A Study of the Relationship Between Superintendents' Perceived Leadership Practices and Socioeconomic Status of School Districts in New Jersey

Enid Golden
Seton Hall University

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations
Part of the Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons

Recommended Citation
http://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/2345
A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERINTENDENTS' 
PERCEIVED LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF 
SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN NEW JERSEY

BY

ENID GOLDEN

Dissertation Committee

Anthony J. Colella, Ph.D., Mentor
James M. Caulfield, Ed.D.
Michael Chirichello, Ed. D.
Charles Kuzminski, Ed.D.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of 
Education
Seton Hall University

1999
I am particularly appreciative of the guidance and dedication of the members of my committee. To Dr. Anthony Collela, my mentor, I offer thanks for his enthusiasm and encouragement from the beginning stages to the completion of the dissertation. I extend gratitude to Dr. James Caulfield for his support and commitment to scholarship. To Dr. Michael Chirichello, I extend gratitude for providing the impetus for a study using transformational leadership practices and his invaluable assistance each step of the way.

A special acknowledgement is extended to Dr. Charles Kuzminski, Howell Township Superintendent of Schools and my colleague, for his insight, motivation and personal encouragement throughout the project.

To my family, I wish to express the deepest gratitude for their understanding, love and support during this time of personal fulfillment. To my husband Norman, I offer sincere appreciation for his unshakable faith in me and for his loving support that carried me through the difficult times and that shared my happiness during the good times. To my daughters, Tara and Jamie, I am eternally grateful for their ability to remind me of what is truly important in life. I can only hope that as they watched me go through this process, I have modeled the rewards of perseverance and the joys that accompany lifelong learning.

Finally, I offer my heartfelt appreciation to the New Jersey superintendents who took the time out of their busy schedules and participated in this study. The gathering of the data was possible only because they took the time and effort to complete the survey instruments.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................... ii

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................... v

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................. 1

Purpose of the Study ........................................................................... 8
Hypotheses ......................................................................................... 9
Definition of Terms ....................................................................... 10
Limitations of the Study ............................................................... 12
Significance of the Study ............................................................... 13
Organization of the Study ............................................................. 14

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ....................................................... 16

Introduction ..................................................................................... 16
The Role of the Superintendent .................................................. 17
The Instructional Role .................................................................. 18
The Managerial Role .................................................................. 23
The Political Role ......................................................................... 26
Superintendents’ Role and School District Effectiveness .......... 28
Transformational Leadership and the Superintendent .............. 33
Transformational Leadership ....................................................... 32
Kouzes and Posner’s Leadership Practices ............................... 36
Challenging the Process ............................................................... 37
Inspiring a Shared Vision ............................................................... 39
Enabling Others to Act ................................................................. 41
Modeling the Way ....................................................................... 44
Encouraging the Heart ................................................................. 48
Contextual Influences on Leadership ......................................... 52
Situational Leadership ................................................................. 52
District Context and Superintendent Leadership .................... 54
District Socioeconomic Status and Superintendent Leadership 60
District/School Size and Superintendent Leadership ................ 63
Gender and Superintendent Leadership .................................... 63
Longevity and Superintendent Leadership ............................... 65
New Jersey School Districts in Context ..................................... 65
Summary ......................................................................................... 68

III. METHODOLOGY ............................................................................. 69
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KoZes and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory-Self</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Survey</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of Sample</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection of Data</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment of Data</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. FINDINGS</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Survey Distribution</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and Treatment of Data</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging the Process</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiring a Shared Vision</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling Others to Act</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling the Way</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging the Heart</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Sample</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of Research</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Findings</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion and Implications</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Superintendent Preparation</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Future Research</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A  Initial Cover Letter to Superintendents</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B  Follow-up Letter to Non-respondents</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C  Demographic Survey Instrument</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D  Approval Letter to Use the Leadership Practices Inventory</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. Distribution of Demographic Survey Responses ............................................. 82
2. Scoring Patterns for Challenging the Process .................................................. 84
3. A Comparison of Scores on Challenging the Process by Gender, Size of District, Years of Experience in Current Position, and Total Years of Experience as a Superintendent .................................................. 85
4. Scoring Patterns for Inspiring a Shared Vision ............................................... 87
5. A Comparison of Scores on Inspiring a Shared Vision by Gender, Size of District, Years of Experience in Current Position, and Total Years of Experience as a Superintendent .................................................. 88
6. Scoring Patterns for Enabling Others to Act ................................................... 90
7. A Comparison of Scores on Enabling Others to Act by Gender, Size of District, Years of Experience in Current Position, and Total Years of Experience as a Superintendent .................................................. 91
8. Scoring Patterns for Modeling the Way ........................................................... 93
9. A Comparison of Scores on Modeling the Way by Gender, Size of District, Years of Experience in Current Position, and Total Years of Experience as a Superintendent .................................................. 94
10. Scoring Patterns for Encouraging the Heart ................................................... 96
11. A Comparison of Scores on Encouraging the Heart by Gender, Size of District, Years of Experience in Current Position, and Total Years of Experience as a Superintendent .................................................. 97
Chapter I
Introduction

There continues to be ongoing criticism of American education. Issues such as homelessness, substance abuse and violence in the schools have generated an abundance of task forces, panels, reports and recommendations at both the state and national levels. Progress has been slow and uneven despite reform initiatives being put into place. The superintendent is under constant pressure to ensure that students reach their academic potential despite the increase in societal problems that impact the schools.

Superintendents are the chief executive officers of their school districts. Today they deal with issues and challenges that are more complex than those addressed by their predecessors. An overwhelming number of competencies are needed by the superintendent in order to oversee the education of thousands of children. "They lead schools in an era when astonishing technological changes are routine and the pace of progress shows no sign of slowing. Yet all this is occurring at a time when community support for education seems to be at low ebb" (Carter and Cunningham, 1997, p. 5).

Although there has been much pessimism regarding the future of our schools, the "effective schools movement" which was initiated in the late 1970's provided educators with a body of research which identified characteristics in high achieving schools and attributed their success to those common attributes. One of the most often cited correlates to a school's success was strong administrative leadership by the building principal (Cuban, 1984; Coleman and LaRoque, 1990; Hord, 1990; Griffen, 1994; Murphy and Hallinger, 1986). Although the emphasis in school reform has been on the role of the
principal, there is a growing body of research to suggest that the leadership of the superintendent is critical to school success. Research has shown that change efforts are more likely to succeed when the superintendent is actively involved (Crowson and Glass, 1991).

The current literature (Berg, 1996; Carter and Cunningham, 1997; Coleman and LaRoque, 1990; Griffen, 1994; Johnson, 1996; Leithwood, 1995; Musella and Leithwood, 1990) on the influence of superintendents on school effectiveness indicated that superintendents play a critical role in improving school and district performance. Research done by Musella and Leithwood (1990) on the impact of chief executive officers on school effectiveness concluded that chief executive officers were perceived to have high levels of influence on school system factors (i.e., staff development, teacher and administrator evaluation, system climate) as a whole, but less influence when school and classroom factors were considered. The researchers suggested that superintendents should focus their efforts even more directly on school system factors since many of these factors are known to directly affect the quality of education for students. They asserted that through these factors, superintendents can have a “powerful, albeit indirect, effect on improving school effectiveness” (p.111).

Coleman (1986) reported that... “it seems likely that good school districts have a characteristic configuration of norms and practices labeled district ethos, which have classroom, school and district-level consequences” (p.95). District ethos provides a useful link between classrooms, schools, and school districts and helps to explain relationships known to exist between effective schools and central office. Coleman suggested that the most important link is leadership. Consequently, administrators are critically important in
school districts. Coleman and LaRoque (1990) claimed that superintendents, through a "reaching out" (p. 67) in successful districts, are able to foster a positive district ethos toward district improvement and toward school effectiveness.

According to Hord (1990), "change is dependent on vision and the superintendent has the responsibility for the district's vision" (p. 65). It is, however, people who turn the vision into a reality, consequently the superintendent must also possess the necessary leadership skills and practices to support the growth of school personnel and form a culture that works towards improving the organization.

If the role of the superintendent is critical to the success of the school district then there is a need to determine what it is that superintendents can do to move a school district forward. According to Leithwood (1995), transformational leadership theory may provide a framework to understand the work of exceptional superintendents.

The term transformational leadership was first used by Burns (1978) and then elaborated on by Bass (1985) to describe a leadership that facilitates, motivates, coaches, and mentors. Bass also believed that transformational leadership would lead to performance beyond expectations because followers would become committed to the leader, would be intrinsically motivated, and would have a sense of purpose or mission.

More recently, educational scholars have begun to look at the superintendent in the role of transformational leader (Avery, 1994; Berg, 1996; Carter and Cunningham, 1997; Griffin, 1994; Konnert and Augenstein, 1990; Lashway, 1997; Leithwood, 1995; Musella, 1995; Johnson, 1996) and contend that transformational leadership presents a more holistic approach to leadership when compared to other leadership theories. They believed it holds great promise for the superintendency.

Because of the emerging literature on transformational leadership and the superintendency, current study of the self-perceived leadership practices of the superintendent is based on a transformational leadership practices model. This model, developed by Kouzes and Posner (1995), provided a validated and theoretical basis for analyzing leadership practices that are transformational. Kouzes and Posner extracted a profile of transformational leadership practices by initially surveying middle and senior level managers about their personal best leadership experiences. From this they developed a model of leadership that can be quantitatively measured. The conceptual framework consists of five leadership practices. Each practice consists of two behaviors that exemplify the practice. The five practices defined by Kouzes and Posner (1995) are Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart. The Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-Self) developed by Kouzes and Posner (1997) rates responses to these categories. Further discussion of this model and its accompanying survey will be provided in Chapters Two and Three, respectively.

Yuki (1994) indicated that virtually all leadership effects are indirect. Leadership practices influence or are mediated by aspects of the organization, which in turn affects
the achievement of its central goals. The more removed the leadership position is from
the direct delivery of services to clients, the longer is the chain of mediating variables
linking leadership practices with the achievement of central organizational goals.

Perhaps because of this chain, there has been relatively little research on
superintendent’s leadership practices and their relationship to specific district variables.
To what extent do specific organizational variables relate to the way school
superintendents can practice their leadership? Situational leadership theory suggests that
aspects of the situation, such as the type of organization, influence leader’s behaviors.
Researchers investigating situational leadership seek to discover the extent to which
leadership practices or behaviors are the same or unique across different types of
organizations. This type of comparative research is not designed to identify what
behaviors are effective in situations. It is relevant for organizational effectiveness
because effectiveness depends on how well a leader resolves role conflicts, copes with
demands, recognizes opportunities, and overcomes constraints (Yukl, 1994). Several
authors (Carter and Cunningham, 1997; Hallinger, Bickman and Davis, 1990; Hannaway
and Talbert, 1993; Johnson, 1996; Konner and Augenstein, 1990; Leithwood, 1995;
Louis, 1990) have criticized earlier school leadership studies that list leadership traits
without attending to the context of the organization. Johnson, 1996, asserted that context
is of utmost importance in the study of leadership. School superintendents must be able
to assess the demands and opportunities for leadership by looking at context variables
associated with their district. In her study of 12 new superintendents, Johnson concluded
that it is the successful interaction of a particular individual and a particular context that
makes leadership work.
Karen Seashore Louis (1990), after studying urban and rural school systems, strongly recommended that prescriptions for superintendents and district staff should be conditional on community context. The missing link in the literature, she contended, is that there is a missing variable that determines the role of district level staff: the community context.

A study by Hallinger, Bickman and Davis (1990) of school administrators indicated that the impact of context on school administrators is as profound as it is for students and teachers. Variables such as district size and complexity, faculty experience and district support determined the principal’s approach to leadership. Additionally, factors such as socioeconomic status of the community, parental involvement and geographic location impacted on the principal’s ability to lead. The researchers concluded that principals who are aware of school context variables and their impact on school improvement efforts may take action to reduce or enhance the impact of those factors based on the needs of the school.

A further study completed by Hannaway and Talbert (1993) looked at the effects of school context variables on principal leadership and found distinct patterns of leadership for schools in urban, suburban, and rural settings. They noted that effective schools’ literature has paid little attention to factors in the external environment of schools that support or inhibit effective internal conditions such as leadership. The authors urge future researchers to develop more context-sensitive studies and provide strategies that recognize the organizational contexts within which U.S. schools operate.

A study done by Hallinger and Heck (1996) demonstrated how community socioeconomic status influenced the type of leadership a principal exercised when
interacting with various school processes. Schools in the study were divided by socioeconomic status and principal's leadership practices were identified. The results indicated that the school's socioeconomic status moderates in-school processes, including the principal's exercise of instructional leadership.

Graham, (1990), researched the behaviors of the superintendent as manager and examined to what extent the socioeconomic status of the school district had an influence on the superintendent's style when there were controls for size and grade organization. He studied nine superintendents in diverse socioeconomic school districts in New Jersey and found that the superintendents shifted their managerial priorities depending on the socioeconomic status of the district. They also found that relevant to leadership style, variety of style was greatest in the high socioeconomic districts as compared to the middle and low socioeconomic districts. They concluded that finances and socioeconomic status of the district in part controlled style choice.

