents in North Carolina.

This chapter has outlined the research methodologies that were used in this study. This study was a mixed methods approach, which utilized both quantitative and qualitative data to analyze the perceived leadership practices of the female superintendents in North Carolina during the 2008-2009 school year. This chapter identified and described the demographic questionnaire, which was used to collect narrative and organizational data about each participant and her school district. This chapter also identified and described the Leadership Practices Inventory.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to examine women's work lives as North Carolina school superintendents through an investigation of their perceived leadership practices. Five research questions identified the focus of this study:

1. How is the age of the female superintendents in North Carolina reflected in their reported leadership practices?

2. How do years of administrative experience reflect perceived leadership practices of the female superintendents in North Carolina?

3. How is the size and structure of school districts in North Carolina reflected in the female superintendents' perceived leadership practices?

4. How do women superintendents in North Carolina describe effective leadership practices?

5. What are the differences or similarities in perceived leadership practices for female superintendents in North Carolina in 2008 as compared to the perceived leadership practices of female superintendents in the four midwestern states from the 2004 study?

The data were collected using three sources: a) a demographic questionnaire, b) the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self, and c) supplemental questions. Out of 117 school superintendents in North Carolina, only 19 were headed by female superintendents at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year. Thirteen of nineteen female superintendents in North Carolina participated in this study, which yielded a response rate of 68%. Personal data about the participants were gathered through a demographic survey (Appendix C). Tables 1-8 report this personal data.

As shown in Table 1 below, the majority of the female superintendents (46.2%)

were between the ages of 55 and 59, while just over 30% were 60 years or older. Twenty-three percent of respondents were between the ages of 50 and 54. None of the participants were less than 50 years old.

Table 1

Ages of North Carolina Female Superintendents

_____

Age	N	P
Under 40	0	0%
40-44	0	0%
45-49	0	0%
50-54	3	23.1%
55-59	6	46.2%
60+	4	30.8%

Note. N=13

As shown in Table 2, over 76% of female superintendents are married and the remaining 23% are divorced, widowed or single.

Table 2

Marital Status

_____

Marital Status	N	P
Married	10	76.9%
Divorced	1	7.7%
Single	1	7.7%
Widowed	1	7.7%

Note. N=13

As shown in Table 3, just over 92% of all North Carolina female superintendents

who participated in this study have earned a doctoral degree. One participant (7.7%) indicated that she had earned her Specialist degree. These results are higher than the reported findings from the American Association of School Administrators' Study of the State of the Superintendency in 2000 by Glass et al., which found that 56.8% of female superintendents, nationally, held doctoral degrees (p. 96).

Table 3

Highest Degree Obtained

Degree	N	P
Masters	0	0%
Doctorate	12	92.3%
Specialist	1	7.7%

Note. N=13

As shown in Table 4, just over 30% of respondents have held a doctoral degree for 6-10 years and the same percent of respondents have held a doctoral degree for 11-15 years. Fifteen percent of respondents have held a doctoral degree for 16-20 years as well as 20-25 years. One respondent (7.7%) has held a doctoral degree for 25 years or more. The average number of years since respondents' highest degree was earned was 15.15 years.

Table 4

Years Since Highest Degree was Obtained

_____

Years	N	P
0-5 years	0	0%
6-10 years	4	30.8%
11-15 years	4	30.8%
16-20 years	2	15.4%
20-25 years	2	15.4%
25 years or more	1	7.7%

Note. N=13

       Table 5 below depicts the age of each respondent when her first job as school superintendent was acquired. The average age of respondents when their first job of school superintendent was acquired was 44.9 years. The median age of respondents when their first job of school superintendent was acquired was 50 years.

Table 5

Age at First Superintendency

_____

Age	N	P
30-35 years	1	7.7%
36-40 years	0	0%
41-45 years	2	15.4%
46-50 years	5	38.5%
51-55 years	4	30.8%
56-60 years	1	7.7%

Note. N=13

As shown in Table 5, one respondent first acquired the job of school superintendent between the ages of 30 and 35 years. All other respondents indicated that they were over 40 years old when they first acquired the job of school superintendent. Fifteen percent of respondents were between the ages of 41 and 45 years when first acquiring the superintendent's position. Thirty-eight percent of respondents indicated that they were between the ages of 46 and 50 when first acquiring the superintendent's position and almost one-third of respondents were between the ages of 51 and 55 years when first acquiring the position of superintendent. One respondent was between the ages of 56 and 60 when first acquiring the position of school superintendent.

As shown in Table 6, almost one-half of female superintendents (46.2%) have been in their current position for 5 years or less. Forty-six percent of respondents have been in their current position between 6 and 10 years. One respondent (7.7%) has held her current position of school superintendent for 11 years or more. Forty-six percent of respondents indicated that they have served between 6-10 total years as a school superintendent, and not necessarily in their current school district. Almost one-third of respondents (30.8%) indicated that they have served between 0 and 5 total years as a school superintendent, and not necessarily in their current school district. Twenty-three percent of respondents indicated that they have served between 11 and 15 total years as a school superintendent, and not necessarily in their current school district. The respondents' average number of years in their current position is 6 years. The respondents' median number of years in their current position is also 6 years. The respondents' average number of total years as a school superintendent is 8 years. The respondents' median number of total years as a school superintendent is also 8 years.

Table 6

Years Serving as Superintendent

_____

	Consecutive, Present District			Cumulative, Any District	
Years	N	P		N	P
0-5 years	6	46.2%		4	30.8%
6-10 years	6	46.2%		6	46.2%
11-15 years	1	7.7%		3	23.1%

Note. N=13

  In the 1992 Ten-Year Study of the American School Superintendent (where women superintendents constituted about 6% of the total superintendent group), "most superintendents indicated that they had taught about five years" (Glass et al., 2000, p. iv). In the 2000 study of the American Superintendency, "superintendents, on average, had spent five to seven years as classroom teachers before becoming an administrator" (Glass et al., p. 36). Nearly 38% of superintendents surveyed in 2000 indicated that they had 6-10 years teaching experience. "Most studies indicate that female superintendents spend more years as classroom teachers than their male counterparts" (Glass et al., p. 36).

  As shown in Table 7, over one-half of the respondents (53.9%) had taught between 6 and 10 years. Almost 31% of respondents had taught between 11 and 15 years. One respondent (7.7%) indicated that she had taught for 5 years or less and one respondent (7.7%) indicated that she had taught for 16 years or more. The average number of years that the respondents spent teaching was 10.83 years. The median number of years that the respondents spent teaching was 10 years. This finding supports the research in that most women spend about 10 years in the classroom before moving into administrative positions.

Table 7

Number of Years Spent Teaching

_____

Years	N	P
0-5 years	1	7.7%
6-10 years	7	53.9%
11-15 years	4	30.8%
16 years or more	1	7.7%

Note. N=13

   Table 8 below depicts the number of administrative positions held by the

respondents before acquiring the position of school superintendent. The average number

of administrative positions held before acquiring the position as school superintendent

was three positions. The median number of administrative positions held before acquiring

the position of school superintendent was also three positions. The majority of the

respondents (46.2%) indicated that they had held three administrative positions before

becoming a superintendent. Two respondents (15.4%) indicated that they had held two

administrative positions before becoming a superintendent. Another two respondents

(15.4%) indicated that they had held five administrative positions before becoming a

superintendent. One respondent (7.7%) had held only one administrative position before

becoming a superintendent. One respondent (7.7%) had held four administrative positions

before becoming a superintendent and another respondent (7.7%) had held six

administrative positions before becoming a superintendent.

Table 8

Number of Administrative Positions Before Superintendency

_____

Administrative Positions	N	P
0	0	0%
1	1	7.7%
2	2	15.4%
3	6	46.2%
4	1	7.7%
5	2	15.4%
6	1	7.7%

Note. N=13

Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12 below reflect the reported school district information

provided by the respondents. As shown in Table 9, the majority of North Carolina female

superintendents led mid-sized districts (69.2%), in which student populations were

between 2,500 and 9,999. The remaining North Carolina female superintendents led large

districts (30.8%), in which student populations were 10,000 or more. None of the

respondents led small districts, where student populations were less than 2,500.

Table 9

Size of District

_____

Size	N	P
Student population less than 2,500	0	0%
Student population 2,500-9,999	9	69.2%
Student population is 10,000 or more	4	30.8%

Note. N=13

As shown in Table 10, the average number of school buildings reported in school districts was 15.61 buildings. The median number of school buildings reported in the respondents' school districts was 11 school buildings. Thirty-eight percent of respondents reported that their district was comprised of between seven and ten school buildings. Twenty-three percent of the respondents indicated that their district was comprised of between 11 and 15 school buildings. Two respondents (15.4%) indicated that there were between 31 and 35 school buildings in their district. Two respondents (15.4%) indicated that their district comprised between 16 and 20 school buildings and another respondent (7.7%) indicated that her district comprised between 21 and 25 school buildings. The average number of school-based administrators reported by respondents was 22.69 administrators and the median number of school-based administrators reported by the respondents was 18 administrators. Almost 54% of respondents indicated that their districts employed between 10 and 20 school-based administrators. Two respondents (15.4%) reported that their districts employed between 21 and 25 school-based administrators and two respondents (15.4%) reported that their districts employed between 31 and 35 school-based administrators. One respondent (7.7%) indicated that 50 or more school-based administrators were employed in her district.

Table 10

Numbers of School Buildings and School-Based Administrators

_____

Buildings	N	P	Administrators	N	P
7-10	5	38.5%	10-15	3	23.1%
11-15	3	23.1%	16-20	4	30.8%
16-20	2	15.4%	21-25	3	23.1%
21-25	1	7.7%	26-30	0	0%
26-30	0	0%	31-35	2	15.4%
31-35	2	15.4%	50 or more	1	7.7%

Note. N=13

As shown in Table 11, 12 of the respondents reported central office staff numbers. Central office staff numbers were significant to the study because they were used to determine the district structure. The structure of the school district is defined as the ratio of central office staff to the number of school buildings in the district. Thirty-eight percent of female superintendents reported that they had between 10 and 20 central office personnel employed in their districts. Two respondents (15.4%) reported that between 21 and 30 central office personnel were employed and two respondents (15.4%) reported that between 41-50 central office personnel were employed in their districts. One respondent (7.7%) indicated that she employed between 31 and 40 central office personnel and another respondent (7.7%) reported that she employed between 51 and 60 central office personnel in her district. One respondent reported that over 100 central office personnel were employed in her district. In this study, the average number of central office personnel employed in school districts headed by female superintendents was 37.75 personnel, with a median number of 27.5 central office personnel.

Table 11

Numbers of Central Office Personnel

_____

Central Office Staff	N	P
10-20	5	38.5%
21-30	2	15.4%
31-40	1	7.7%
41-50	2	15.4%
51-60	1	7.7%
Over 100	1	7.7%

Note. N=12

      The structure of a school district is defined as the ratio of central office personnel to the number of school buildings. Twelve respondents reported numbers of central office personnel employed in their school districts. As shown in Table 12, the majority of school districts (53.9%) had a structure of 1.01-2.00.

Table 12

Structure of District

_____

Structure	N	P
0.00-1.00	1	7.7%
1.01-2.00	7	53.9%
2.01-3.00	1	7.7%
3.01-4.00	2	15.4%
4.01-5.00	1	7.7%

Note. N=12

The North Carolina female superintendents who participated in this study were asked to complete the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI) developed by Kouzes and Posner (1995). Twelve of the thirteen respondents (92%) completed the LPI survey. The researcher scored the participants' LPI survey results using a computerized scoring software program. Kouzes and Posner "developed the LPI through a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research" (p. 341). Initially, in-depth interviews and written case studies were conducted of 42 middle and senior level managers of their personal best leadership experiences. A questionnaire was then developed and over 2,500 long surveys and over 5,000 short surveys were collected. The analysis of the interviews, case studies and surveys produced five key leadership practices that characterize Kouzes and Posner's leadership framework. These five leadership practices became the five constructs rated by the LPI. Kouzes and Posner translated the five leadership practices into behavioral statements (see Appendix D). A 10-point Likert scale was developed to represent the use of each leadership behavior, with the largest number reflecting greater use of the leadership behavior. Each of the five leadership practice scales is measured with six statements for a total of 30 questions (see Appendix D).

Table 13 depicts the averages and standard deviations of the LPI scores for all North Carolina female superintendents participating in this study. The average column shows the averages of all of the respondents' ratings for each of the five practices. The standard deviation is based on all of the scores in the group and is determined by figuring out how much each score deviates from the average score. The standard deviation describes the dispersion of scores and indicates the extent of agreement among all the individual North Carolina female superintendents.

Table 13

Leadership Practices Inventory-Self

_____

Leadership Practice	Average	Standard Deviation
Model the Way	52	4.3
Inspire a Shared Vision	51.4	5.5
Challenge the Process	51.6	4.0
Enable Others to Act	53.2	2.8
Encourage the Heart	51.9	5.1

As shown in Table 14 below, the LPI survey results indicated that five of twelve respondents (41.7%) used the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act most often. Four of twelve respondents (33.3%) used the leadership practice of Encouraging the Heart most often. Two of the respondents (16.7%) used the leadership practice of Inspiring a Shared Vision most often. One respondent (8.3%) used the leadership practice of Modeling the Way most often. None of the respondents' survey results indicated that the leadership practice of Challenging the Process was used most often.

Table 14

LPI Survey Results

_____

Leadership Practice	N	P
Enable Others to Act	5	41.7%
Encourage the Heart	4	33.3%
Inspire a Shared Vision	2	16.7%
Model the Way	1	8.3%
Challenge the Process	0	0

Note. N=12

Research Question 1: *How is the age of the female superintendents in North Carolina reflected in their reported leadership practices?*

To explore the impact that the North Carolina female superintendents' age had on her leadership practice as rated using the LPI, a one-way, between group analysis of variance was conducted. ANOVA was used in this study because participants' perceived leadership practices were measured on different characteristics. In this instance the characteristic measured was age. Three age categories were used (Group 1: 50-54, Group 2: 55-59, Group 3: 60 or older). There was very little variance in means among groups and there was no significance at the $p = .05$ level found between the age of the North Carolina female superintendent and her perceived leadership practice. Table 15 illustrates the findings of the LPI results as they relate to the ages of the North Carolina female superintendents using ANOVA, where *MS* is the mean squared for each leadership practice.

Table 15

One-way ANOVA for LPI Scales and North Carolina Female Superintendent's Age

_____

Practice		*df*	*MS*
Enable Others to Act	Between groups	3	3.24
	Within groups	8	
Encourage the Heart	Between groups	3	5.06
	Within groups	8	
Inspire a Vision	Between groups	3	2.25
	Within groups	8	
Model the Way	Between groups	3	9.00
	Within groups	8	

Note. F=1.284, p=0.344

Research Question 2: *How do years of administrative experience reflect perceived leadership practices of the female superintendents in North Carolina?*

To explore the impact that the North Carolina female superintendents' years of administrative experience had on their perceived leadership practice as rated using the LPI, a one-way, between group analysis of variance was conducted. Years of administrative experience was defined as total years as school superintendent. ANOVA was used in this study because respondents' perceived leadership practices were measured on different characteristics. In this instance, the characteristic measured was years of administrative experience. There was little variance among the means among groups and there was no significance at the *p* =.05 level found between the number of years of administrative experience for the North Carolina female superintendent and her perceived leadership practice. Table 16 illustrates the findings of the LPI results as it

relates to years of administrative experience for the North Carolina female

superintendents using ANOVA, where *MS* is the mean squared for each leadership

practice.

Table 16

One-way ANOVA for LPI Scales and North Carolina Female Superintendents' Years of Experience

_____

Practice		*df*	*MS*
Enable Others to Act	Between groups	3	68.89
	Within groups	8	
Encourage the Heart	Between groups	3	54.46
	Within groups	8	
Inspire a Vision	Between groups	3	56.25
	Within groups	8	
Model the Way	Between groups	3	64.00
	Within groups	8	

Note. F=0.041; p=0.988

Research Question 3: *How is the size and structure of school districts in North Carolina reflected in the female superintendents' perceived leadership practices?*

To explore the impact that the North Carolina female superintendents' structure of

district had on their perceived leadership practice as rated using the LPI, a one-way,

between group analysis of variance was conducted. Structure of district was defined as

the ratio of central office personnel to the number of school buildings. ANOVA was used

in this study because participants' perceived leadership practices were measured on

different characteristics. In this instance the characteristic measured was district structure.

There was a significant difference found at the *p*=.05 level for the structure of the district

and the North Carolina female superintendent's perceived leadership practice. When the

structure of the district was 1.59 or less, North Carolina female superintendents perceived

themselves to be Enabling Others to Act most frequently. Table 17 illustrates the findings

of the LPI results as they relate to the district structures of the North Carolina female

superintendents using ANOVA, where *MS* is the mean squared for each leadership

practice.

Table 17

One-way ANOVA for LPI Scales and Structure of Districts

Practice		*df*	*MS*
Enable Others to Act	Between groups	3	1.607
	Within groups	8	
Encourage the Heart	Between groups	3	11.34
	Within groups	8	
Inspire a Vision	Between groups	3	9.068
	Within groups	8	
Model the Way	Between groups	3	2.777
	Within groups	8	

Note. F=4.362; p=.05

Research Question 4: *How do women superintendents in North Carolina describe*

effective leadership practices?

This question was presented to the North Carolina female superintendents in the

form of a supplemental question. There were a total of five supplemental questions (see

Appendix C), and the first one asked respondents to describe effective leadership

practices. The majority of respondents indicated that having a shared vision, mission, setting goals and having high expectations were essential to being effective, and this common theme was mentioned 14 times, thus having a high frequency. Another common theme, communication, was mentioned seven times and had a high frequency among respondents in regards to effective leadership practices. Organizational excellence and celebrating achievement and progress were each moderate frequency responses given by participants on three occasions to describe effective leadership practices. Respondents also noted that hiring the best people and adjusting for change were other effective leadership practices, but because these two responses were mentioned only twice, they were rated as having a low frequency. Actual responses to the question asking respondents to describe effective leadership practices are listed below. All documents mailed to the North Carolina female superintendents contained coding in the upper right corner, which were the first 19 letters of the alphabet. (There were a total of 19 female superintendents in North Carolina during the time this study was completed). The coding linked the LPI survey and questionnaire to the female superintendent of origin and allowed the researcher to identify each superintendent's results. However, each participant remained anonymous.

Superintendent D: Effective leadership practices promote organizational excellence through shared vision and high expectations (Anonymous, personal communication, September 13, 2008).