This study will investigate the relationship between district socioeconomic status and superintendents' self-perception of their own transformational leadership practices as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory. Self developed by Kouzes and Posner (1997). The study will be conducted in the state of New Jersey. New Jersey provided the researcher with districts that are very rich and districts that are very poor. New Jersey schools, according to Education Week (Edwards, 1998), are also among the worst segregated in the country, with minorities filling the classrooms of inner-city districts and whites filling those in the suburbs. Student achievement is also reported consistent with the rich-poor dichotomy.
Socioeconomic status of each school district in New Jersey has been determined by using principal component analysis by the New Jersey Department of Education. There are eight District Factor Groups (DFG's) that have been used for the comparative reporting of test results from New Jersey's statewide testing programs (New Jersey Department of Education, 1999). The groups range from A (the lowest socioeconomic) to J (the highest socioeconomic). The variables that are used in the formula are discussed further in Chapter III.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between superintendents' perceived leadership practices and school district socioeconomic status. In the study superintendents' perceptions of their leadership practices are measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self. The five research questions each focus on one of the scales that comprise the LPI-Self.

The major questions posed for this study are:

1. Is there a perceived difference between the self rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding “Challenging the Process” as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory-Self?

2. Is there a perceived difference between the self-rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding “Inspiring a Shared Vision” as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory-Self?
3. Is there a perceived difference between the self-rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding “Enabling Others to Act” as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory- Self?

4. Is there a perceived difference between the self rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding “Modeling the Way” as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory- Self?

5. Is there a perceived difference between the self-rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding “Encouraging the Heart” as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory- Self?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses have been developed from the research questions presented above:

H1. There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the “Challenging the Way” scale.

H2. There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the “Inspiring a Shared Vision” scale.

H3. There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of
superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the Enabling Others to Act scale.

H4. There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the "Modeling the Way" scale.

H5. There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the "Encouraging the Heart".

Definition of Terms

In order to understand the variables utilized in this study, it is necessary to define them.

District Factor Group (DFG) - is a category assigned to each school district in the State of New Jersey. It provides an indicator of the socioeconomic status of citizens in each district. It has been useful for the comparative reporting of test results from New Jersey’s statewide testing programs. There are eight district factor groups ranging from A (the lowest socioeconomic) to J (the highest socioeconomic).

Low DFG/socioeconomic districts - Districts A, B, and CD include those districts identified by the Supreme Court in the Abbott v. Burke case as Special Needs Districts that contain the state’s most economically disadvantaged student population (A and B) and those that are moderately low (CD).

High DFG/socioeconomic districts - Districts GH, I and J include those
districts that have been targeted by the Supreme Court in the Abbott IV decision as property rich districts that would be used to identify target levels of funding for the Special Needs Districts (I and J) and those that are moderately high (GH).

**Transformational Leadership**- an influencing relationship among inspired, energetic leaders and followers who have a mutual commitment to a mission that includes a belief in empowering the members of the organization to effect, through a collaborative responsibility and mutual accountability, lasting change or continuous improvement that will benefit the organization's clients. (Chirichello, 1997)

**Leadership Practices**- the customary or habitual behaviors of effective leaders while engaged in their work as defined by Kouzes and Posner (1995).

**Challenging the Process**- Term used by Kouzes and Posner (1995) that describes the transformational leadership practice of searching for opportunities to change the status quo of the organization by experimenting and taking risks and accepting inevitable disappointments as learning opportunities.

**Inspiring a Shared Vision**- Term used by Kouzes and Posner (1995) that describes the transformational leadership practice of envisioning the future by creating an ideal and unique image of what the organization can become and enlisting others by providing visions that demonstrate exciting possibilities for the future.

**Enabling Others to Act**- Term used by Kouzes and Posner (1995) that describes the transformational leadership practice of fostering collaboration and building spirited teams by strengthening others through active involvement and mutual respect.

**Modeling the Way**- Term used by Kouzes and Posner (1995) that describes the transformational leadership practice of establishing principles concerning the way people
should be treated and the way goals should be pursued including creating and setting an example for others to follow, setting interim goals so that people can achieve small wins as they work towards larger objectives, unraveling bureaucracy when it impedes action, putting up signposts when people are unsure of where to go or how to get there and creating opportunities for victory.

Encouraging the Heart-Term used by Kouzes and Posner (1995) that describes the transformational leadership practice of keeping hope and determination alive by recognizing contributions that individuals make by celebrating accomplishments.

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations were placed on the study:

1. This study was limited to K through 12\textsuperscript{th} grade public school districts in the state of New Jersey (N=209).

2. The accuracy of the responses to the Leadership Practices Inventory- Self will be dependent on the self-perception of the leadership practice of the respondent superintendents.

3. The researcher chose the Leadership Practices Inventory- Self as the measurement instrument.

4. The independent variables in the demographic survey, (i.e. gender, district size, years of experience in current position, and years of experience as a superintendents) were not controlled for in the selection process.
Significance of the Study

There is a need for ongoing educational reform. Superintendents are in the most influential position of the school system, however there has been a scarcity of research that has investigated their leadership practices (Coleman and LaRoque, 1990; Cuban, 1984; Griffen, 1994; Hord, 1990; Murphy and Hallinger, 1986).

The superintendent's leadership practices may determine the degree to which other school personnel are motivated to work towards the accomplishment of the district's goals. An examination of the current literature supports transformational leadership practices as a model that meets the needs of today's organizations. Scholars of school leadership have suggested transformational leadership theory may provide a framework to explain the work of exceptional superintendents (Avery, 1994; Berg, 1996; Carter and Cunningham, 1997; Griffen, 1994; Johnson, 1996; Lashway, 1997; Leithwood, 1995; Musella, 1995).

However, we are cautioned (Carter and Cunningham, 1997; Hannaway, Bickman and Davis, 1990; Hannaway and Talbert, 1993; Leithwood, 1995; Konner and Augenstien, 1990; Leithwood, 1995; Louis, 1990 Johnson, 1996) that leadership studies must look at leaders and their context to understand what it is that leaders do.

District context variables such as socioeconomic status (Graham, 1990) may be related to the way superintendents practice their leadership. Superintendents who find themselves in districts where the context is such that they are thwarted in engaging in transformational leadership practices, must be aware of the obstacles they face and consciously seek opportunities to provide those practices that will enable them to move their district forward.
By studying the relationship between superintendent’s self-perception of their own leadership practices and the socioeconomic status of the school district, the researcher will begin to determine if a superintendent’s leadership practices can be linked to the community context. If district variables such as socioeconomic status are related to superintendents’ practicing of transformational leadership, superintendent preparation programs should, in addition to providing the appropriate leadership training, provide their students with the ability to recognize significant contextual variables and adopt their leadership behaviors accordingly. They must also be able to resolve role conflicts, cope with demands, recognize opportunities and overcome barriers.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I presents the introductory background to the study: the problems, the objectives, research questions, the hypotheses, definition of terms, limitations of the study, significance of the study, and organization of the study.

The review of literature in Chapter II contains an introduction and the following sections: the role of the superintendent, transformational leadership and the superintendent, and effects of context variables on school leadership. The Kouzes and Posner (1995) framework will be expanded upon in this chapter.

Chapter III contains an introduction and describes the research methodology including the following: the data collection, instrumentation, procedures and data analysis employed in the study.

Chapter IV includes an in-depth analysis of data, the summary and treatment of data, and tests the hypotheses.
Chapter V summarizes the study and forms conclusions based on the in-depth analysis of results. Also included is a discussion of the implications of the research, recommendations based on the research, and recommendations for future research.
Chapter II
Review of the Literature

Introduction

The purpose of the review of the literature is to provide insight into the role of the superintendent and its complexities, to define transformational leadership practices and their implications for superintendents, and to begin to clarify the relationship between context and leadership practices. The five leadership practices defined by Kouzes and Posner (1995) will be defined and reviewed in relationship to the body of literature on transformational leadership. The Kouzes and Posner framework has been identified because it is consistent with the recent literature on transformational leadership and because the instrument used in this study to determine superintendents' transformational leadership practices is based on their framework.

The role of the superintendent has evolved from a role with an emphasis on instruction to one that is multifaceted (Griffen, 1994). Currently, according to Johnson (1996), "... many believe that the school superintendent can be a champion of reform, assessing a district's needs, devising solutions to its problems, taking charge of its policies and practices, providing support to its principals intent on improving their schools, inspiring confidence among teachers and ensuring compliance by the reluctant and recalcitrant" (p. xi).

After many years of relatively little research on the superintendency there now appears to be a growing body of literature on the work of the district's chief school administrator. To provide a quality education to students in a school district, the
superintendent as the chief educational leader must understand the complexity of his or her role.

There is a call for a new type of leadership for the superintendent. "Superintendents must be in a position to distribute power and influence in such a way that it supports the capacity to continuously improve schools. Superintendents must develop shared visions that address the needs of students and communities while holding firm to high standards established by government, business, and their profession" (Carter, G. and Cunningham, W., 1997, p.16).

Several researchers (Kommert and Augenstein, 1990; Leithwood, 1995) have suggested that transformational leadership holds great promise for the superintendency. A superintendent's ability to practice transformational leadership however may be shaped by the context in which they work (Johnson, 1996). The school superintendent by virtue of access and control, makes decisions within the constraints posed by the organizational environment and external influences or pressures (Fullan, 1980).

The Role of the Superintendent

The effective schools movement in the 1980's did not place much emphasis on the role of the school superintendent (Coleman and LaRoque, 1990; Cuban, 1984; Griffen, 1994; Murphy and Hallinger, 1986). Recently, however, a body of research has begun to accumulate that investigates this overlooked position (Hord, 1990.). Murphy and Hallinger (1986) noted that "there are substantial patterns between the findings on the principal as instructional leader and the role of the superintendent as instructional leader"(p.229). Ultimately the role of the superintendent is to assist the district in building capacity to move itself forward (Carter and Cunningham, 1997).
The core roles of superintending are instructional, managerial and political (Cuban, 1988, Johnson, 1996). Constituents rely on superintendents to provide leadership in each of these areas.

If instructional leadership is weak, the superintendent has been found to be misguided and preoccupied with the wrong things. When managerial leadership is weak, the superintendent is seen as ineffective in implementing the goals of the district. When political leadership is weak, the schools succumb to outside influences or become a battleground for competing priorities (Johnson, 1996).

The instructional role. Significant improvement in school performance will not occur if the superintendent does not assume a strong role as an instructional leader (Carter and Cunningham, 1997).

According to Cuban (1988), the concept of the instructional role for the superintendent implies that the superintendent is the teacher of the school community rather than the instructor of students and teachers. At one level this refers to helping teachers improve pedagogy, helping principals interpret the curriculum, and teaching principals how to supervise and evaluate their staff. At another level, a broader definition of the instructional role of superintendents refers to the shaping of a mission for the district, establishing a district climate, providing rituals and setting a personal example to communicate ways to implement the mission. At this level, the school board, the community and the district organization become a classroom in which the superintendent instructs on how to view schooling in a slightly different way as well as bends their efforts toward new activities and goals. Superintendents who assume this instructional role set goals, establish standards, select and supervise staff, and ensure consistency in
curricula and teaching approaches. Cuban concluded that school improvement could not be achieved without a high level of curriculum and instruction involvement from the superintendent.

Murphy and Hallinger (1986) studied instructional leadership in effective school districts by interviewing superintendents from 12 of the most instructionally effective districts in California. Specific instructional management practices were examined within a framework of six major functions: setting goals and establishing expectations and standards, selecting staff, supervising and evaluating staff, establishing an instructional and curricular focus, ensuring consistency in technical core operations and monitoring curriculum and instruction. The superintendents reported actively "managing and directing technical core activities in their districts" (p.220) using a cadre of direct and indirect leadership tools. Their involvement included the following:

1) Setting goals and establishing standards. The 12 superintendents reported that their primary goal was increased student learning although they were already among the most academically successful districts in the state. This achievement orientation developed by the superintendents was translated into norms and goals, which in turn guided the actions of others in the school system. This was one area in which the superintendents were "directly, personally and actively involved" (p.221) in goal development. The goals in these districts tended to focus on curriculum and instruction, were developed primarily as an internal activity led by the superintendent with collaboration of the administrative team and the Board of Education without extensive input from teachers or the community, and were believed by the superintendents to strongly influence both
district and site level activities. A strong district level mission to improve learning was a priority of the superintendents.

(2) Selecting Staff. Superintendents in these 12 districts were involved in the hiring of all administrators and often participated in the selection of teaching staff in conjunction with building level staff. In hiring new administrators they developed selection criteria and procedures and put an emphasis on curriculum and instruction management skills and human relations. The superintendent’s involvement in the selection of new teachers was symbolic in that it conveyed the significance of the appropriate hiring of new teachers. The extent of the superintendent’s involvement was inversely related to district size.