Superintendent O: Effective leadership comes through developing and supporting a team who is inspired to accomplish the goals and dreams for your district (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent A: Find outstanding people who are self-starters, mission-driven and committed to student success; develop shared goals, monitor and support programs; Celebrate when we make progress; Communicate, Communicate, Communicate; Appreciate, Appreciate, Appreciate (Anonymous, personal communication, August 28, 2008).

Superintendent S: The ability to diagnose needs of organization both quantitatively and qualitatively; the ability to lead others to understand and address those needs; Communication skills, which includes listening; Walk the talk (Anonymous, personal communication, August 24, 2008).

Superintendent F: An effective leader sets out a vision, gets others to help set goals, develops strategies to achieve goals, identifies in advance how the success of strategies will be measured, gathers disaggregated data frequently and reports successes/failures in achieving goals to staff, board and the public; An effective leader brings out the best in others (Anonymous, personal communication, August 22, 2008).

Superintendent K: The ability to articulate a vision for all students; the ability to handle constant change and pressure; Communication skills to engage all stakeholders (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent C: A leader is one who demonstrates daily a vision for the organization and one who empowers everyone in the organization to lead articulating the vision and demonstrating every moment the passion (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent V: Open, honest, good communicator, visionary, fair and respectful (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent M: Knowing the strategic plan for the organization; Keeping all focused on the goals; Being able to take charge in a caring manner; Celebrating successes and constantly adjusting for improvement (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent N: Leading is a collaborative manner; Visionary (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent L: Set goals, communicate well, be a role model, hire the very best people you can find, have high expectations for yourself and others (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent T: Having a vision and motivating others to reach for the vision; Involving stakeholders in making decisions and providing feedback and input; Communicating the vision and the plan for reaching goals for the organization (Anonymous, personal communication, October 7, 2008).

Figure 1 below illustrates the frequencies of common themes described by respondents as effective leadership practices.
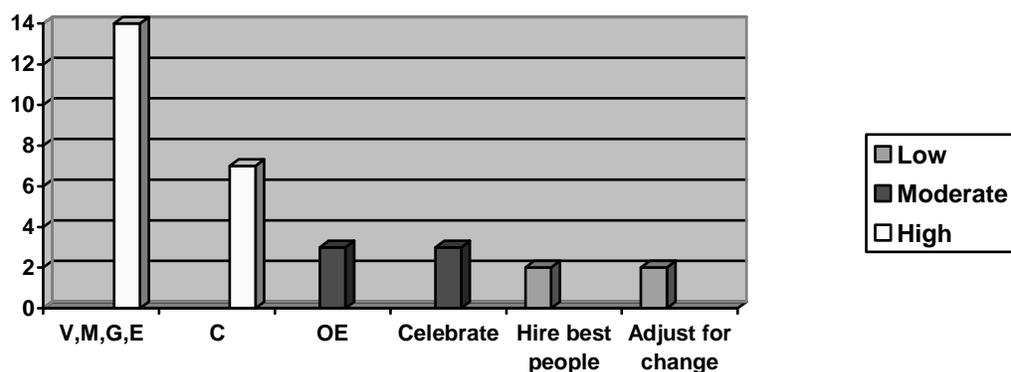
Figure 1. Frequencies of common themes for descriptions of effective leadership practices. VMGE= Vision, Mission, Goals and Expectations, C=Communication and OE= Organizational Excellence.

Research Question 5: *What are the differences or similarities in perceived leadership practices for female superintendents in North Carolina in 2008 as compared to the perceived leadership practices of female superintendents in the four midwestern states from the 2004 study?*

A study of female superintendents in four midwestern states using the LPI was conducted by Katz (2004). In Katz's study, women perceived themselves to be using the five leadership practices in the following order: Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, Challenging the Process, Encouraging the Heart and Inspiring a Shared Vision. In this study of North Carolina female superintendents, women perceived themselves to be using four of the leadership practices in the following order: Enabling Others to Act, Encouraging the Heart, Inspiring a Shared Vision and Modeling the Way. None of the female superintendents in North Carolina perceived themselves as Challenging the Process. In Katz's study, women superintendents in the largest school districts perceived themselves to be Challenging the Process and Inspiring a Shared Vision more than women in mid-size and small school districts. Also in Katz's study, women superintendents in mid-size school districts perceived themselves to be using Modeling the Way more than women superintendents in the other two groups. In this study of North Carolina female superintendents, there were no female superintendents that led small districts. Only four North Carolina female superintendents led large districts and nine led mid-size districts. In this study of North Carolina female superintendents, only the structure of the district (ratio of central office personnel to the number of school buildings) impacted superintendents' perceived leadership practice. Enabling Others to Act was found to be a significant leadership practice when the structure was 1.59 or less.

Katz (2004) interviewed nine female superintendents after her quantitative data

analysis found differences in perceived leadership practices based on size of district. Katz asked the interviewees their perceptions of leadership in different size districts. Five female superintendents who led small districts were interviewed. The women expressed that in small districts, superintendents have to wear many hats. They are involved in everything, which can be very demanding. Yet, the female superintendents in small districts agreed that they are hands-on, able to recognize students and families and can remember names. North Carolina female superintendents agreed that the job of superintendent is very demanding with long hours and advised women who aspire to become superintendents to find balance in their lives.

Katz (2004) interviewed two female superintendents who led mid-size districts. One had been hired to "fix" a troubled school district and she did that by fostering collaboration. The other one was hired to create a new image for her district. Her district was one of the poorest in the state and she was a part of mobilizing the district to overcome the poverty barrier and set high expectations for students. Most North Carolina female superintendents mentioned having high expectations as an effective leadership practice and organizational excellence was a moderate theme mentioned by North Carolina female superintendents.

Katz (2004) interviewed two female superintendents who led large districts. The first superintendent thought that the processes of leadership are the same regardless of the size of the district. She stated "you have got to build consensus for what you want to do and you've got to engender the support of the people that you work with, no matter what the environment" (Katz, p. 15). The respondent did, however, feel that being in a large district did not allow her to be intimately involved in the day-to-day operations of the school district. The second superintendent interviewed by Katz from a large size district

was from a growing suburb of a major metropolitan area. She noted that she had worked in both a small district and a large district. As the leader of a small district, this respondent knew absolutely every teacher by name and where they were teaching. She felt that the key to leading a large district was in figuring out what you can insert yourself into and what you let assistant superintendents and principals deal with. Several North Carolina female superintendents indicated that effective leadership comes through developing and supporting a team to accomplish the goals of the district. The North Carolina female superintendents also agreed that collaboration, empowerment of others and shared decision making were essential for leadership.

Another interview question from Katz (2004) asked how women searched for opportunities to change the status quo. The women were cautious in effecting change, preferring to build relationships first. For one respondent, change was a way of life for her district, given the fact that her district had experienced tremendous growth. However, this particular superintendent had to decide on how much change her employees could deal with and still be sane. Another respondent indicated that she had to know what was happening with her people so that she could know how hard and fast to push them on some organizational changes that needed to take place. A third respondent in Katz's study felt strongly about changing the status quo and would often ask her staff what their greatest fear was and what was the worst that could happen. These two questions helped her staff understand that the benefits outweigh the risks and it took them away from their comfort levels. One participant in Katz's study noted that one of the best ways to change the status quo is to make time for reflection, because when people can intellectualize what happened, they can know why some things work and others do not. Two of the North Carolina female superintendents mentioned that effective leadership means having

the ability to handle constant change and pressure and knowing how to constantly adjust for improvement.

A third question from Katz (2004) asked interviewees their vision for their school district and the fourth question from Katz asked was how others were enlisted in sharing the vision. A common theme for vision was instructional improvement to help students learn. Several respondents indicated that they solicited input from stakeholders, including community members, to craft the vision in their school districts, by fostering "buy in" and giving staff credit for their work. Another respondent ensured that the vision and mission were always in the forefront by sending a weekly memo to staff which addressed how the district was doing in terms of that vision. Female superintendents interviewed in Katz's study spoke of building consensus through shared decision making and being visible in the community. Not only did the majority of North Carolina female superintendents indicate that having a shared vision was an essential leadership practice, but many mentioned the importance of articulating the vision by using communication skills to engage all stakeholders.

When asked about their philosophy of leadership, one of the female superintendents interviewed in Katz's (2004) study felt that leadership is being able to provide the environment, resources and climate for people to be able to utilize their strengths and abilities. Another believed that leadership is building security and confidence in the people who are in the district. Another spoke about servant leadership and how she engaged the staff and community members to partner in moving the district forward. There was a consensus among most of the women that they needed to build key relationships with the school board, staff members and community. All of the women superintendents in Katz's study believed themselves to be role models for their staff and

students. It can be deduced that the North Carolina female superintendents in this study maintained key relationships with their stakeholders. In describing effective leadership practices, North Carolina female superintendents agreed that developing and supporting a team as well as engaging stakeholders was integral for success. Additionally, most of the North Carolina female superintendents felt that coworkers, mentors and supervisors inspired them to become a superintendent, which signifies the fact that the participants in this study were able to maintain positive and collaborative relationships. One respondent reported that she enjoyed problem solving and relationship building. Several North Carolina respondents indicated that it was important to involve stakeholders in making decisions and providing feedback and input.