(3) Supervising and Evaluating Staff. Ten of the 12 superintendents maintained primary responsibility for the evaluation of principals and another was actively involved. They believed high visibility at the school buildings was a key to their leadership role. The average superintendent in this group spent over 20 eight-hour days visiting schools, which is approximately 8 percent of their total work year. As part of the supervision process they reported regular meetings with individual principals, with seven of the 12 conducting more than 25 meetings with individual principal throughout the year. Reasons given for the school visitations included supervision of personnel, checking systems, and building organizational climate. Several of the superintendents indicated that in addition to the observations made, they used the visitations to monitor the progress each principal was making towards their objectives.
(4) Establishing an instructional and curriculum focus. Superintendents in the 12 districts gave a high degree of focus to instructional and curriculum activities. They placed more emphasis on activities related to curriculum and instruction and monitored those activities. It was not unusual for some of the superintendents to identify a particular teaching methodology and expect all teachers to emphasize it.

The two methods used to bring clarity to the technical core were the setting of a preferred approach to instruction and the development of system wide curricular expectations. In eight of the districts textbooks and standardized testing instruments were consistent among the schools.

(5) Ensuring consistency in technical core operations. The superintendents reported that there was a high degree of consistency in the areas of curriculum and instruction and the superintendents were the “key actors” (p. 226) in maintaining this focus. Selection of staff, professional development and the allocation of resources were ways in which the superintendent maintained the consistency of focus. Teacher evaluations were standardized across each district and evaluation objectives were aligned with school objectives.

(6) Monitoring curriculum and instruction. School visitations were one important way those superintendents monitored technical core operations. They used their visits to review the following: (1) the extent to which district and school goals were being implemented in the classrooms; (2) the match between the district adopted curriculum and the objectives emphasized during class lessons; (3) the pervasiveness of the district preferred teaching strategy; (4) the principals clinical teaching and supervision skills; (5) the effectiveness of school and classroom
management practices as reflected in student movement patterns on the school
campus and student engagement rates in the classrooms; and (6) the principals' 
level of understanding about what was happening in the areas of curriculum and
instruction in their schools.

These superintendents, as reported by Murphy and Hallinger (1986), were all
actively involved in the instructional program of their district. Their direct leadership
was displayed in three ways. They provided significant direction in the areas of
curriculum and instruction, they ensured consistency and coordination among the
technical core operations, and they watched over internal processes and inspected
outcomes.

Bredeson (1996) further investigated the instructional leadership roles of
superintendents. He examined the relationships between superintendent's self-
descriptions of their involvement in curriculum development and instructional leadership
activities in their district and salient personal, professional and work variables. The role
in curriculum development described by the superintendents in this study was grounded
in facilitation, support and delegation of the work to others. The four major instructional
leadership roles that emerged were instructional visionary, instructional collaborator,
instructional supporter and instructional delegator. Instructional supporters and
delegators accounted for 62.1 percent of all respondents. Slightly over one quarter of the
superintendents described themselves as collaborators and only 12.5 percent described
their role as instructional visionaries. Superintendent's descriptions of their daily work
and administrative priorities indicate that superintendents spend little time in curriculum
development. Time constraints, role overload, other priorities, and lack of personal
interest in curriculum and instruction confined the majority of superintendents. Tasks involving budgets and school finance dominated the work of school superintendents.

There were significant discrepancies in what superintendents said was important compared to how much time they spent on particular administrative tasks. For example, superintendents ranked curriculum and instructional tasks fourth by importance. However, these same tasks dropped to seventh place based on the actual amount of time spent by superintendents in this area. The study also revealed that superintendents believed their school boards evaluated their administrative performance based on public relations, personnel administration, and general system administration. Effectiveness in the area of curriculum and instructional leadership was the fifth most cited responsibility.

The managerial role. According to Johnson (1996) school districts are bureaucratic agencies and require superintendents to be good managers. The school board delegates management of the district to the superintendent who is expected to fulfill their expectations. “The superintendent may foster creative teaching and nurture innovative programs, but if the busses do not run or children are unaccounted for, he or she is judged to have failed as a manager, not to have succeeded as a leader” (p.220).

Johnson studied 12 superintendents in diverse school districts and found that there was agreement by the staff that each district required management and that the superintendent should be in charge. There was, however, a range of views on exactly what the superintendent should manage and how absolute his or her authority should be.

Superintendents in highly bureaucratic districts delegated authority to central administrators and through them to building level administrators. Johnson (1996) noted that in these districts there was little room for variation and experimentation while in less
bureaucratic districts there was a more dynamic atmosphere. In the less formal districts, subordinates still knew who was the boss, but their relationship with the boss was more involved with reciprocal influence. Johnson concluded that identifying competent management is relatively easy, while locating leadership is a more complicated matter. In no district did the researcher find effective leadership without effective management. On the other hand, there were incidents of superintendents who were inspirational, however, because of poor management skills, they were unable to implement new ideas.

The effective new superintendents, studied by Johnson (1996), were found to lead “through managing” (p.239), although they did not manage rigidly. Each superintendent was responsive to the context of the district and assessed the opportunities for putting forth initiatives. Three related management issues were relevant for each new superintendent studied. The first concerned the issue of balance between centralization and decentralization and how much conformity among school practices is worthwhile. Second, the new superintendents had to consider how to structure their central office. The third managerial consideration related to the quality of the district’s principals. The way in which they selected and supervised building administrators provided the superintendents with an opportunity to exercise influence.

“Good leaders must be good managers, but good managers may not be good leaders” Hord, 1990 (p.1). Managers do not change very much. Instead they manage what they find and leave things as they found them when they leave. The managerial role serves the fundamental purpose of maintaining organizational stability. Cuban (1987) distinguished between managing and leading. Managing requires the technical skills of allocating effectively and efficiently toward organizational goals and resources,
monitoring, evaluating, and navigating. Leading occurs when the goals go beyond maintaining organizational stability and the superintendent initiates and takes risks, creates conflict, transforms existing goals and adds new ones. Superintendent activities that are associated with this role include those that carry out board policies, such as planning, collecting and disbursing information, constructing budgets, hiring and firing, supervising subordinates, and managing conflict. For those superintendents who seek to go beyond what the school board mandates, there is a merging of the managerial and instructional roles (Cuban, 1987).

Karen Seashore Louis (1990) evaluated the role of the school district in school improvement and identified two opposing sides of the debate. One side advocates for “strong central leadership” while the other side pushes for more school-based control. The author presented arguments that suggest a “middle way”, one involving district and school co-management of the improvement process. Within a co-managed system the roles she delineated for the superintendent and district staff included the following responsibilities:

1. System Building
2. Setting Broad Policies
3. Stimulating
4. Enabling
5. Supporting
6. Buffering

Cuban (1987) reviewed the research on how superintendents spend their time and concluded that the initial self-reports of the 1950's showed superintendents spending most
of their time in administration rather than in instructional supervision, with brief moments squeezed into relations with the community. Reports done by shadowing superintendents from the early 1970's on showed that superintendents have many brief encounters, mostly with school board members and central office staff members. There are numerous interruptions that limit the time spent in schools or at the desk. "In short, superintending is a world of action. A picture of superintendent behavior as planned and organized receives little support from these studies" (p.260). The studies indicated time being spent with superiors and subordinates in meetings and deskwork with little time to spend in schools and classrooms.

The constant attention required by these interactions, with conflicting demands from individuals and groups, generate inescapable conflict. It is because of these demands, Cuban believed, that superintendents opt for adopting a managerial role, rather than a leadership role, as a strategy for reducing conflict. Other reasons for adopting a managerial role include the origins of the position, socialization and training, uncertainty in determining effectiveness and convenience.

Despite the emphasis on management over leadership, Cuban asserted, there have been superintendents that made substantive changes to the districts they led. For this type of change to occur there must be certain conditions in place. The necessary conditions noted included 1) a sense of crisis 2) an enlightened school board and 3) a vision.

**The political role.** The political role goes beyond community leadership and public relations and includes those processes that superintendents must use to determine and transform personal and public goals into policies and actions. It also encompasses
the authority, rules and influence that superintendents exert in working with a school board and governing a school district (Cuban, 1988).

Superintendents stand between what state and local school boards direct, what parents expect, what teachers and parents want (and these differ) and what students need. Their position is like that of a police officer at a traffic circle where cars from four different directions enter and exit. There to slow and speed up traffic, the officer also must sense when it will bunch up and even out and determine when to call a halt to one line while urging another to move ahead with dispatch. Figuring out when the traffic of competing interests and expectations will ebb and flow, while simultaneously handling the inevitable crashes of conflicting interests in order to avoid gridlock becomes a superintendent's major task. By their decisions and actions, by their exercise of formal and informal power, their display of interpersonal skills, their core values, and their perspectives on what is or what is not possible, superintendents determine to what extent a policy is implemented as intended, converted to fit the particular contours of the district, or shelved. (Cuban, 1988, p.257).

Johnson (1996) concluded that politics is a central component in the work of the superintendent and a requirement for success. Superintendents must know how to build coalitions, negotiate agreements, and force concessions when necessary. They cannot afford to be above politics. In recent years the role of politics in education has increased due to shrinking public funds, an increasing conviction that the public, not the professionals, should control public education and the need to serve a diverse student population. In addition, most teachers are currently supported by labor organizations and
negotiated contracts. Superintendents need to be political to build coalitions that establish support for their district. They need to ensure adequate funding for their schools by using those coalitions to petition legislators, bargain with the mayor, and motivate teachers to represent the schools, or challenge inadequate budgeting for education. Superintendents also must use political leadership to divide resources among programs and schools as competing demands are made.

The three roles, instructional, managerial and political, form the core of the superintendency and cannot be ignored if the superintendent is to survive. The conflict arises as superintendents try to serve a multitude of constituencies that have competing expectations as to what should occur. Conflict is embedded due to the multiple roles and is connected to how much superintendents manage and how much they lead.

**Superintendents’ role and school district effectiveness.** There is little doubt that a school superintendent would like to improve school performance, raise public confidence, and secure community support for the district’s vision of schooling. The specific role of the superintendent in this process is less clear and the literature in this area is sparse (Berg, 1996). Although most school reform reports stress the importance of the principal’s role and ignore the superintendent’s role, there is a growing body of literature that suggests that the superintendent’s leadership is a critical component if educational change is to be institutionalized (Leslie, 1992). Fullan (1982) has asserted that change efforts are more likely to succeed when the superintendent is an active supporter.

One reason for the lack of information may be that finding a definition of “district effectiveness” (p. 28) is a difficult task for researchers studying school or school district
leadership. Although not without limitations, several investigators have looked at student achievement as a way to gauge effectiveness (Leithwood, 1995).

Coleman and La Rocque (1990) studied the activities of the superintendent's office in high performing districts and compared them to the activities of the superintendent's office in other districts. They concluded that the work of the superintendency contributes to the development and maintenance of a district ethos, which, in turn, affects district quality. They developed three concepts that emphasize cultural elements of leadership rather than relational ones. The first is "reach" which conveys the ability of the superintendent to influence the orientation of subordinates and encompasses the two other concepts of "vision" and "range" (p. 61). Vision refers to the professional norms, which shape and guide activities towards a desired future state. Range refers to the scope and diversity of activities to which the superintendent devotes his time and energy. The authors emphasize that most leadership studies in education focus on the role of the principal, with little research done on the superintendent. Given the current school environment and hostility to authority, the author believes that "leadership in school districts is better characterized as influence than power. They suggest that leadership in school districts should be mostly focused on creating and sustaining a positive district ethos. District ethos, as described by Coleman and LaRocque is made up of six activity and attitude "focuses"(p. 64): taking care of business; monitoring performance; adapting policies and practices; consideration/caring for stakeholders; creating shared values; and creating community support. These practices parallel what occurs in good classrooms and in good schools and ultimately impact on student outcomes. As such, leaders at the district level are acting in a manner
similar to principals in climate building. Since the school level activities have been proven to affect student achievement, the authors contend it is possible that they will also have a positive effect at the district level. They concluded their research by suggesting that the superintendency can have a profound effect on the work of other professionals in the district through the creation and maintenance of a positive district ethos.

Musella and Leithwood (1990) found much less “reach” into classrooms on the part of a cross section of superintendents. They looked at the influence of the superintendent on school effectiveness by surveying 69 superintendents and 762 other respondents in five other roles. Their results indicated extensive perceived influence of superintendents on school system factors through the use of a broad array of influence strategies. As a framework for their study they reviewed the extensive body of evidence that has accumulated in support of teacher and school effectiveness as it relates to student learning. They also incorporated 11 system factors and noted that evidence of the potential link between these factors and student growth varies in quality. Convincing evidence is available concerning staff development programs, teacher evaluation practices and system morale and climate. More speculative factors with less available research are administrator evaluation practices, teacher selection and promotion practices, trustee-teacher relations, trustee administrator relations, board-community relations, program evaluation practices and administrator teacher relations. Four other factors were also included in the framework: funding, policy, legislation and board-ministry relations. Each represents a variable that is related to student learning. Based on evidence outside this study they believed that superintendents should focus on selected school-system factors, which emphasize school level administrators’ effectiveness. Finally they
recommended that superintendents “be a coach and a referee but not a player” (p. 111). Recent efforts moving towards school-based planning would exemplify this approach. Musella and Leithwood concluded that superintendents appeared to have minimal direct effects upon schools but their work created many of the organizational conditions giving rise to district effectiveness by contributing to the improvement of building-level administrator effectiveness.