In Katz's (2004) study, women superintendents felt that hiring practices were important components of how well they led and they believed that effective leaders must possess specific qualities, such as integrity, character and strong values. In this study of North Carolina female superintendents, two respondents echoed the importance of hiring practices. One respondent indicated that an effective leader finds outstanding people who are mission-driven and committed to student success, while another indicated the importance of hiring the very best people one can find. When giving advice for other women who may aspire to the role of superintendent, a common theme mentioned by North Carolina female superintendents was to know thyself, and the values and beliefs one stands for. There were many similarities between the North Carolina female superintendents and the female superintendents from Katz's study of four midwestern states. Both sets of female superintendents had similar ideas on leadership, collaboration, relationships, vision and high expectations. Table 18 below compares the leadership practices of North Carolina female superintendents with Katz's midwestern study of

female superintendents, based on size of district.

Table 18

Comparison of Leadership Practices Between the North Carolina Study and the Mid-western Study

_____

	Midwest	North Carolina
Large	Challenging Process/Inspiring Vision	Enabling Others/Encouraging Heart
Mid	Modeling the Way	No significant differences
Small	No significant differences	No small districts

Twelve of the 13 participants in this study responded to a set of five supplemental questions, (Appendix C), which comprised the qualitative portion of this mixed methods research study. The supplemental questions were attached to the LPI survey and included in the initial mailings to North Carolina female superintendents. The supplemental questions were analyzed by the identification of common themes. The researcher first identified and compiled a key word count which was then translated into common themes for each supplemental question. Then the researcher trained another colleague, who is also a doctoral student at a local university, to identify key word counts that could be translated into common themes for each supplemental question (Appendix C). All individuals with access to surveys or survey data were asked to sign a form of confidentiality. The researcher then compared her analysis with her colleague's analysis in order to determine congruency with both analyses. The researcher and her colleague agreed upon the identified themes that were found to be common among respondents for each of the supplemental questions in Appendix C. This process of checks and balances enabled the researcher to validate the content of the responses to the supplemental

questions. Common themes were color-coded and frequencies were hand-counted. As

shown in Table 19 below, themes mentioned one to two times by respondents were

considered to have a low frequency. Themes mentioned between three and five times by

respondents were considered to have a moderate frequency. Themes mentioned more

than six times by respondents were considered to have a high frequency.

Table 19

Identification of Common Themes for Supplemental Questions

_____

Theme (N)	Level of Frequency
1-2	Low
3-5	Moderate
6 or more	High

Supplemental question one asked respondents to describe effective leadership

practices and responses were reported in Research Question 4. Supplemental question

two asked respondents what advice they would give to other women who may aspire to

the superintendency. Six themes emerged: Be prepared to handle criticism (low

frequency), manage emotions (low frequency), know yourself and your core beliefs

(moderate frequency), find balance and support of family (moderate frequency), be

prepared to work long and hard (moderate frequency) and Go for it! (moderate

frequency). Figure 2 below illustrates the frequencies of common themes for

supplemental question two, in which respondents gave advice for women who may aspire

to become a superintendent. There were no common themes that generated a high

frequency from the respondents for supplemental question two.
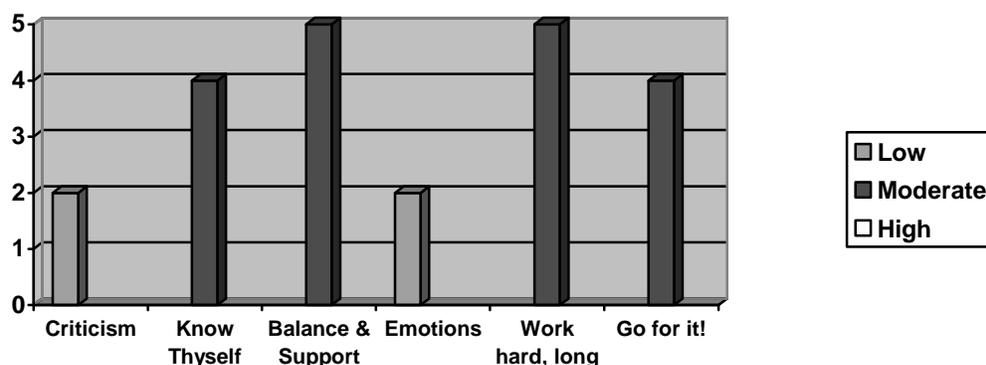
Figure 2. Frequencies of common themes for advice for women who may aspire to the superintendency.

Actual responses from the supplemental question which asked current North Carolina female superintendents what advice they would give to women who may aspire to the superintendency are listed below.

Superintendent D: You must be tough-skinned. You must realize criticism will come and it is related to the position and usually not to the person. Maintain composure at all times. Admit mistakes and correct accordingly. One person cannot control the Board (Anonymous, personal communication, September 13, 2008).

Superintendent O: Women, perhaps even more than ever, need to be very clear with themselves about their core beliefs. Stay focused but be willing to take detours because a longer path may be the one to success. Don't have a gender chip on your shoulder. Don't try to win all of the battles. Find balance to your life, but know it is hard work (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent A: Know your own core values and what you stand for. Be prepared to handle criticism (public criticism). Know why you want to be a superintendent. Enjoy problem solving and relationship building (Anonymous, personal communication, August 28, 2008).

Superintendent S: Women are much more intuitive and skilled at this work if they can manage their emotions. I think we personalize issues more than men. You don't have to try to be a man to be good at this work. You must be at a point in your life where you will not have to sacrifice your family to be a superintendent (Anonymous, personal communication, August 24, 2008).

Superintendent F: I would give the same advice to men and women who aspire to the superintendency. Seek mentors, identify your personal strengths and weaknesses, work hard to improve areas where you need (or could be perceived to need) to learn more, and ask for opportunities to be involved in key activities, such as budget preparation, that a superintendent must do. Secure the support of your family and be willing to relocate more than once (Anonymous, personal communication, August 22, 2008).

Superintendent K: Go for it (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent C: Learn prior to accepting a position of this magnitude the time commitment the job requires, the impact the job may have on one's family and the politics that often govern the job (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent V: It's a great job and one that you will really enjoy. You can do it, and I would say "Go for it" (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent M: Get plenty of experience in central office or the principalship. Know who you are and be true to who you are, which usually takes maturity (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent N: Go for it (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15,

2008).

Superintendent L: Acquire doctorate degree—It opens doors. Work hard and long hours. You must be a people person and a good communicator (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent T: Being a female superintendent requires a strong commitment. The hours are unbelievable and the stress is especially high. There is little room for emotions. It is very difficult to find a balance in your life. There is never an off or downtime (Anonymous, personal communication, October 7, 2008).Supplemental question three asked respondents if they had ever experienced gender bias in their career as an administrator. Seven respondents indicated that they had never or rarely experienced gender bias in their career, which indicated a high frequency. Other common themes for supplemental question three were compensation (low frequency), respect issues, especially when wearing certain types of clothing (low frequency) and not being tough enough because of gender (moderate frequency). Figure 3 below illustrates the frequencies of common themes for supplemental question three, which asked respondents to describe any experiences of gender bias.
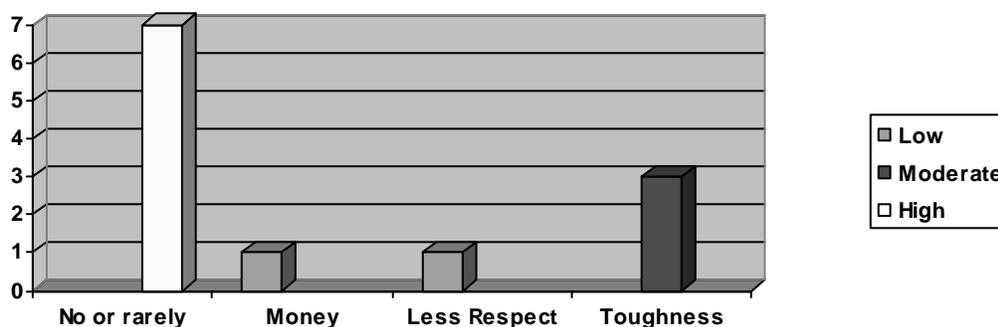
Figure 3. Frequencies of gender bias reported in career as administrator.

Actual responses from the supplemental question which asked current North Carolina female superintendents if they had ever experienced gender bias in their career as an administrator are listed below.

Superintendent D: I probably was not compensated at the rate of most superintendents. I received no supplement. I was paid on the state salary schedule based on district size, years of experience and degrees. My travel allowance was the same as all staff—just reimbursement (Anonymous, personal communication, September 13, 2008).

Superintendent O: I did experience gender bias when I was cracking the ceiling with technology. The bias came from a colleague, not my supervisor. I have also noticed that I am not treated with as much respect when I wear pant suits, especially early in my administrative career (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent A: No (Anonymous, personal communication, August 28, 2008).

Superintendent S: Yes on many levels from male peers who are uncomfortable, from "officials" who are not sure a female is tough enough. I have always found that once folks get to know me—that all goes away. The initial tests may be stricter for women (Anonymous, personal communication, August 24, 2008).

Superintendent F: When I first became an assistant principal in 1984, I was not issued a set of keys to the building. The assistant superintendent explained to me that the district did not issue keys to women for their own safety. He stated that if a woman was in a building alone at night or on the weekend she could be "raped or something." The only other gender bias I experienced was being subjected to gender-based questions in interviews (Anonymous, personal communication, August 22, 2008).

Superintendent K: No, not really (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent C: I feel that during my tenure as a school principal, I was never selected as a high school principal because my competition seemed to always be large men who had made their mark as disciplinarians while serving as Assistant Principals. In another situation, I was actually told by a Board of Education member that a female would not be selected for the position that was vacant in the district where I served as Assistant Superintendent. A male was selected for the job. He was bought out of his contract two years later and I was named Superintendent (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent V: No (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent M: No (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent N: Yes, but rarely. Individuals may have issues, but generally this has not been a big problem (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent L: No (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent T: Not really (Anonymous, personal communication, October 7, 2008).

Supplemental question four asked respondents what life experiences, if any, prepared them to become a superintendent. The common theme that was considered to have a high frequency was family experiences. The common themes that were considered to have a moderate frequency were administrative experiences, working hard for everything and all experiences prepared respondents to become a superintendent. For supplemental question four, no responses resulted in a low frequency for common themes. Figure 4 below illustrates the common themes for supplemental question four, which asked respondents what life experiences prepared them to become a superintendent.
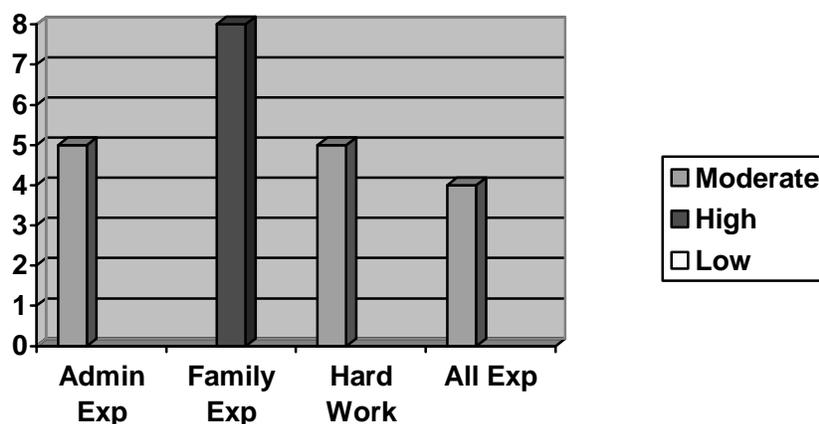
Figure 4. Frequencies of life experiences reported by respondents that gave preparation for job of superintendent.

Actual responses from the supplemental question which asked current North Carolina female superintendents what life experiences prepared them to become a superintendent are listed below.

Superintendent D: Administrative experience, teaching at the elementary, middle and high school levels, working with strong superintendents and varied central office experiences, including 7 years as an associate superintendent (Anonymous, personal communication, September 13, 2008).

Superintendent O: My parents raised me with a sense that girls could have big dreams that could be realized, especially my father. I am a sum of many rich experiences (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent A: My father was a superintendent; many leadership roles over the years, such as college drum major, class president, etc., 13 years of classroom experience and coaching high school sports (Anonymous, personal communication, August 28, 2008).

Superintendent S: ALL. I think being a principal is a must for superintendents. It

is hard to understand and be credible if you have not walked in the shoes of others. Working hard on a farm growing up was also good preparation (Anonymous, personal communication, August 24, 2008).

Superintendent F: My two custodial parents (grandmother and mother) died 45 days apart when I was 12, forcing me to live with relatives I barely knew and to change schools four times in 4 years. From this I developed resiliency, learned to adapt and to establish rapport with people from all walks of life. As a teenager, I held leadership positions in school and community organizations. I was also the first female to play in my high school's jazz band. Most importantly, I had opportunities to develop interests in a wide variety of topics, giving me a well-rounded background that has served me well (Anonymous, personal communication, August 22, 2008).

Superintendent K: All of my experiences have helped, from being a mother, working full time juggling competing demands on my time, working in a factory on an assembly line and course work in my degrees (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent C: I grew up with a single mom with a high school degree who was a seamstress supporting three daughters. I became very independent and learned quickly to work for what I wanted to acquire and never quit anything until the job was done and done well (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent V: I believe that all of your life experiences help mold you as a person and thus as a superintendent (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent M: Being a mother, sibling and wife (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent N: Being a single parent and working hard to finish degrees while working (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent L: I worked hard for everything. I would not take no for an answer. I tried to be the best at each and every job (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent T: I am not sure there was any experience that gave enough preparation. It is more on-the-job training. Professionally, being a high school principal prepared me as much as anything. Both jobs begin and end each day with the unexpected (Anonymous, personal communication, October 7, 2008).

Supplemental question five asked respondents what or who inspired them to become a superintendent. The common theme that was considered to have a high frequency was co-workers, mentors and supervisors. The common theme that was considered to have a moderate frequency was intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation was characterized by respondents wanting to make a difference or by a desire to be at the top of their profession. The common theme that was considered to have a low frequency was family members. Figure 5 below illustrates the common themes for supplemental question five, which asked respondents to indicate what or who inspired them to become a superintendent.
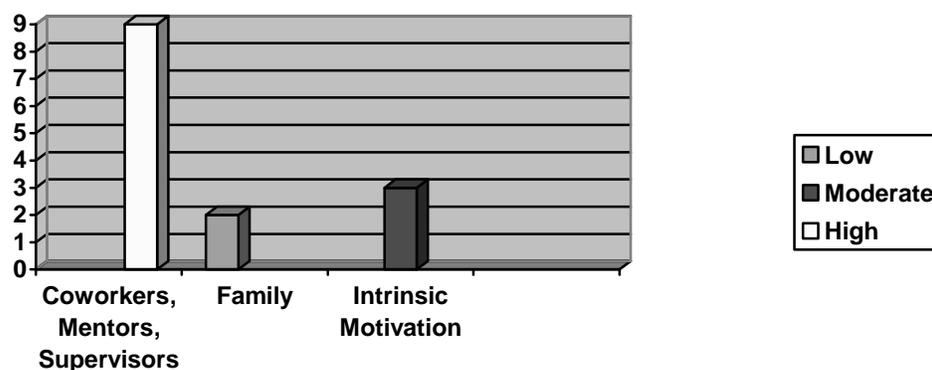
Figure 5. Frequencies of common themes reported by respondents when asked about sources of inspiration when deciding to become a superintendent.

Actual responses from the supplemental question which asked current North Carolina female superintendents what or who inspired them to become a superintendent are listed below.

Superintendent D: Co-workers and mentors (Anonymous, personal communication, September 13, 2008).

Superintendent O: My inspiration came from my superintendent, my supervisor and my spouse (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent A: My father and my mentor, which was my superintendent from 1991-2000 (Anonymous, personal communication, August 28, 2008).

Superintendent S: I was more encouraged than inspired from mentors and friends who thought I could do the job (Anonymous, personal communication, August 24, 2008).

Superintendent F: When I graduated from (……) in 1969, the superintendent was a woman. Since there had only been two superintendents during my 12 years of schooling, I naively assumed that 50% of superintendents were women. I was unaware that she was the only female superintendent in that state. Two administrators in particular, as role models and mentors, inspired or encouraged me to become a

superintendent: The superintendent of (…..) County Schools and the superintendent of (…..) County Schools. A graduate school professor followed my career and provided support (Anonymous, personal communication, August 22, 2008).

Superintendent K: I don't know that it was one individual. It was the circumstances of where I was in life and from the encouragement of a teacher colleague who is also a trusted friend (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent C: The Superintendent who served the district where I served as principal for 10 years (Anonymous, personal communication, August 20, 2008).

Superintendent V: A central office director channeled me into administration, not necessarily the superintendency (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent M: No particular person (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent N: I wanted to make a difference (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent L: I aspired to be at the top of my profession (Anonymous, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

Superintendent T: The superintendent in (…..) County was my mentor. He has always encouraged me to stretch and go beyond what I think I can do (Anonymous, personal communication, October 7, 2008).

Summary

This chapter of the research study has explained the manner in which the data were handled and analyzed. Two of the research questions (age and years of administrative experience) were found to not have a significant impact on the North

Carolina female superintendents' perceived leadership practices. However, the structure

of the district was found to have a significant impact on the North Carolina female

superintendents' perceived leadership practice. The next chapter will discuss the findings,

results, implications for further research, and conclusions.

Chapter 5: Findings and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived leadership practices of the North Carolina female superintendents. A second intent was to determine if organizational or personal variables impacted the rating of the female superintendents' leadership practice. A third intent was to give voice to the female superintendents in North Carolina so that women who aspire to the superintendency are able to learn about various leadership practices and how women go about influencing others. Each respondent had a predominant leadership practice. In this chapter, conclusions on the findings of this study are reported. They are organized for the reader as responses to the research questions in this study. The relationship of the findings to the literature, along with limitations and recommendations by the researcher for further study follow.

Findings

Research Question 1: *How is the age of the female superintendents in North Carolina reflected in their reported leadership practices?*

For the first research question, the age of the female superintendents in North Carolina had no significant impact on reported leadership practices. Three of the thirteen respondents were between the ages of 50 and 54. Six of the thirteen respondents were between the ages of 55 and 59. The remaining four respondents were aged 60 or older. There was very little variance in means among these three groups and there was no significance found between the age of the North Carolina female superintendent and her perceived leadership practice. The F score was 1.284 and the p value was 0.344. Even if there had been more of an age range for the respondents, this study found that age would not have been a factor in perceived leadership practices of North Carolina female superintendents.