Griffin (1994) provided a multi-state study on the superintendent’s impact on school district effectiveness by looking at the behaviors of school district superintendents in six districts that had engaged in district-wide school improvement plans based on effective schools research. The focus of the study was on the district and not on individual schools. Her study included sending questionnaires to principals to obtain their perceptions of their superintendent’s behaviors and activities during the time their schools were improving. Interviews were conducted with the superintendents to determine the perceived behaviors and activities that they believed led their districts to a state of effectiveness. Observing the superintendent and analyzing the content of district archival records got additional descriptive information. Interview questions were clustered around five categories: leadership and planning; curriculum; staff development; district-school interaction and superintendent behaviors. The three themes that emerged that described the dynamics of the superintendents’ impact were focus, support and beliefs. The superintendents’ focus brought clarity of vision and organizational goals. Each superintendent was involved in the activities of the district’s effective schools committee. Support by the superintendents was in the recognition of district staff as professionals. The necessary assistance needed to accomplish school improvement tasks
and organizational goals were provided. Beliefs were the driving force linked to focus and support. They contributed to the process of actualizing visions.

Griffin (1994) concluded that the leadership provided by the superintendent contributes to schools developing one at a time and provides the linkage needed among schools to bolster the improvement of individual schools. In effective school districts it was the superintendent’s behaviors that shaped the district and created the setting for goal accomplishment within the school district.

“To argue that district superintendents are in a position to restructure schooling, (and presumably to improve what occurs in the classroom) attention must be paid to the origins of the post, the varied roles that superintendents must perform, and the nature of leadership and change in school” (Cuban, 1989, p.251). Cuban relies on his 15 years as a school practitioner, seven of those years spent as a superintendent and researcher and asserts that "Conflict is the DNA of the superintendency" (p. 291) and superintendents are commonly driven to reduce tensions and avoid major change and instability by favoring constancy over change. When superintendents do initiate changes, they favor ones that improve efficiency and effectiveness rather than alter the fundamental structures of schooling. Superintendents who have made critical changes in schooling did so when their skills converged with conditions within the setting favorable to undertaking such structural changes.

**Transformational Leadership and the Superintendent**

The current literature on educational leadership (Leithwood, 1995, Konnert and Augenstein, 1990, Johnson, 1996) has advocated for transformational leadership as a way for superintendents to bring positive change to their districts. This section will review the
recent research on transformational leadership and will describe the transformational behaviors that have been identified by Kouzes and Posner (1995). The Kouzes and Posner framework has been identified because it is consistent with the recent literature on transformational leadership and because the instrument used in this study, The Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (1997) is based on the Kouzes and Posner model.

Transformational leadership, Burns (1978) first proposed the idea of transformational leadership in a developed form and Bass (1985) applied the concepts and expanded upon them in educational settings. Transformational leaders, as defined by Bass, motivate subordinates to do more than they ever expected to do by raising their level of awareness and consciousness about the importance and value of reaching designated outcomes, encouraging subordinates to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of the organization, and altering subordinates needs on Maslow's hierarchy or expanding their portfolio of needs and wants. According to Bass “the transactional leader works within the organizational culture as it exists; the transformational leader changes the organizational culture” (p. )

Three transformational leadership factors identified by Bass included:

1. Charisma: the leader instills pride, faith, and respect; has a gift for seeing what is really important; has a sense of mission (vision) effectively articulated.

2. Individual consideration: the leader delegates projects to stimulate and create learning experiences; treats each person with respect and as an individual.

3. Intellectual stimulation: the leader provides ideas that result in a rethinking of old ways; leader enables followers to look at problems from many angles and to seek creative solutions.
Research on this type of leadership has just begun to emerge within the educational setting. Transformational leadership includes both transactional and transformational practices. Transactional forms of leadership are based on exchange theory: system rewards are exchanged for system services of the employee, who is perceived as performing in part out of self-interest. Although transactional leadership practices are needed, they are not sufficient in motivating people to do their best or in maintaining peak effort from employees. According to Burns (1978) only a portion of leadership is due to a transaction between the leader and the followers. In transactional leadership, the leaders and followers approach each other with the expectation that an exchange will occur. Transformational leadership goes beyond this approach as the leader seeks a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation.

Bennis (1984) noted the following competencies required by transformational leaders:

1. Management of attention: a compelling vision that brings others to a place they have not been before; a clear sense of outcome goal and direction.
2. Management of meaning: communicating the vision; making dreams apparent to others and aligning people with these dreams.
3. Management of dreams, constancy and focus.
4. Management of self: knowing one's skills and deploying them effectively (p 17).

Leithwood (1992) is one of the key researchers who have been looking at transformational leadership as it applies to educational administration. He and his colleagues completed three studies in an ongoing series aimed at looking at this type of
leadership. According to Leithwood, school administrators must focus their attention on using facilitative power to make second order changes in their schools. This can be accomplished by using transforming leadership as a leadership that facilitates the redefinition of a people's mission and vision, renews their commitment and restructures their system for goal accomplishment (Roberts, 1983; cited in Leithwood, 1992). He suggested that transformational school leaders are continually pursuing three fundamental goals: 1) helping staff members develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture; 2) fostering teacher development; and 3) helping them solve problems together more effectively.

Leithwood (1995) has adapted the two dimensions of transactional leadership identified by Bass to apply to the practices of the superintendent. The two identified practices are:

1. Contingent reward. The superintendent tells the staff what to do in order to be rewarded for their efforts.
2. Management by exception. The superintendent intervenes with staff only when standards are not being met.

Leithwood (1995) also provided a review of transformational leadership practices as they apply to the superintendency:

1. Identifying and articulating a vision. The superintendent identifies new opportunities for the district and develops, articulates and inspires others with his or her vision for the future.
2. Providing an appropriate model. The superintendent sets an example for staff to follow that is consistent with the values that the superintendent espouses.
3. Fostering the acceptance of group goals. The superintendent promotes cooperation among staff and assists them to work together towards a common goal.

4. High performance expectations. The superintendent demonstrates expectations for excellence, quality, and/or high performance on the part of the staff.

5. Providing individualized support. The superintendent shows respect for the staff and concern about their personal feelings and needs.

6. Intellectual stimulation. The superintendent challenges staff to reexamine some of their assumptions about their work and rethink how it can be performed.

According to Konnert and Augenstein (1990), “transformational leadership is the superintendency” (p. 74). It’s having a vision of what the school system can be and motivating all associated with the system to have pride in the system and to achieve more than they thought possible for the good of the system.

Kouzes and Posner’s Leadership Practices

Leadership practices, in relationship to the superintendent, have been defined as those overt and observable behaviors that are used by superintendents to maintain and improve the quality of education in their school district (Leithwood, 1995).

Kouzes and Posner (1995) conducted extensive research on transformational leadership practices and developed a list of five leadership practices and ten strategies associated with those practices:

1. Challenging the Process

Search for Opportunities
Experiment and take risks

2. Inspiring a Shared Vision
   Envision the future
   Enlist Others

3. Enabling Others to Act
   Foster Collaboration
   Strengthen Others

4. Modeling the Way
   Set the Example
   Plan Small Wins

5. Encouraging the Heart
   Recognize Individual Contribution
   Celebrate Accomplishments

It is these five practices that are incorporated into their Leadership Practices Inventory that is being used in this study to measure superintendent’s transformational leadership. Following is a discussion of each of those five practices and the two associated behaviors.

Challenging the process. Effective leaders challenge the status quo. They are pioneers who are willing to step out and explore the unknown by taking risks in order to find a better way of doing things. They are not always the creators or originators of new products, services, or processes. Much of this comes from others who are doing the work. Their primary contribution is in the recognition of good ideas, the support of those ideas, and the willingness to challenge the system to get those good ideas adopted.
Leaders realize that experimentation, innovation and change all involve risk and failure but they continue on anyway. They also invite others to take risks, experiment and innovate. Their failures and the failures of others are viewed as learning opportunities. They learn from their failures as well as their successes. The two key behaviors that characterize leaders who challenge the process are searching for opportunities and experimenting and taking risks.

Peters (1987) stated that visions and opportunities adopted by leaders were seldom original: that the effective leaders primary function was not to identify new opportunity, but to effectively implement the changes necessary to secure any advantages presented by the opportunity. Meeting with a variety of diverse groups is a way in which leaders can identify those opportunities. Kouzes and Posner (1995) agree that by meeting with both internal and external sources, leaders become aware of potential opportunities to gather new ideas. Systemic approaches such as suggestion boxes, brainstorming meetings, focus groups and other communication can also be effective ways of getting new ideas.

According to Kouzes and Posner (1995), innovation becomes stifled when the prevailing attitude is “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” (p. 57). It is the role of the leader to go out and look for those things that don’t look right.

Effective leaders work to build a culture that encourages employees and others to present new ideas and assist in the search for new opportunities. When this occurs employees are more productive and more creative (Oakley and Krug, 1991; Schein, 1985).
Facilitative leadership, identified by Lashway, 1997, promotes a culture for change by supporting risk-taking activities, cutting through red tape, ceaselessly communicating with teachers, openly facing conflict, selecting only staff who are in tune with the vision, and nurturing those rituals that support the schools values. Kouzes and Posner (1995) see risk-taking as an essential part of leadership and view leaders as pioneers who are willing to step into the unknown" (p. 66). Waiting for permission to begin new endeavors is not characteristic of leaders. Acting with a sense of urgency is a behavior of successful leaders. Peters (1987) suggested that to move an organization forward, the leader must provide an environment where failure is viewed as an essential element of ongoing organizational operations because the knowledge gained helps produce innovation and positive change. He acknowledged that the question of how much risk an organization can sustain is one that must be addressed. Some organizations provide guidelines in this area, but there is always the element of judgement for the individual to exercise regarding what is an appropriate level of risk.

**Inspiring a shared vision.** Effective leaders inspire a shared vision. They imagine the opportunities that wait when they and their constituents arrive at a distant destination. Leaders want to make things happen, change the way things currently are, and create something that no one else has ever created before. They see what the results will look like even before they start the project and are pulled forward by the clear image. Yet they realize that nothing will get accomplished without commitment and that they cannot command that commitment, only inspire it. To do this, leaders must know their constituents and speak the same language. The constituents must believe that the leader understands their needs and has their best interest at heart. The leader can only enlist
their support by knowing their hopes, aspirations, dreams and visions. Leaders can
enable others to see the exciting possibilities that the future can hold. They paint a
picture that shows how the dream is for the common good and communicate their passion
through the use of vivid language. It is this passion that sparks the enthusiasm in the
constituents. Kouzes and Posner (1995) report that of their five exemplary leadership
practices, inspiring a shared vision is the least frequently applied and the one most
reported to be the most uncomfortable. The researchers believe that most people attribute
something mystical about the process of inspiring a shared vision and see it as something
"that comes from the gods" (p. 125). It is this assumption that inhibits people more than
an inability to be inspirational. According to the researchers there is no need to be a
famous or a charismatic person to inspire a shared vision. What is necessary is to believe
and to be able to transmit the belief in an energetic and enthusiastic way that brings the
vision to life for others. Abstract visions become concrete when leaders use a variety of
techniques such as metaphors, symbols, positive language and personal energy to
generate excitement. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. exemplified a leader who had mastered
this art. The two key behaviors that characterize leaders who inspire a shared vision are
envisioning the future and enlisting others in pursuing the vision.

According to Konnert and Augenstein (1990), the articulation of a vision may be
the "cornerstone of empowerment for the superintendent and the entire school
community" (p. 106). Bennis and Nanus (1985) suggested that the vision can be as
unique as a dream or as precise as a goal or a mission statement. The most important
component is that it articulates a view of a "realistic, credible, attractive future for the
organization, a condition that is better in some important ways than what now exists" (p.
They determined, after looking at the lives of 90 leaders, that "attention to vision" was one of the main strategies employed. Peters (1987) agreed that an effective superintendent must be able to articulate the vision to create an atmosphere for growth.

Kouzes and Posner (1995) define enlisting others as attracting people to a common purpose. That common purpose must be brought to life by igniting passion in others. To enlist others in pursuing the vision, everyone must own the vision and goals. This is particularly important in a school setting because teachers typically regard methodology as a matter of individual preference and empowerment strategies do not automatically lead to schoolwide change in educational practices. Failing to solicit the input of others may cause resentment, resistance and backlash (Johnson, 1996). She further suggested that an educational vision must be crafted with a particular local context in mind rather than one that could be relevant in any district. Rather than stating the conviction that "all children can learn" (p. 70) a local vision must be tailored to the specific context of the district. The successful superintendent must step back and find values among competing points of view and develop a process whereby those competing points of view begin to clarify a vision that provides a direction for the district. To develop a practical and purposeful vision that is meaningful in context, the superintendent must consider "their district's history and current needs, the character of their communities, the structure and culture of the school organizations, as well as the formal and informal authority inherent in their new position" (p. 67).