According to the 2006 Mid-Decade Study of the State of the American School Superintendency, today's superintendents are older. "The mean age is the highest in history, at nearly 55 years old" (Pascopella, 2008, p. 32). The average age of the American superintendent in 2000 was 52. In a 1992 study of American School Superintendents, the average age of superintendents was near 50. The average age when North Carolina female superintendents acquired their first job of school superintendent was 44.9 years. "In years past, superintendents started their positions at around age 40" (Pascopella, p. 32). According to Sharp et al. (2000), male superintendents typically enter the superintendency in their early to mid-40's, while female superintendents will not enter the superintendency until around 50 years of age. In the 2000 study of the American School Superintendency, female superintendents' ages were as follows: 0.6% were between the ages of 30 and 40, 8.2% were between the ages of 41 and 45, 31.6% were between the ages of 46 and 50, 34.7% were between the ages of 51 and 55, 17% were between the ages of 56 and 60, 6.8% were between the ages of 61 and 65 and 1% of female superintendents were aged 66 or older. In the 2000 study of the American School Superintendency, male superintendents' ages were as follows: 2.8% were between the ages of 30 and 40, 6.6% were between the ages of 41 and 45, 24.5% were between the ages of 46 and 50, 37.2% were between the ages of 51 and 55, 21% were between the ages of 56 and 60, 7.1% were between the ages of 61 and 65 and 0.9% of male superintendents were aged 66 or older. According to the 2006 Mid-Decade Study of School Superintendents, 4.3% of all respondents were aged 39 or younger, 6.2% were between the ages of 40 and 44, 12.8% were between the ages of 45 and 49, 26.2% were between the ages of 50 and 54, 35.7% were between the ages of 55 and 59, 12.2% were between the ages of 60 and 64 and 2.6% were aged 65 or older. In this study of North

Carolina female superintendents, 23% were between the ages of 50 and 54, 46% were between the ages of 55 and 59 and 31% were aged 60 or older. Historically, women enter school administration later than men, which may be due to the fact that women raise families and tend to family obligations. The data for research question one imply that most North Carolina female superintendents are older than the 2006 national average age of superintendents, which is 55 years. Seventy-seven percent of North Carolina female superintendents were aged 55 or older. All of the respondents in this study were aged 50 or older.

Research Question 2: *How do years of administrative experience reflect perceived leadership practices of the female superintendents in North Carolina?*

For the second research question, years of administrative experience had no significant impact on perceived leadership practices of the female superintendents in North Carolina. In this study, years of administrative experience was defined as the total number of years as a school superintendent. Total years of administrative experience ranged from 3.5 years to 15 years. Almost one-third of respondents (30.8%) indicated that they had 5 years or less of administrative experience. Forty-six percent of respondents indicated that they had between 6 and 10 years of administrative experience and 23% of respondents indicated that they had between 11 and 15 years of administrative experience. The respondents' average number of years of administrative experience was 8 years; 8 years was also the median number of years of administrative experience. There was very little variance in means among groups and there was no significance found between the number of years of administrative experience for the North Carolina female superintendent and her perceived leadership practice. The F score was 0.041 and the p value was 0.988, which indicated that the North Carolina female

superintendents' years of administrative experience had no impact on perceived leadership practices.

Nine out of thirteen respondents indicated that they had three or fewer administrative positions before acquiring the job of school superintendent. The data for research question two imply that the prior administrative experiences for the respondents were sufficient and prepared them for their current roles, but had no impact on their perceived leadership practices. Other factors, such as beliefs about effective leadership attributes, may impact female superintendents perceived leadership practices, but not administrative experiences.

In the 2000 study of the American School Superintendency, 26.6% of men had 14 or more total years of experience while 74.9% of women had 9 or fewer years of experience. According to the 2006 Mid-Decade Study of School Superintendents, the estimated average tenure of superintendents was 5.5 years and the median tenure was near 6 years. This finding is significant because superintendent tenure is positively correlated with student achievement. "According to research by the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, the positive effects manifest themselves as early as two years into the superintendent's tenure" (Vogt, 2007, p. 2). Fifteen percent of all respondents in 2006 had served 1 year as superintendent in their current position, 15% had served 2 years in their current position, 12.2% had 3 years of experience in their current position, 10.6% had 4 years of experience in their current position, 9.7% had 5 years of experience in their current position, 8.7% had 6 years of experience in their current position, 6.9% had 7 years of experience in their current position, 3.4% had 8 years of experience in their current position, 3.6% had 9 years of experience in their current position and 15% had 10 or more years of experience in their current position. In

this study, 46.2% of North Carolina female superintendents had served 5 years or less in their current position, another 46.2% had served between 6 and 10 years in their current position and 7.7% had served between 11 and 15 years in her current position.

Research Question 3: *How is the size and structure of school districts in North Carolina reflected in the female superintendents' perceived leadership practices?*

For research question three, the size and structure of school districts in North Carolina significantly impacted female superintendents' perceived leadership practices. In this study, the structure of a school district was defined as the ratio of central office personnel to the number of school buildings. Twelve out of thirteen respondents reported numbers of central office personnel employed in their school districts. The majority of school districts (53.9%) had a structure between 1.00 and 2.00. There was a significant difference found at the $p=.05$ level for the structure of the district and the North Carolina female superintendents' perceived leadership practice. When the structure of the district was 1.59 or less, the North Carolina female superintendents perceived themselves to be Enabling Others to Act most frequently. When the One-Way ANOVA was conducted for the LPI scales and the structure of the district, the F value was 4.362, which indicates that significance for the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act was not due to chance. Superintendent O perceived herself to use the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act most frequently. She leads a large school district and has a ratio of 1.59 central office staff members for every school building. Superintendents A and V, who perceived that they used the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act, both lead a mid-size school district, with a ratio of 1.22 central office personnel for every school building in their districts. Superintendent S, who perceived herself as using the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act most frequently, leads a large school district and has a ratio of

1.43 central office staff members for every school building. Superintendent K, who perceived that she used the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act, leads a mid-size school district, with a ratio of less than one (.875) central office staff member for every school building in her district. Superintendent M did not return the LPI survey, but her district structure was 1.571, which fell into the significant category of Enabling Others to Act. The researcher can thus conclude that had Superintendent M returned her LPI survey, Superintendent M's results would indicate that she perceived herself to be utilizing the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act most frequently. This conclusion can be made based on the fact that Superintendent M's structure of the district was within the range of the significant category of this particular leadership practice.

Research Question 4: *How do women superintendents in North Carolina describe effective leadership practices?*

For the fourth research question, women superintendents in North Carolina described effective leadership practices. The majority of respondents indicated that having a shared vision, mission, setting goals and having high expectations were essential to being effective, and this common theme was mentioned 14 times, thus having a high frequency. Another common theme, communication, was mentioned seven times and had a high frequency among respondents in regards to effective leadership practices. Organizational excellence and celebrating achievement and progress were each moderate frequency responses given by participants on three occasions to describe effective leadership practices. Respondents also noted that hiring the best people and adjusting for change were other effective leadership practices, but because these two responses were mentioned only twice, they were rated as having a low frequency.

The data from research question four imply that North Carolina female

superintendents had similar ideas when describing effective leadership practices. The common themes of shared vision and mission, setting goals, having high expectations and communication are what North Carolina female superintendents believe are essential attributes in performing their role and being successful as school superintendents. Organizational excellence and celebrating progress towards goals were also considered to be important components of effective leadership.

Research Question 5: *What are the differences or similarities in perceived leadership practices for female superintendents in North Carolina in 2008 as compared to the perceived leadership practices of female superintendents in four midwestern states from the 2004 study?*

For the fifth research question, differences or similarities in perceived leadership practices for female superintendents in North Carolina in 2008 were compared to the perceived leadership practices of female superintendents in four midwestern states from a 2004 study. A study of female superintendents in four midwestern states using the LPI-Self survey was conducted by Susan Katz in 2004. There were a total of 196 women superintendents among the four states (Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin). From that population, 148 women participated in the study for a response rate of 76%. Sixty-five percent of the participants in Katz's study were between the ages of 50 and 56. The average age of participants was 52 years, with a range of ages from 38 years to 65 years. Sixty-six percent of the participants had earned doctoral degrees and 85% reported that they were married. In the 2008 North Carolina study of female superintendents, 92.3% had earned doctoral degrees and 76.9% were married.

In Katz's (2004) study, the average age of female superintendents when the first job was acquired was 45.7 years. The average number of years for participants in their

present position was 5.4 years. The average number of years spent teaching prior to administration was 10.58 years and the average number of administrative positions before acquiring the role of school superintendent was 2.9 positions. In the 2008 North Carolina study of female superintendents, the average age when the first job of school superintendent was acquired was 44.9 years and the respondents' average number of years in their current position was 6 years. North Carolina female superintendents reported an average of 10.83 years teaching prior to administration and an average of three administrative positions before acquiring the role of superintendent. Female superintendents in Katz's study had an average number of 6.26 school buildings in their districts and 9.65 building administrators. The average number of central office personnel in Katz's study was 5.23 and the average district structure was 1.17. In the 2008 North Carolina study of female superintendents, the average number of school buildings reported in school districts was 15.61 buildings and the average number of building administrators was 22.69. The average number of central office personnel employed in North Carolina school districts headed by female superintendents was 37.75 personnel and the average district structure was 2.14.