Enabling others to act. Effective leaders know that their dreams will not become a reality by the actions of one individual. They know that leadership is a team effort and that they must enlist the support and assistance of all those who have a stake in the vision
to make the project work. Kouzes and Posner (1995) note that their research has supported the notion that leaders personally benefit when they engage in collaborative behaviors since they are more likely to be seen as credible. To foster cooperation, leaders must work with diverse and conflicting interests among groups by developing cooperative goals, seeking integrative solutions, and building trusting relationships. The leader's ability to enable others to act must be founded on trust and confidence. From the constituent's point of view, this is the most important of the five leadership practices because without that trust and confidence, risks will not be taken and change will not occur. According to the researchers, trust is at the heart of fostering collaboration and is a critical ingredient in successful organizations. Leaders must demonstrate their trust in others before asking that others trust them. To build trust a leader must listen to what others have to say and be sensitive to their needs. People listen more attentively to people who listen to them.

To enable others to act, leaders must make it possible for them to feel strong and competent and to have a sense of ownership. Leaders do this by not hoarding the power they have but by giving it away. When people are given discretion, authority, and information, they are more likely to use their energies to produce extraordinary results. To strengthen others the effective leader must create a climate where people are involved and important. Leaders strengthen others when they give their power away, when they allow constituents to exercise choice, and discretion, when they develop competence to excel, when they assign critical tasks, and when they offer visible support. The two key leadership behaviors that enable others to act are fostering collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust and strengthening people by giving power away.
providing choice, developing competence, assigning critical tasks, and offering visible support.

In the over 500 original cases studied by Kouzes and Posner (1995), there was never an example of extraordinary accomplishment without the active support of many individuals. They found that collaboration produces cohesiveness and enhanced morale among employees and groups collaborating. To gain this active support, leaders must use effective communication to attract people to their vision and enlist their aid in developing organizational goals. Bennis and Nanus (1985) noted the great need for leaders to communicate in such a manner that the message is understood at every level, and in every direction, both formally and informally. According to Johnson (1996), leadership in school districts must be based on reciprocal influence with individuals from different roles collaborating to improve education. Effective school administrators encourage independent initiative and creative solutions. They model collaboration by allowing leadership to be simultaneously top-down, bottom up, and side-to-side.

Peters (1987) indicated that there are no limits to the ability to contribute on the part of a properly selected, well trained, appropriately supported, and above all, committed person. The school superintendent, often removed from the classroom because of the location of the central office and because of other issues, such as school funding, asbestos crises, political campaigns, teacher strikes and state mandates, must devote the time and energy required to empower school personnel to ensure a quality educational program.

Trust is at the heart of fostering collaboration and is the central issue in relating to others both inside and outside the organization (Kouzes and Posner, 1995). When trust
has been established. Individuals are able to consider alternative viewpoints and make use of other peoples' expertise. When trust is not present, there is a tendency to twist facts and create an atmosphere of misunderstanding and misinterpretation. To build trust, a leader must be able to listen to what others have to say. People listen more attentively to others who listen to them. Within the educational environment, teachers believe that they have the most important position but know that others don't always share that view. Johnson (1996) pointed out that once teachers feel genuinely respected, they trust the superintendent's intentions and are able to consider his or her ideas. If the teacher senses condescension from the superintendent, they will dismiss the superintendent as a bureaucrat. In Johnson's study of twelve new superintendents, she found that teachers and principals hoped that the superintendents would respect their work, seek their opinions, and earn their trust and support. They wanted to go beyond the hierarchical relationship to establish a collaborative association, which would lead to positive school change.

**Modeling the way.** Effective leaders consistently exhibit behaviors that show them as individuals with uncompromising integrity. They set a daily example that builds commitment by demonstrating behaviors that create progress and momentum. Leaders must first be clear about their beliefs and guiding principles. Constituents are moved more deeply by deeds than by compelling words and expect leaders to show up, pay attention, and participate directly in the process of getting extraordinary things done. By leading by example, leaders make their visions become tangible and provide the evidence of their commitment. Leaders must have beliefs and articulate them often.
Kouzes and Posner (1995) have done extensive research on the issue of credibility and have found that when it comes to determining a leader's believability, "people first listen to the words; then watch the actions. They listen to the talk and then watch the walk. Then they measure they congruence." (p. 210). Every action a leader takes must be consistent with those beliefs and must be able to steer projects along a predetermined path. They must recognize that it is the little wins that add up and build the confidence that bigger challenges can be met, consequently strengthening commitment to the long-term future. Leaders help others by breaking progress into small achievable goals. The small wins process helps leaders to keep constituents commitment to a course of action by providing some indication of movement. Small wins also help build confidence and reinforce the natural desire to feel successful. Each small win provides a stable building block in the process. The two key leadership behaviors that model the way are setting the example by behaving in ways that are consistent with shared values and achieving small wins that promote consistent progress and build commitment.

Johnson (1996) noted in her study of superintendents, that most teachers see the superintendent in the distance and believe that it is the principal who has the greatest leverage on their work. The expectations of teachers and principals with regard to superintendents are usually transactional, not transformational. "Only when superintendents prove themselves to be well-informed educators, wise change agents and deserving of respect and trust do constituents seriously consider responding to their call for change" (p. 121). Teachers and principals must be convinced that their superintendent will work hard to provide the resources for their programs. Once the basics are satisfied, they will look for more activities that demonstrate the superintendent's commitment to
education. Behaviors such as visiting schools and classrooms and making genuine efforts to engage staff in new ideas about their work will reinforce the notion that the superintendent's primary goal is to provide a positive instructional atmosphere. A superintendent's capacity to lead in this type of environment becomes dependent upon the way teachers and principals view the superintendent's commitment to children and dedication to ensuring that the school works well. Some types of superintendent visibility were valued more than others, making the distinctions between ceremonial, social and substantive types of visits. Superintendents who only visit the schools for special events were felt to have no understanding of what really goes on. Social visits were appreciated but teachers expressed a wish for visits that were more meaningful. One superintendent in the study was reported as being highly engaged in classroom activities. He watched lessons, talked with students and informally discussed issues with staff. In general superintendents, who made frequent classroom visits, impressed teachers. Some expressed exacerbation by the fact that although they were visited, there was little feedback regarding what was seen. Johnson (1996) concluded that a superintendent who is regularly engaged in the life of the schools and classrooms has a tremendous influence on the teacher's work. Teachers and principals in frequently visited buildings reported that the superintendent's presence conveyed the district administration's support of teaching and concern for students and their learning. This increases the potential for better collaboration and provides the superintendent with enhanced credibility as an educator. Being viewed as an educator first, earns the superintendent dutiful respect. However, he or she must maintain ongoing success in this area in order to achieve long-term commitment from teachers and principals.
A second behavior associated with modeling the way is to achieve small wins (Kouzes and Posner, 1995). In order to get commitment to new behaviors leaders must break down big problems into small, doable steps and get a person to say yes more than one time. Others must be able to see that breaking the journey down into measurable goals and milestones can demonstrate progress. The authors contended that strategic planning, a traditional management approach, doesn't convey the emotions that people experience when they reach milestones. The small wins process allows the leader to build commitment to a course of action. This concept is compared to the way professional fund-raisers initially ask for a small contribution from new donors. "they know that it's easier to go back and request more (and they do) in the future from those who've made an initial contribution than to return to someone who's already said no" (p. 245).

Small wins build confidence and increase the desire to be successful. Leaders must deliberately cultivate a strategy of small wins to get others to want to go along with their requests. People who feel like winners have an increased desire to continue on in the journey. Achieving small wins creates momentum and sustains commitment to stay on the path. When we provide visibility by publicizing the contributions of others we increase the likelihood of new relationships. Success acts as a magnet that pulls people together and increases their attachment to the project. "Commitment--staying the course--is thus facilitated when people feel that they have a choice, when their decisions and actions are visible, and when they can't easily deny or back out of actions" (Kouzes and Posner, 1995, p.259).
Encouraging the heart. Effective leaders encourage the heart of their constituents by recognizing their contributions. This encouragement can be dramatic or simple but it must be a genuine act of caring. When goals are reached, those that have achieved those goals must be treated like winners. The four essentials in the recognition of individuals are (a) to build self-confidence through high expectations; (b) to connect performance and rewards; (c) use a variety of rewards; and (d) be positive and hopeful. By using these four essentials and recognizing contributions, leaders stimulate and motivate the internal drive within individuals. Leaders express pride in the accomplishment of others, and recognize them with public praise, rewards and warm acknowledgements. The two key behaviors associated with encouraging the heart are recognizing individual contributions to the success of every project and celebrating team accomplishments regularly.

Leaders who celebrate team accomplishments, as well as individual accomplishments, reinforce the notion that “we’re all in this together” (p. 270). This serves to create and sustain team spirit as well as provide opportunities to stress key values. By providing this type of recognition, role models are also identified and providing this type of recognition increases people’s commitment to the group’s goals.

Lashway (1997) distinguished between transformational leadership behaviors and two other types of leadership behaviors, hierarchical and facilitative. Leaders using the hierarchical strategy base their power on the position they hold in the hierarchy. For the most part their power is coercive and may result in the discipline of a subordinate who fails to follow orders. This type of power assumes there is only one best way of doing a task. Many school reform plans, such as the “instructional leader” (p. 53) in the effective schools movement maintain a hierarchical focus. The most obvious advantage of this
model is efficiency. Focusing on logical decision making and worker accountability provides a clear direction for getting things done and allows for fair and impartial decisions. Another benefit comes from the fact that not all employees are self-motivated and have the organization's best interests at heart at all times. Using coercive power usually works with this type of employee. Finally, individuals have what is called the "habit of obedience" (p. 54) and like having someone in charge of decision-making.

Limitations of the hierarchical strategy include the realization by leaders that the same hierarchy that gave the leader power also controls the limits to that power by board policies, union contracts, and state laws. Even if there were no restraints on the level of power in a school system, it is extraordinarily difficult to control the efforts of teachers in a classroom. Another problem Lashway (1997) points out is the loss of control based on the fact that "no organizational chart can accurately capture the rich, varied, and occasionally quirky behaviors of human being" (p. 54). Hierarchical power is also limited based on its assumption that organizational goals are clear and leaders can concentrate on implementation. Changes needed are usually small scale and risk-taking is limited. An emphasis on order can limit the creativity of those individuals in the organization. Despite its limitations, the hierarchical approach remains dominant in American schools.

Unlike the hierarchical leader, the transformational leader is more difficult to track. This type of leader provides a vision and a sense of purpose to those who share that vision, while building commitment, enthusiasm, and excitement. In educational systems, the number of transformational leaders is not large. Among the advantages of this leadership strategy is the ability to motivate others and inspire followers. Lashway,
(1997) noted that this is a good approach to use in schools since many teachers are intrinsically motivated and this type of leadership can provide a way to allow staff to become part of a collective effort in a worthy cause. In restructuring efforts, transformational leadership may be crucial in allowing teachers who are skeptical of change to believe that their hopes for the future are attainable.

Limitations of transformational leadership are its difficulty to be taught, the possibility of particularly charismatic leaders becoming too complacent, and the risk of creating high expectations that cannot be met. In addition, Lashway questions the role of the transformational leader once the needed change has occurred.

Facilitative leadership is a new concept that has evolved from the work of transformational leadership and the two terms are often used interchangeably. Although both terms are change-oriented, there is a subtle difference in emphasis. The facilitative leader remains in the background unlike the transformational leader who remains on the center stage. Both strategies require behaviors that promote employees to collectively and actively be engaged in problem solving. However facilitative leadership employs democratic decision-making while transformational leadership asks followers to commit effort and energy to the common cause but does not necessarily imply democratic decision making. Facilitative leadership relies on mutuality and synergy, with power coming from multiple sources. Leaders employing this strategy use their authority to support a process of professional give and take. Conley and Goldman (as cited in Lashway, 1997) list the following key strategies used by facilitative leaders: building teams; providing feedback, coordination and conflict management; creating communication networks; practicing collaborative politics; and modeling the schools.
vision. Identifying the key players, knowing what they are looking for and reconciling those needs are ways in which facilitative leaders rely on the political structure. However, facilitative leaders are able to let go and trust that others can and will "function independently and successfully within a common framework of expectations and accountability." (p. 65).

Similar to transformational leaders they are keepers of the vision but unlike transformational leaders they create the vision with input from the entire school community. Facilitative leaders also provide resources, monitor and check progress and take the long view by recognizing that "change is a process, not an event" (p. 66).

Carlson (1996) reviewed the research on the use of transformational leadership in the school environment and reported that there is a consensus view that the organizations of the future will require leaders and followers invested in a transformational process. He reinforced the importance of having and articulating a vision, creating enthusiasm and support through charisma, building trust, and enabling empowerment to emerge in those taking on the task of implementing change. Through these concepts we can appreciate the terrain of transformational leadership but we are still unable to know how to implement the process. Carlson (1996) cautioned that "these concepts cannot be mechanically implemented without an appreciation for social, political, cultural, and psychological dynamics" (p. 143). At the same time, they contended, leaders should not revert to a trial and error approach each time the conditions change. Among the principles in their system is the fact that organizations and problems are too complex to be tackled by one management model and/or the "quick fix" (p. 50).
"right" leadership style that is applicable to all situations. A style can be effective or ineffective depending on how "favorable" a situation is.

Fiedler's (1967) contingency model of leadership maintained that leadership was most effective when one's predominant style matched the situation in terms of the degree of control held by the leaders. He identified three main elements that may determine whether a given situation is favorable to a leader:

1. leader-member relations (personal relations with members of the group).
2. position power (power and authority provided by the leader's position)
3. task structure (clearly defined goals, decisions, and solutions to problems).

The situation is the most favorable when relations with the subordinates are good, the leader has substantial position power, and the task is highly structured. According to his theory, the most effective leaders are neither task oriented nor people oriented. Instead, effective leaders are flexible enough to adopt a leadership style that fits their needs and the needs of their followers as well as the situation.

Stodgill (1974) surveyed the research conducted at Ohio State University in the 1940's and revealed (a) that studies had failed to provide an all purpose profile of successful leaders, (b) that traits found to be effective in some circumstances failed in others, and (c) that traits which led to the attainment of leadership positions might not be useful in practice. The researcher concluded that the relationship of leaders and followers must be considered in order to set the stage for subsequent studies involving situational leadership behaviors within groups and examination of the types of interaction between leaders and group members.
Pitner and Ogawa (1981) noted that the theorists and researchers looking at situational leadership have focused on the dynamics of leader-follower/superordinate-subordinate relationship and have not attended to the possible effects organizational and societal contexts might have on leadership. They believe that this narrowness has inhibited the description or organizational leadership in respect to the superintendency. They note, for example, that the societal structures serve as the raw material of superintendent's work as well as define the boundaries within which superintendents may operate. Finally they argued that consideration must be given to the influence of societal and organizational factors before adequate conceptualization of leadership can be developed.

The next section of this chapter will look at the literature that has served to remedy this deficit by studying leadership of the superintendent within a broader context.

District context and superintendent leadership. Several studies on leadership have considered demographic variables as possibly affecting the style or behavior of educational leaders. Although the present study focuses primarily on district socioeconomic status as the primary demographic variable, other variables such as gender, district size and years of experience as a superintendent both inside and outside the district, are discussed and considered as they relate to superintendent's leadership practices.

Konnert and Augenstein (1990) described the school as an open system and suggested that the contemporary setting of the superintendent is larger than the internal educational organization. Attention, they cautioned, should be paid to worldwide, national and community events. They note that community mores, values, needs and
educational expectations are of critical importance to the superintendent since the community is the closest to the internal organization and exerts the most immediate pressure and influence. Influential external environmental demands presented by the local community, state legislatures, governmental agencies, pressure groups, and employee unions can lead to unplanned changes. Hence, a major responsibility of the superintendent is to guide the school system in coping with the uncertainties of the external environment. To do this the superintendent must demonstrate leadership that is flexible enough to make the necessary modifications that will allow the district to stay on course. The superintendent must take an action while bearing in mind that they cannot allow the external environment to detract from the district's achievement of its goals.

"For a loosely coupled organization to stay on track, the individuals within the organization must know the mission and the goals of the organization and be motivated to work toward their accomplishment" (p.18). The authors noted that to be able to achieve this the superintendent must go beyond transactional leadership and become a transformational leader.

Johnson (1996) noted the failings of earlier leadership studies that list traits of leadership as if they were "static and context free" (p.13). She asserted that the circumstance in which the leader finds him or herself matter in that what has an impact in one setting does not have any impact in another setting. Different situations present different demands and possibilities for leaders. Gary Wills (1994; cited in Johnson, 1996) who concluded, "So much for the idea that a leader's skill can be applied to all occasions, that they can be taught outside a historical context or learned as the 'secret' of the control of every situation"(p. 13).
Instead, Johnson (1996) concluded that context is of utmost importance in the study of leadership. Superintendents must determine the demands and opportunities for leadership by looking at the context variables of time, locale, and organization. Each historical period has favored certain educational strategies and goals that were later disregarded for an updated version. Similarly, school superintendents must be able to assess the demands of their particular locale since current research on leadership does not apply equally well in every municipality or agency. School districts are not independent entities, their interests and practices are interwoven with those of their city or county government, business community and social and religious organizations. Their school budgets are tied to the district's financial condition and they must be acutely aware of the needs of the individuals who control their educational funding. Social class is another important contextual aspect to which attention must be paid. In communities with well-educated and well-to-do parents and teachers, who are attuned to and responsive to the needs of the school district, a superintendent may employ one type of leadership which contrasts with the type of leadership needed in a district where the parents and teachers are less educated and less affluent. When superintendents find themselves at odds with local values, they must either conform or try to change the local context. The context of the organization is also important. One school district may be hierarchical and unionized while another one may be static. Superintendents could rely on mandates to effect change if school districts were hierarchical however the author believed that school districts are decentralized and relatively flat organizations. Control is limited because teachers reinterpret the curriculum each time it is taught, reject prescriptive practices, and improvise to meet student's individual needs. Superintendents should realize that this is
at the heart of instruction and rely more on collaboration than on control when they want to influence the instructional practices in their districts.

Johnson (1996) contended that leadership is a multidirectional relationship, which must be negotiated and consensual in respect to the followers. Superintendents are advised to remember that they may influence their constituents but constituents also influence them. Constituents are both those inside and outside the organization. Different constituent groups will require different leadership practices from the school district leader and that leader must attend simultaneously to several embedded contexts (i.e. times, locale, and organization) that often interact themselves. "The challenge of leadership study today is to conduct research that reveals how designated leaders and their constituents work together within this complicated set of contexts to achieve their goals" (p.19). McCall and Lombard, 1978, Pitner and Owago, 1981 and Immegart, 1981, (as cited in Johnson, 1996) stress the importance of looking at leaders and their context to gain knowledge about leaders and what they do. Leithwood (1995) also is critical of the way in which the effective schools research provided correlates that would ensure that schools would become more effective despite dissimilar contexts.

In her research on 12 newly appointed superintendents, Johnson (1996) demonstrated that it is the successful interaction of a particular individual and a particular context that make leadership work. The sample studied consisted of superintendents and districts that portrayed a wide variety of settings: district size, urban/suburban character of the community, racial, ethnic and class make-up of the community, prior rate of turnover in the superintendency, prior experience of the new superintendent; and gender and race of the superintendent. The 12 districts were diverse socioeconomically and
ethnically and ranged in size from 2,600 to 27,000 students. Of the 12 superintendents five were experienced superintendents and seven were new to the role. There were nine men and three women. She concluded that superintendents must understand what is unique about their districts and find the correct leadership approach that will be successful there. “Wise superintendents interview constituents widely when they begin their job, seeking to learn about recent history, current conventions, local politics, and community expectations” (p. 282).

A study by Hallinger, Bickman and Davis (1990) of school administrators indicated that the impact of context on school administrators is as profound as it is for students and teachers. Variables such as district size and complexity, faculty experience, and district support determined the principals approach to leadership. Additionally, factors such as socioeconomic status of the community, parental involvement and geographic location impacted on the principal’s ability to lead. The researchers concluded that principals who are aware of school context variables and their impact on school improvement efforts may take action to reduce or enhance the impact of those factors based on the needs of the school.

Hannaway and Talbert (1993) extended the research on variables that promote or undermine school effectiveness by focusing on the impact of context effects on principal leadership. They argued that previous effective schools research was narrowly focused. This significantly limited understanding of the factors and processes that promote school effectiveness because it did not take into account local system factors that affect a school's ability to improve. Strong principal leadership is a factor that most researchers agree promotes school effectiveness. However the social and organizational environments of
schools in urban, suburban and rural settings affect principal leadership and thereby create different school environments. These environments, according to the researchers, either inhibit or promote school reform in ways that are dependent on their contexts and cannot be generalized. Hannaway and Talbert are critical of policy research that contends that "general models specified for the aggregate apply equally well to all kinds of school settings" (p.165). Their analysis of principal leadership provided strong evidence that district size and school size have different implications for urban and suburban schools. Specifically, in suburban schools there is a positive effect on principal leadership when the district size is large and in urban districts there is a negative effect when district size is large. There were also significant opposite effects for school size when urban and suburban districts were compared. Hannaway and Talbert point out that earlier studies looked at the effect of school size across all kinds of schools and found either an overall negative effect or no effect when urban status was controlled. The researchers speculated that organizational size may have different effects on urban and suburban schools because teacher's professional autonomy and the availability of resources may have an effect on the principal's ability to lead.

Louis (1990) studied the role of the school district in school improvement and attempted to determine if her findings could be generalized to different conditions. After review of the relevant literature she concluded that there is a missing variable that determines the role of the district: the community context. The studies that were reviewed focus on "typical" districts – suburban or small city/town. After looking at rural and urban settings she concluded that there are important differences in the roles played by district personnel. In urban districts she reported that one can usually observe certain
characteristics such as an abundance of rules and regulations, with a reliance of rules exemplified by union contracts and by the way unions insist on going by the letter of the law. Schools in these districts seemed to operate in isolation of one another, with varying degrees of disengagement. The challenge facing urban superintendents and their staffs is to undo all the previous efforts to gain increased accountability and to move away from a focus on regulations to a focus on school needs. The main issue faced by rural districts is that they tend to be loosely administered due to the limited number of administrators and their physical distance from one another and from the district office. The challenge to superintendents in these districts was to get involved in the change process without becoming highly bureaucratic and by supporting school personnel in their improvement efforts. Her review of urban and rural school systems strongly suggested that prescriptions for superintendents and district office staff should be conditional on community context. The problems are varied and the solutions should be varied as well. "Typical" districts are those without a history of performance problems. The superintendent can focus on building an understanding and support for a more strategic approach so that schools can work independently, but within a common frame.

**District socioeconomic status and superintendent leadership.** Most lower performing students are members of the lowest socioeconomic status (SES) group. There is a high correspondence between SES and minority status. These conditions will continue to present a challenge to schools in the future. Because of these relationships the best schools and students are located in the suburbs and the worst schools are located in the inner cities and in some rural areas (Hodkinson, 1992). According to Hodgkinson, our country is moving towards a two-part society made up of the "information rich" and
the "information poor" (p. 26). These groupings also distinguish the educational opportunities of poor children and their parents from higher-income children and parents.

"The problems of poverty and providing adequate educational, health and social services will no doubt become a major issue for the late 1990's and early in the next millennium. Continued collaboration between and among social and educational service institutions will need to be a high priority" (Carlson, 1996, p. 311)

In a dissertation on the superintendent as manager, Graham (1990) examined to what extent socioeconomic status of a school district influenced the behavior of the school superintendent when there were controls for size and grade organization. In his review of the literature on situational leadership theory, the researcher concluded that effective leadership is in part a function of the situations in which issues, challenges, and crisis arise, the maturity of the followers, and the style of the leader. By looking at nine superintendents in diverse socioeconomic New Jersey school districts, Graham studied the skills and practices superintendents used to manage conflict and make decisions to solve problems. The specific conflict issues looked at were board relations, finance, labor relations/personnel, reorganization, programs, outcomes and results. These issues were studied across various leadership styles with a focus on authoritarian, consultative, democratic, and delegatory. The nine superintendents were comprised of three superintendents from districts rated by the state as low socioeconomic status, three superintendents from districts rated by the state as middle socioeconomic status districts, and three superintendents from districts rated as high socioeconomic status. Graham's findings indicated that when looking at all nine cases, conflict management issues were
prioritized as follows: board relations; finance; labor relations/personnel; education programs; and reorganization.

However, when the data was looked at by socioeconomic status of the district there was a shift in the way the issues were prioritized. The superintendents in the high socioeconomic districts prioritized labor relations and personnel. Board relations and financial concerns were almost of equal weight as the second and third priority areas. Educational programs were rated fourth and reorganization fifth.

The superintendents in the middle socioeconomic districts identified finance as the highest priority issue with educational programs and board relations being a close second and third priority. Labor relations/personnel were not as great as in the middle socioeconomic group as was the case in the high group. Reorganization was not identified as a problem area.

The superintendents in the low socioeconomic districts identified finance as the first priority area and board relations as the second issue of concern. Labor relations/personnel was rated as the third priority and educational programs the fourth. Only one of the three superintendents in this category rated reorganization as a major concern.

Looking at the leadership behaviors of the nine superintendents revealed that no superintendent selected an autocratic preferred style. Although all superintendents were concerned with student achievement, high and middle socioeconomic districts have student achievement as more of a status issue. Participative and delegative styles, according to Graham, are more compatible with the climate of status and pupil achievement than an autocratic style. Test scores in these districts were above state
standards, which encourages the superintendent's style to be more democratic, consultative, and delegatory.

**District/School size and leadership.** Sorenson (1985) determined that the size of a school district was a factor that affected the choice of leadership in his study. He concluded that this probably represents an interrelationship between the complexity of the organization and the amount of time available to district leaders.

In her study of superintendent work activity, Munther (1998) investigated how superintendent's duties, roles, and responsibilities vary in regard to district size and complexity. Munther found that the capacity of the superintendent to delegate appears to be the most important factor in work activity variation as it related to district size.

**Gender and superintendent leadership.** Women have always been interested in education and working with children and young adults. Shakeshaft (1987) noted however that in proportion to their numbers, women have been underrepresented in educational leadership positions such as principals and superintendents. When women are assigned similar responsibilities they often approach their task differently than men. Her review of the research on men and women administrators indicated that there are some differences in the ways in which they spend their time, in their day-to-day interactions, in the priorities that guide their actions, in the perceptions of them by others, and in the satisfaction they derive from their work. When these differences are combined, a different work environment is created for women than for men. According to Shakeshaft (1987) women conduct more unscheduled meetings, monitor less, take fewer trips away from the building, observe teachers more, engage in more cooperative planning, and favor more people oriented projects.
The increase in women in leadership roles has led to increased focus on gender as a leadership variable. A study done by Floit (1998) looked at transformational leadership and the superintendency by comparing the roles played by men and women. The study surveyed 77 female superintendents and 116 male superintendents in Illinois by using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. The results indicated that, in general, women in the superintendency prefer a more transformational leadership style than do men.

Wesson and Grady (1994) examined the leadership practices of women superintendents to determine the extent to which they engaged in transformational leadership practices by using the Leadership Practices Inventory. The study focused on superintendents in urban and rural centers. One hundred and seventy-four surveys were returned with the results indicating that both the urban and rural female superintendents described their leadership characteristics in similar ways. Whether in highly bureaucratic urban settings or in small rural settings, women described themselves as successfully building collegial-collaborative organizations. It was found that the women did well in the five practices and ten accompanying behaviors that have been described by Kouzes and Posner (as cited in Wesson and Grady, 1994) as "fundamental practices and behaviors in exemplary leadership" (p. 12). The women superintendents, during the interview component of the study, indicated that what they liked the most about their jobs was the way they were able to lead by focusing on the human relations aspect of their jobs. They recognized the value of relationships and specified the relationships between and among teachers, between and among children and the relations with the community, the school board and state department personnel.
Longevity and superintendent leadership. Sequeira (1980) studied the relationship between the longevity of superintendents in their positions and their leadership style. The researcher determined whether or not superintendents whose style conformed to the requirements of community and board characteristics have a greater longevity in their positions than those whose styles do not conform. To do this they studied superintendent’s compatibility in schools in New York City and on Long Island and compared the compatibility factor with the length of time the superintendents had occupied in their positions. Their findings indicated that superintendents in districts that conform to community and board characteristics are apt to have greater longevity than the superintendents in districts that do not conform.

New Jersey School Districts in Context

Based on per capita income, New Jersey is the second-wealthiest state in the country. Despite this wealth, New Jersey is also one of the nation’s most urban states. According to a special report in Education Week (Edwards, 1998), New Jersey is at a crossroads in regard to its school funding policy. The school-funding debate is a result of the state’s unusual demographics. The state is both very rich and very poor, it is both suburban and urban, and students enrolled represent diverse backgrounds.

Although the state supreme court named 28 special needs districts, another 20 to 25 districts have urban type characteristics of poverty and infant mortality. Camden, which is in southern New Jersey, is rated the country’s fifth worst for poverty. Fifty percent of the city’s children live in poverty.

New Jersey’s schools are also, according to Education Week (Edwards, 1998), among the worst segregated in the country, with minorities filling the classrooms of
inner-city districts and whites filling those in the suburbs. Student achievement is also reported consistent with the urban-suburban, rich-poor dichotomy. The suburban schools include some of the nation's best, while the urban schools remain at a low level of productivity. Statewide testing programs reflect that the poorest districts fail to demonstrate at least a minimum level of competency while the wealthier districts perform at rates of 96% or better.

New Jersey's involvement with its urban schools began in 1970 when a lawsuit was filed against the Governor at the time, William T. Cahill. The suit argued that by using property tax revenues to pay for schools, property poor urban districts were being discriminated against. The disparity in funding resulted in large learning gaps between students in urban and suburban schools. Although the supreme court agreed, legislators did not remedy the situation until the state had to close schools for a few days in 1976 to force lawmakers to pass an income tax to finance the new spending.

The debate over school finance has lasted for 30 years. The urban districts have gone to the Supreme Court three more times to seek increased funding, and the supreme court has ruled that the school funding system is unconstitutional. Each time the state has responded by increasing the allocation in the poor urban districts but has contended that more money is not the answer to improved schools if the money is not spent wisely. The state has called for increased accountability, which has lead New Jersey to its most far-reaching policy- the takeover of its three largest school districts.

In May of 1998, the Supreme Court ordered the state to immediately raise spending in the 28 special needs districts to the average amount expended in the state's wealthiest districts. This ruling also required that the state fully assess the needs of
students in poor city schools, identify the specific programs and services they require, and devise a plan for state assisted implementation of the identified programs. The court also ordered the state to assess the facilities needs in the districts and develop a plan to address them. Taken together, the instructional and facilities plan provides the urban districts affected with a highly prescriptive course of action provided by the New Jersey Department of Education. One of the most important components of the instructional plan emphasizes improvements in the elementary school level and in early childhood education. The proposal calls for 319 elementary schools in the affected districts to adopt a program of whole school reform. Adopting this approach ensures that the individual schools and not the districts are provided the needed resources. Whole school reform requires that the educational program of the school is restructured with the input of parents, teachers, and administrators.

The facilities plan calls for spending at least $1.8 billion dollars over three years on fully state financed projects to upgrade the districts' nearly 430 schools. The state will play a strong role in approving and overseeing the refurbishing projects.

Although the state has clearly focused on the neediest urban districts, all districts in New Jersey will experience the state's initiatives this year. New Jersey students will take new tests in grades four and eight that are related to the state's core content standards. New Jersey teachers will also have to meet the state's new standards for professional development that requires all teachers to receive 100 hours of continuing education every five years.
Summary

The superintendent has many roles to perform as the leader of a complex organization. He or she must attend to each of these roles to be effective. The literature review looked at the superintendent in the role of instructional, managerial and political leader of the district. Superintendents have the ability to make an important contribution to the success of their districts but they must provide the leadership necessary to promote meaningful organizational change.

The current literature on leadership and the superintendent advocates for the use of transformational leadership practices as a way for superintendents to accomplish their goals. The five transformational leadership practices that have been identified by Kouzes and Posner (1995) were defined and reviewed in relationship to the role of the superintendent.

Of utmost importance in the study of school district leadership is consideration of the district context. Studies that have addressed context as an independent variable were presented. Although the focus of this study was on the context variable of socioeconomic status of the district, research was also included regarding the variables of gender, district size and superintendent's years of experience and longevity in their current position.

Since this study was conducted in the state of New Jersey, the chapter concluded with a description of the current context of school districts in New Jersey.
Chapter III
Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between superintendents' perceived leadership practices and school district socioeconomic status. The methods the researcher employed and the instruments used in obtaining and analyzing the data are reviewed in this chapter. The data used to address the independent variable, district socioeconomic status, is also discussed in this chapter. The procedures that were followed in choosing the sample and administering the questionnaire and survey are explained. Finally the statistical procedures used to analyze the data are described.

Instrumentation

Kouzes and Posner's leadership practices inventory-self. The superintendents studied were asked to complete the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI) developed by Kouzes and Posner (1997). This instrument was selected because the leadership practices identified by the authors parallel the profile of transformational leadership presented in the literature (Bass, 1985; Konnert and Augenstein, 1990; Leithwood, 1995). Several researchers (Konnert and Augenstein, 1990; Leithwood, 1995) have identified transformational leadership as a model of leadership that holds great promise for the superintendency. There have been many other researchers in a variety of fields, including education, who have successfully used the LPI-Self to investigate a
variety of issues related to leadership (Riley, 1991; Ross, 1995; Wesson and Grady, 1994).

The Leadership Practices Inventory-Self was developed through a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research methods and studies. The authors were able to extract a profile of transformational leadership practices by initially surveying middle and senior level managers about their "personal best" (p. xxi) leadership experience.

According to Kouzes and Posner (1995), "personal best" is the leadership behavior used by the managers and executives when they received outstanding results. In addition, forty-two in depth interviews were conducted and the research was expanded to include community leaders, student leaders, church leaders, government leaders and hundreds of others in non-managerial positions. From an analysis of the personal best experiences, the authors were able to develop a model of leadership and two instruments, the LPI -Self, which is used in this study, and the LPI-Observer, which is not used in this study. The conceptual framework, explained in greater detail in Chapter II, consists of five leadership practices each consisting of two strategies:

1. Challenging the process
   - Search for opportunities
   - Experiment and take risks

2. Inspiring a shared vision
   - Envision the future
   - Enlist others

3. Enabling others to act
   - Foster collaboration
Strengthen others

4. Modeling the way
Set the example
Plan small wins

5. Encouraging the heart
Recognize contributions
Celebrate accomplishments

The Leadership Practices Inventory-Self measures the extent leaders have adopted these five leadership practices and ten behaviors. As reported by the authors, various analyses support the belief that the LPI has sound psychometric properties. The complete Leadership Practices Inventory consists of two instruments, the LPI-Self and the LPI-Observer. The LPI-Self is a self-assessment instrument while the LPI-Observer measures others perceptions of the leader's practices. The internal reliabilities for the LPI-Self range between .71 and .85. Test-retest reliability for the five practices have been at the .93 level and above in studies conducted by Kouzes and Posner.

Scores on the LPI have been relatively stable over time (Kouzes and Posner, 1995). Using participants in The Leadership Challenge Workshop, the authors have compared scores every two years since 1987 and have found considerable consistency across the five leadership practices for each time period comparison. In addition, LPI scores have not been related to demographic factors (i.e., age, marital status, years of experience, and educational level) or to organizational characteristics (i.e., size, functional area, and line versus staff position)
Validity of the LPI has also been established by the authors as well as by other
independent researchers. "The underlying factor structure has been sustained across a
variety of studies and settings, and support continues to be generated for the instruments
predictive and concurrent validity" (Kouzes and Posner, 1995). In addition the LPI
scores are independent of potentially confounding variables, a characteristic of measures
with high construct validity. They are not related to demographic factors, (i.e., age
marital status, years of experience, and educational level) or to organizational
characteristics (i.e., size, functional area, and line versus staff position).

The instrument consists of thirty items, each a sentence, designed to measure the
types of behaviors that Kouzes and Posner associate with the five leadership practices
they have identified and defined. The respondent is asked to use the following ten-point
Likert scale to report his or her beliefs about how frequently he or she engages in the
behavior described: 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. A sample of the statements presented to the respondent is as follows:
"I talk about future trends that will influence how our work gets done"; "I appeal to
others to share an exciting dream of the future"; "I experiment and take risks even when
there is a chance of failure".

The authors granted permission to the researcher to duplicate the instrument for
the purposes of this study. A copy of the complete Leadership Practices Inventory- Self is
not included in the Appendix because it is a copyrighted instrument.

Demographic survey. The superintendents were asked to complete a brief
demographic survey containing four questions. Requested information included gender
of the superintendent, district size as measured by student enrollment, years of experience in their current district position, and years of total experience as a superintendent. These variables were used to confirm the generalizability of the findings. The demographic survey also included a question asking if the respondent would like to receive the survey results.

Procedures

The procedures that were used in this investigation included: (a) The selection of the sample, (b) collection of the data, and (c) the treatment of the data.

**Selection of Sample.** The New Jersey Department of Education uses District Factor Groups (DFG’s) to provide an indicator of the socioeconomic status of citizens in each district that is useful in comparative reporting of school districts. To answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1, the entire population of superintendents in kindergarten through 12th grade school district in New Jersey (N=209) was invited to participate in this study. Each superintendent was in a New Jersey district that has been assigned a district factor group (DFG) indicative of the socioeconomic status of its community. Of the 209 superintendents that were surveyed, 24 were from A, or lowest socioeconomic status districts, 28 from B districts, 26 from CD districts, 36 from DE districts, 29 from FG districts, 27 from GH districts, 36 from I districts, and 3 from J, or highest socioeconomic status districts. Since the goal of the study was to determine whether reported leadership practices of superintendents of higher socioeconomic status districts differed from those of lower socioeconomic status districts, the DFG scale was an effective way of classifying subjects.
The motivation to develop the DFG scale was research conducted in the late 1960's and early 1970's that showed a strong relationship between socioeconomic status and educational outcomes. There was a concern that policymakers reviewing educational outcomes obtained in different contexts would make unjustified inferences regarding resources provided to schools. The research indicated that what children bring to school was one of the most important determinants of educational outcomes and as such a school system could not be evaluated without an indicator of the socioeconomic background of its students. The New Jersey State Department of Education originally developed the District Factor Grouping System for its own use in reporting test scores in a way that shows district results arranged by their DFG category. Comparisons can then be made between districts of similar socioeconomic status, rather than on a geographic basis. This reduced variation in reported scores that are due to variables beyond the control of local educators. In addition to the original intent of using DFG's to report test scores, the DFG's have been used in the debate over how schools could be equitably financed. Most recently the DFG has taken on increased significance because the Supreme Court in the Abbott IV case used the DFG as a means of identifying the school districts in New Jersey for which there would be special funding, as well as those districts that would be used to identify target levels of funding.

The measure was first used in 1975 when it was based on the value of demographic variables from the 1970 United States Census. It was most recently revised in 1992 using data from the 1990 United States Census. The seven factors that go into the formulation include percent of population with no high school diploma, percent with some college, occupational status, population density, income, unemployment rate and
poverty. The variables are combined using a statistical technique, which results in a single measure of socioeconomic status for each district. Districts are ranked according to their score on this measure and divided into eight groups based on the score interval in which their scores were located. There are eight district factor groups (A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I and J) with A being the lowest socioeconomic group and J being the highest.

(New Jersey State Department of Education, 1999)

Although there are currently 573 school districts in New Jersey that are recorded by their DFG, this study focused on the 209 superintendents in districts that service kindergarten through 12th grade student populations. There are 209 kindergarten through 12th grade school districts in New Jersey that are categorized by DFG as follows:
To compare the LPI-Self rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic school districts with those of superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts, the 209 districts that were used in this study were placed into low, middle and high district factor group clusters as follows:

1. Low DFG/socioeconomic districts – Districts A, B, and CD include those districts identified by the Supreme Court in the Abbott v. Burke case as Special Needs Districts that contain the state’s most economically disadvantaged student population (A and B) and those that are moderately low (CD).

2. Middle DFG/socioeconomic districts – Districts DE and FG share similar community wealth and demographic variables.

3. High DFG/socioeconomic districts – Districts GH, I and J include those
districts that have been targeted by the Supreme Court in the Abbott IV decision as property rich districts that would be used to identify target levels of funding for the Special Needs Districts (I and J) and those that are moderately high (GH).

The New Jersey School Boards Association provided a list of the K through 12th grade superintendents' names and district addresses, along with the district factor group of the school district, to the researcher.

**Collection of data.** A survey packet was mailed to the 209 superintendents in the sample. According to Rea and Parker (1997) there are both advantages and disadvantages to the mail-out format. Among the advantages are completion at the respondent's convenience, limited time constraints, anonymity, and reduced interviewer-induced bias. The authors caution however that there are also several disadvantages to this approach. These include a lower than usual response rate, a comparatively long time period for returns, self-selection, and lack of interviewer involvement. The researcher was concerned about a poor return rate due to the nature and complexity of the superintendents' position and the imposition of the time needed to complete the questionnaire and demographic survey.

To minimize the disadvantages, and maximize the return rate, the researcher's mailing included a personalized, introductory letter on Seton Hall University Stationary and a letter of support by the Executive Director of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators. The NJASA letter was provided after the researcher contacted the association and explained the purpose of her study. The letter reinforced the need to respond by reminding the sample superintendents that the association needed research
data to craft position papers, as well as to assist both current superintendents and those preparing for the superintendency. The cover letter was individually addressed to each recipient. It included a brief introduction to the project, comments on the use of the LPI-Self, an assurance of confidentiality in regard to individual respondents and their school districts, a request for the superintendent to participate, a request for a response within two weeks, a comment that a stamped self-addressed envelope was included, and an offer to provide the respondent with the results of the survey. The researcher requested a return of the questionnaire and demographic survey three weeks after the initial mailing. A coding of the districts that received the mailing was kept for the purpose of following up with a second request for a response. Those superintendents that did not respond received a follow-up letter after the three-week time frame. Response time for the second request was two weeks.

One hundred and sixty-six of the 209 superintendents surveyed responded by the end of the second mailing, providing a response rate of 79%. Of the 166 responses, 157 Leadership Practices Inventory-Self questionnaires were usable, for an overall useable response rate of 75% for the principal group of analyses. An LPI-Self was not usable when several items were not completed thereby rendering it impossible to obtain valid scores for any of the five scales.

As all but one of the superintendents who returned a usable inventory also returned a complete demographic survey, there were 156 potential subjects for each of the supplementary analyses that used demographic survey data. Descriptive data was computed for all potential subjects.
Fifty-eight of the potential subjects met the criterion of being a superintendent of one of the lower DFG school districts. Forty-six of the potential subjects met the criterion of being from one of the higher DFG school districts. These 104 subjects were the subjects of the main study.

Treatment of data. The 1997 edition of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for Windows (SPSS 8.0) was used to analyze the data.

Since LPI scale values are equal interval scales with normal distributions, means and standard deviations could be used to describe the data, and parametric statistics could be used to compare groups. Differences of the mean scores of superintendents who lead higher and lower socioeconomic districts on the five subscales of the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self were evaluated using independent sample, two tail t-tests, with level of significance set at $\alpha = .05$. A significant result meant that district wealth was related to superintendents' self-evaluation on an inventory scale of the LPI.

In addition, t-tests were computed to test whether any LPI scale differences being attributed to DFG's might be related to gender, district size, and years of experience in the current district and years of total experience as a superintendent. It should be noted that these factors, however, were not controlled for in the selection process.

A presentation of the survey instruments used in this research was presented in this chapter. The method used for selecting the population of superintendents sampled and the method for the treatment of the sample were described.
Chapter IV
Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between superintendents' perceived leadership practices and school district socioeconomic status. This was accomplished by soliciting the perceptions of all the K through 12th grade superintendents in New Jersey school districts, and then examining the responses of those whose districts met the socioeconomic status criteria of the study. The Leadership Practices Inventory—Self (Kouzes and Posner, 1997) was used in this research to measure the self-perceived leadership practices that are the main focus of the study. This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected studying the relationship between the self-perceived leadership practices of superintendents and the socioeconomic status of their school districts based upon responses to the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory—Self (1997).

In addition to completing the inventory, superintendents were asked to complete a demographic survey that provided supplemental information pertaining to district enrollment size, number of years as a superintendent in the current district, number of years employed as a superintendent in any district, and gender. These data were related to the superintendents' LPI values to supplement the socioeconomic status findings.

The demographic survey items, with the exception of the gender category, each had four response categories. To facilitate their use in supplementary analyses, adjacent categories were combined to create clusters with the smallest discrepancies in size.
1. District Enrollment Size - Collapsed value labels
   “a. 1-1999,” “b. 2000-4999,” “c. 5000-9999,” and “d. 10,000 and over,” to read
   “less than 5000” and “more than 5000.”

2. Years in Current Position - Collapsed value labels
   “a. Less than 1 year,” “b. 1-2 years,” “c. 3-5 years,” “d. 6-10 years,” and “e. 11
   years or more,” to read “Less than five years” and “More than five years.”

3. Years as a Superintendent – Collapsed value labels
   “a. Less than one year,” “b. 1-3 years,” “c. 4-6 years,” “d. 7-10 years,” and “e. 10
   years or more,” to read “Under 6 years” and “Over 6 years.”

Table 1 lists the distribution of superintendents who returned the demographic
survey in each group after adjacent categories were combined. Although these groups are
of unequal size, other configurations formed by the researcher provided even greater
discrepancies in size. It should be noted that the variables reflected in the demographic
survey were not controlled for in the selection process and as such, sample size could not
be determined prior to the responses being received.
Table 1

**Distribution of Demographic Survey Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>156</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Size</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5000</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5000</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>156</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in Current Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>156</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years as a Superintendent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 6 years</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 6 years</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>156</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remainder of this chapter has two sections. In the first, the rate
superintendents responded to the survey will be discussed. The second section will
present the research questions and the formal hypotheses that were used to answer them,
followed by results and the supplementary data pertaining to each.

**Summary of the survey distribution.** The Leadership Practices Inventory—Self
and demographic data survey were distributed to all kindergarten through 12th grade
superintendents in New Jersey (N=209). One hundred and sixty-six of the 209
superintendents surveyed responded by the end of the second mailing, for a response rate
of 79%. Of the 166 responses, 157 Leadership Practices Inventory-Self questionnaires were usable, for an overall usable response rate of 75% for the principal group of analyses. An LPI-Self was not usable when several items were not completed thereby rendering it impossible to obtain valid scores for any of the five scales.

All but one of the superintendents who returned a usable inventory also returned a complete demographic survey. Hence there were 156 potential subjects for each of the supplementary analyses that used demographic survey data. Descriptive data was computed for all potential subjects. Fifty-eight of the potential subjects met the criterion of being a superintendent of one of the lower DFG school districts. Forty-six of the potential subjects met the criterion of being from one of the higher DFG school districts. These 104 superintendents were the subject of the main study. As there were no DFG restrictions on the supplementary analyses, all 156 superintendents' responses were used for that part of the study.

Summary and Treatment of Data

Challenging the process. Research Question 1. Is there a perceived difference between the self rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding "Challenging the Process" as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory-Self?

Related Null Hypothesis. There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the "Challenging the Process" scale.
Table 2 shows the scoring patterns of the respondents by category of district socioeconomic status regarding Challenging the Process. On this scale, respondents from low SES districts and respondents from high SES districts had a .70 difference between their mean score, which was not statistically significant. There was no reliable difference between superintendents in high and low SES districts reporting of Challenging the Process thereby confirming the null hypothesis.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sign. Of t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low SES</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>50.275</td>
<td>5.084</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>.722</td>
<td>.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High SES</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50.978</td>
<td>4.721</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>50.627</td>
<td>4.902</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the analysis reported above, t tests were computed to determine whether Challenging the Process scores were influenced by gender, size of district enrollment, years of experience in current position, and years of experience as a superintendent. The results are illustrated in Table 3. The largest difference between members of a pair of means is for District Size, 1.4 points, and none of the t-tests are significant. Thus there is no reliable evidence that Challenging the Process scores are influenced by any of the supplementary analyses variables.
Table 3

A Comparison of Scores on Challenging the Process by Gender, Size of District, Years of Experience in Current Position, and Total Years of Experience as a Superintendent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sign. Of t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>49.845</td>
<td>5.557</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>1.131</td>
<td>.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>51.153</td>
<td>4.388</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5000</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>49.929</td>
<td>5.279</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>.518</td>
<td>.605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5000</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>50.439</td>
<td>5.731</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Current Position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>49.821</td>
<td>5.708</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td>.543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>50.352</td>
<td>5.008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as Supt.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 6</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>49.317</td>
<td>5.988</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>1.433</td>
<td>.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 6</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>50.576</td>
<td>4.904</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Inspiring a shared vision**, Research Question 2. Is there a perceived difference between the self-rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding “Inspiring a Shared Vision” as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory- Self?

Related Null Hypothesis 2. There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the “Inspiring a Shared Vision” scale.

Table 4 shows the scoring patterns of the respondents by category of district socioeconomic status regarding Inspiring a Shared Vision. A two-tailed t-test for independent means was conducted. On this scale, respondents from low SES districts and respondents from high SES districts had a 2.18 difference between their mean scores. Although the t-test for independent sample means indicated that there is no statistically significant difference with \( p = 0.064 \), and the null hypothesis was confirmed, there was a strong trend. A statistical significant difference would have been detected by a one tail test because superintendents in high SES districts tended to have a higher Inspiring a Shared Vision score more than superintendents in low SES districts.
Table 4

Scoring Patterns for Inspiring a Shared Vision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sign. Of t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low SES</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>49.137</td>
<td>6.151</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1.875</td>
<td>.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High SES</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51.326</td>
<td>5.593</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>50.232</td>
<td>5.872</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the analysis reported above, t tests were conducted for Inspiring A Shared Vision to compare high and low values of the independent variables: gender, size of district enrollment, years of experience in current position, and years of experience as a superintendent. The results are illustrated in Table 5. All of the differences between groups are less than one point and none are statistically significant.
Table 5

A Comparison of Scores on Inspiring a Shared Vision by Gender, Size of District, Years of Experience in Current Position, and Total Years of Experience as a Superintendent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sign. Of t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>49.845</td>
<td>6.604</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>.858</td>
<td>.392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>51.153</td>
<td>5.079</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Size</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5000</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>49.193</td>
<td>6.283</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>.316</td>
<td>.752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5000</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>49.561</td>
<td>6.693</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in Current Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>49.190</td>
<td>6.350</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>.211</td>
<td>.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>49.408</td>
<td>6.446</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years as Supt.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 6</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>.48.857</td>
<td>6.053</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>.699</td>
<td>.486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 6</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>49.587</td>
<td>6.602</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Enabling others to act. Research Question 3. Is there a perceived difference between the self-rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding “Enabling Others to Act” as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory- Self?

Related Null Hypothesis: There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory- Self on the “Enabling Others to Act” scale.

Table 6 displays the scoring patterns of the respondents by category of district socioeconomic status regarding Enabling Others to Act. On this scale, respondents from low SES districts and respondents from high SES districts had a 1.51 difference in mean scores. The t-test indicated that this difference is statistically significant (p = .046).

Superintendents who worked in high socioeconomic status districts scored higher than low SES district superintendents on this scale.
Table 6

Scoring Patterns for Enabling Others to Act