In Katz's (2004) study, women perceived themselves to be using the five leadership practices in the following order: Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, Challenging the Process, Encouraging the Heart and Inspiring a Shared Vision. In this study of North Carolina female superintendents, women perceived themselves to be using four of the leadership practices in the following order: Enabling Others to Act, Encouraging the Heart, Inspiring a Shared Vision and Modeling the Way. None of the female superintendents in North Carolina perceived themselves to utilize the leadership practice of Challenging the Process. In Katz's study, there was a statistically significant

difference in the size of the district and perceived leadership practices. Women superintendents in the largest school districts perceived themselves to be Challenging the Process and Inspiring a Shared Vision more than women in mid-size and small school districts. Also in Katz's study, women superintendents in mid-size school districts perceived themselves to be using Modeling the Way more than women superintendents in the other two groups. No other significant differences, such as age or years of administrative experience, were found to impact perceived leadership practices of female superintendents in Katz's study. In this study of North Carolina female superintendents, there were no female superintendents that led small districts. Only four North Carolina female superintendents led large districts and nine led mid-size districts. In this study of North Carolina female superintendents, only the structure of the district (ratio of central office personnel to the number of school buildings) was found to be significant and impacted female superintendents' perceived leadership practice. Enabling Others to Act was found to be the leadership practice when the structure was 1.59 or less. The findings of both studies indicated that the majority of female superintendents utilized the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act most frequently, although this practice was only significant in the North Carolina study when the structure of the school district was 1.59 or less. Katz also found that female superintendents who led mid-size districts utilized the leadership practice of Modeling the Way most frequently. A large majority of North Carolina female superintendents led mid-size districts, and yet only one female superintendent perceived herself to utilize the leadership practice of Modeling the Way most often. The data for research question five could imply that differences in geographical regions may have an impact on perceived leadership practices for female superintendents.

Discussion

When North Carolina female superintendents were asked what advice they would give to other women who may aspire to the superintendency, six themes emerged: be prepared to handle criticism, manage emotions, know yourself and your core beliefs, find balance and support of family, be prepared to work long and hard and go for it! Being prepared to handle criticism and managing emotions were both mentioned by the respondents, but with a low frequency of two times. The other four suggestions given by the respondents to women who may aspire to the superintendency (know yourself and your core beliefs, find balance and support of family, be prepared to work long and hard and go for it!) were mentioned between four and five times by respondents, which indicated a moderate frequency.

North Carolina female superintendents were also asked if they had ever experienced gender bias in their career as an administrator. Seven out of the 12 respondents indicated that they never or rarely experienced gender bias. One respondent indicated that she was discriminated against in the area of compensation, which she felt was related to her gender. Another respondent indicated that when she wore pant suits, especially early in her career, she was not given as much respect as she deserved. Three respondents indicated that others did not view them as being "tough enough" because of their gender. The gender bias reported by respondents in this study is consistent with the findings in the literature, but does not seem to be as prevalent in North Carolina as it is in the other states mentioned in the literature. Grogan (1999) asserted that "much of the research that has focused on women in leadership has concluded that most women are reluctant to name sexism or racism as affecting their own lives and sometimes the lives of others" (p. 528). This may explain why almost 60% of the respondents in this study

rejected experiencing gender bias in their careers as administrators.

When the North Carolina female superintendents were asked what life experiences prepared them to become a superintendent, three of the four responses were rated with a moderate frequency (mentioned by four or five respondents), such as administrative experiences, working hard, and all experiences. Family experiences, mentioned eight times, was considered to have a high frequency, which prepared respondents to become a superintendent. One respondent's father was a school superintendent. Another respondent indicated that her parents, especially her father, raised her with a sense that girls could have big dreams that could be realized. Several other respondents indicated that either being raised by a single mother or just being a mother themselves prepared them for the job of superintendent. All of the respondents had been teachers prior to moving into administrative roles. The average number of years that the respondents spent teaching was 10.83 years. The median number of years that the respondents spent teaching was 10 years. This finding supports the research in that most women spend about 10 years in the classroom before moving into administrative positions, whereas almost half of male superintendents spend about 5 years as a teacher.

Additionally, North Carolina female superintendents were asked who or what inspired them to become a superintendent. Nine respondents indicated that co-workers, mentors, and supervisors inspired them to become a superintendent, which represents a high frequency. Two respondents indicated that family members, such as a spouse, inspired them to become a superintendent, which represents a low frequency. Three respondents indicated that they were intrinsically motivated to become a superintendent, which represented a moderate frequency. The respondents indicated that they wanted to make a difference or aspired to be at the top of their profession.

Limitations

This study was limited to the population of approximately 19 female superintendents in North Carolina during the 2008-2009 school year. It only involved full-time and currently active superintendents. A survey was used to collect information on the perceived leadership practices of the female superintendents in North Carolina. There are several limitations in using survey research. The most obvious limitation in this study is the fact that respondents self-reported their leadership practices. Self-reporting is not always accurate. The researcher was not able to judge the quality of the responses or explain the study in person to the respondents. In using a survey, the researcher had no personal contact with the respondents, which resulted in a moderate response rate of 68%. The findings of this study should not be generalized beyond the field of education, nor should this study be generalized beyond the position of school superintendent. The percentage of women in lower administrative positions, such as principal or assistant superintendent, is much greater, and a study of their perceived leadership practices may produce different findings. Variables other than those examined in this study may impact the leadership practices of North Carolina female superintendents. Unstudied variables, such as race, may have impacted the leadership practices found in this study. The female superintendents in North Carolina comprise a fixed number of available subjects in this study, which limited the sample size to less than 20. The small sample size may have had an effect on the validity of this study. However, the study is important because it can help to inform prospective female superintendents about effective leadership practices, which in turn, may lead to more females in the top leadership positions in public schools.

Implications for Further Research

Many implications for future research are suggested by the findings of this study.

North Carolina female superintendents used the LPI survey to report their perceived

leadership practices. If given the opportunity to rate their North Carolina female

superintendent using the LPI-Observer survey, would school board members or

principals report the same leadership practice as their female superintendent perceives

herself as modeling most often? People who supervise the superintendent or who are

supervised by the superintendent may have a very different perspective of the

superintendent's leadership practice. Further research that explores this phenomenon may

be needed to determine congruency in perceived versus actual leadership practices for

North Carolina female superintendents. It would also be interesting and beneficial to

know whether the North Carolina female superintendents brought their perceived

leadership practice with them to the job or if they began to model these practices after

being hired as superintendent. Another noteworthy discovery would be to find out from

school board members and/or principals if they believe that changes in leadership

practices of the North Carolina female superintendents have occurred over time.

   Further research is needed to explore if there is a particular leadership practice

that can get women hired as a superintendent regardless of the size and structure of the

district. It would also be interesting to know if school boards, depending on the structure

of their district, will hire a female superintendent with a certain leadership practice.

Further research is also needed to explore perceived leadership practices for female

leaders in other positions, such as associate/assistant superintendent, school principal or

executive director. This research study has answered a few questions, but has raised

many others, such as how would female leaders in other positions, such as principal or

assistant/associate superintendent rate their perceived leadership practices? Female

leaders who aspire to the superintendency may rate themselves as utilizing a certain

leadership practice most often, but once the position of school superintendent is acquired, would their perceived leadership practice change or remain the same?

Summary and Conclusion of Study

This research study, the first of its kind, examined North Carolina female superintendents and their perceived leadership practices. The findings of this study indicated that five of the twelve respondents modeled the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act most often. This particular leadership practice had a significant relationship with the structure of the school district. The structure of the district was defined as the ratio of central office personnel to the number of school buildings in the district. When the structure of the district was one point five nine or less, North Carolina female superintendents perceived themselves to utilize the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act. This study also found that neither the age of North Carolina female superintendents nor years of administrative experience for the participants had any impact on perceived leadership practices.

This study also gave voice to the North Carolina female superintendents. Participants in this study offered candid advice for women who may aspire to the superintendency, discussed gender bias, if any, that they had encountered, offered sources of inspiration and life experiences that prepared them for the job, and described effective leadership practices. The results of this study were compared to a study conducted in 2004 by Susan Katz on female superintendents in four midwestern states. The findings confirmed that for both studies, the majority of female superintendents perceived themselves to utilize the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act most frequently. In this study, four out of five leadership practices were perceived by respondents to be used most often. Not one of the respondents indicated that they utilized the leadership practice

of Challenging the Process. However in Katz's study, she found that female

superintendents who led large districts utilized the leadership practices of Challenging the

Process and Inspiring a Shared Vision more than females who led small or mid-size

districts. In this study, there were no female superintendents who led small districts, as all

student populations were reported to be 2,500 or greater.

   The lack of females in the role of superintendent in the United States suggests

questions about whether appropriate leadership talent is being fully utilized. Differences

in the socialization of men and women may contribute to the disparities between males

and females securing the top leadership position in public schools. However, women's

organizational and interpersonal strengths are highly valued. Several conditions are

favorable which may enhance opportunities for women to become school

superintendents. The findings of the research may serve to enlighten women who may

aspire to the superintendency, as well as provide insight to those females who have

already acquired the role, giving them the vision necessary to effectively maintain their

positions.

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Appendix A

Cover Letter

August 8, 2008

Superintendent Name
Name of School District
Street Address
City, State, Zip code

Dear Superintendent _____,

My name is Deardre J. Gibson and I am a doctoral student in Educational
Leadership at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, NC. Under the
guidance and direction of my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Victoria Ratchford, I
am conducting a study examining perceived leadership practices of female
superintendents in North Carolina. The primary purposes of my study are to
increase the baseline data on women in the superintendency and to give voice to
the North Carolina female superintendents concerning their leadership practices
and experiences.

I am inviting you to participate in this study and I trust that you will recognize the
unique contribution you are in the position to make as a female school district
superintendent. Your participation is completely voluntary. In order to prepare
you to fully consider participating in this research study, I would like to provide
you with important information relative to your participation. Your participation
will involve completing a demographic questionnaire with supplemental open-
ended questions and the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI) rating
instrument. The total time to complete the surveys should not exceed 30 minutes.

As you know, it can be quite a challenge to gather a large enough sample for a
study to be valid. Please take the time to return the enclosed consent form
indicating your willingness to participate. Measures of confidentiality will be
maintained throughout this process. No names will be reported or disclosed in this
study. The anticipated risks of this study are minimal, if any at all. I am very
aware of the rigorous schedule of a superintendent and other demands on your
time, so I thank you in advance for your attention and support.

I sincerely hope that you will agree to participate in this exciting project
highlighting female superintendents in North Carolina and allowing the expansion
of their presence in the field of educational research. The surveys are enclosed
along with a self-addressed, stamped, return envelope. I would gladly speak with
you over the phone or through email if you have questions or comments. I will
share the cumulative findings of this study with all participating female
superintendents in North Carolina.
If you have additional questions regarding your participation in this study, please
feel free to contact me or my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Victoria Ratchford

(phone 704.406.4407 or email vratchford@gardner-webb.edu). I will send the completed study to you as a token of my appreciation for your participation. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Deardre J. Gibson, Researcher
4263 Everest Drive
Gastonia, NC 28054
704.879.4314
Email: Deardre.Gibson@cms.k12.nc.us

Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

Profile of the Superintendent and Her District

Instructions: This survey should be completed by the school superintendent and returned to the researcher in the envelope provided. Please check appropriate boxes below.

Name of School District: _____

City, town or towns in which district is located or serves:
_____

Size of District:

_____ Student population is less than 2,500

_____ Student population is 2,500-9,999

_____ Student population is 10,000 or more

Number of School Buildings: _____

Number of building administrators: _____

Number of central office staff: _____

Age of Superintendent:

      _____ under 40   _____ 45-49   _____ 55-59

      _____ 40-44   _____ 50-54   _____ 60+

Age at first Superintendency: _____

Number of years in present position: _____

Total years as Superintendent: _____

Marital Status: _____ Married   _____ Single   _____ Divorced   _____ Widowed

Number of years teaching prior to administration: _____

Number of administrative positions before first superintendency: _____

Highest Academic Degree Obtained: ____ Master's   ___ Doctoral   **Year:** _____

Appendix C

Supplemental Questions

Supplemental Questions

Please answer the following questions. The back page may be used for more space.

1. How would you describe effective leadership practices?

2. What advice would you give to other women who may aspire to the superintendency?

3. Have you ever experienced gender bias in your career as an administrator? If so, please explain.

4. What life experience prepared you to become a superintendent?

5. What or Who inspired you to become a superintendent?

May I contact you by phone, if needed, to elaborate or clarify your answers?
___Yes   ___No

Appendix D

Summary of LPI Survey Statements

Rating Scale ranges from 1-10 (1=Almost Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Seldom; 4=Once in a While; 5=Occasionally; 6= Sometimes; 7=Fairly Often; 8=Usually; 9= Very Frequently; 10= Almost Always)

Supt	Score
A	9
C	10
D	10
F	9
K	8
L	10
N	8
O	8
S	9
T	10
U	9
V	10

<u>Model the Way</u>

Q1. I set a personal example of what I expect of others.

Supt	Score
A	5
C	10
D	8
F	9
K	9
L	10
N	8
O	7
S	6
T	8
U	9
V	6

Q6. I spend time and energy making certain that the people I work with adhere to the principles and standards we have agreed on.

Supt	Score
A	10
C	10
D	10
F	10
K	9
L	10
N	9
O	8
S	8
T	10
U	9
V	9

Q11. I follow through on the promises and commitments I make.

Model the Way

Supt	Score
A	4
C	8
D	8
F	6
K	8
L	10
N	6
O	6
S	7
T	9
U	7
V	9

Q16. I ask for feedback on how my actions affect other people's performance.

Supt	Score
A	9
C	10
D	10
F	8
K	8
L	10
N	8
O	10
S	9
T	8
U	10
V	8

Q21. I build consensus around a common set of values for running our organization.

Supt	Score
A	9
C	10
D	10
F	10
K	8
L	10
N	9
O	9
S	10
T	9
U	9
V	8

Q26. I am clear about my philosophy of leadership.

Inspire a Shared Vision

Supt	Score
A	7
C	9
D	9
F	8
K	8
L	10
N	9
O	9
S	5
T	9
U	9
V	8

Q2. I talk about future trends that will influence how our work gets done.

Supt	Score
A	6
C	9
D	9
F	7
K	8
L	9
N	9
O	8
S	7
T	8
U	10
V	9

Q7. I describe a compelling image of what our future could be.

Supt	Score
A	7
C	10
D	9
F	6
K	6
L	10
N	9
O	10
S	6
T	8
U	10
V	9

Q12. I appeal to others to share an exciting dream of the future.

Inspire a Shared Vision

Supt	Score
A	5
C	9
D	9
F	7
K	9
L	10
N	7
O	7
S	7
T	9
U	10
V	8

Q17. I show others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting a common vision.

Supt	Score
A	9
C	9
D	10
F	10
K	8
L	9
N	9
O	9
S	7
T	9
U	10
V	9

Q22. I paint the "big picture" of what we aspire to accomplish.

Supt	Score
A	9
C	10
D	10
F	9
K	9
L	10
N	9
O	10
S	10
T	8
U	10
V	9

Q27. I speak with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work.

Challenge the Process

Supt	Score
A	7
C	10
D	9
F	9
K	7
L	9
N	9
O	7
S	8
T	8
U	9
V	8

Q3. I seek out challenging opportunities that test my own skills and abilities.

Supt	Score
A	9
C	9
D	10
F	7
K	7
L	10
N	9
O	9
S	5
T	9
U	10
V	10

Q8. I challenge people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work.

Supt	Score
A	9
C	9
D	9
F	9
K	7
L	9
N	8
O	9
S	6
T	9
U	9
V	7

Q13. I search outside the formal boundaries of my organization for innovative ways to improve what we do.

Challenge the Process

Supt	Score
A	8
C	9
D	8
F	10
K	9
L	10
N	8
O	8
S	9
T	8
U	9
V	8

Q18. I ask "What can we learn?" when things don't go as expected.

Supt	Score
A	10
C	9
D	9
F	10
K	8
L	10
N	8
O	9
S	10
T	10
U	10
V	10

Q23. I make certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on.

Supt	Score
A	6
C	9
D	9
F	8
K	7
L	9
N	9
O	8
S	7
T	9
U	10
V	7

Q28. I experiment and take risks, even when there is a chance of failure.

Enable Others to Act

Supt	Score
A	9
C	10
D	9
F	7
K	9
L	10
N	10
O	10
S	10
T	10
U	9
V	10

Q4. I develop cooperative relationships among the people I work with.

Supt	Score
A	8
C	9
D	8
F	7
K	10
L	10
N	7
O	9
S	9
T	9
U	9
V	8

Q9. I actively listen to diverse points of view.

Supt	Score
A	8
C	10
D	10
F	8
K	9
L	10
N	9
O	10
S	10
T	10
U	10
V	10

Q14. I treat others with dignity and respect.

<u>Enable Others to Act</u>

Supt	Score
A	8
C	8
D	9
F	8
K	8
L	7
N	8
O	9
S	9
T	9
U	9
V	9

Q19. I support the decisions that people make on their own.

Supt	Score
A	8
C	9
D	9
F	9
K	7
L	10
N	8
O	8
S	8
T	8
U	10
V	8

Q24. I give people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work.

Supt	Score
A	9
C	10
D	10
F	8
K	8
L	9
N	9
O	8
S	8
T	9
U	8
V	9

Q29. I ensure that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.

Encourage the Heart

Supt	Score
A	6
C	10
D	10
F	10
K	10
L	10
N	8
O	8
S	7
T	10
U	9
V	7

Q5. I praise people for a job well done.

Supt	Score
A	8
C	10
D	9
F	8
K	7
L	10
N	8
O	9
S	7
T	9
U	9
V	9

Q10. I make it a point to let people know about my confidence in their abilities.

Supt	Score
A	7
C	10
D	9
F	8
K	8
L	9
N	7
O	6
S	8
T	9
U	8
V	7

Q15. I make sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of our projects.

Encourage the Heart

Supt	Score
A	9
C	10
D	10
F	9
K	8
L	10
N	8
O	9
S	9
T	10
U	9
V	9

Q20. I publicly recognize people who exemplify commitment to shared values.

Supt	Score
A	9
C	10
D	9
F	10
K	8
L	9
N	9
O	9
S	8
T	9
U	9
V	7

Q25. I find ways to celebrate accomplishments.

Supt	Score
A	9
C	10
D	10
F	9
K	8
L	10
N	7
O	7
S	8
T	10
U	8
V	7

Q30. I give the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions.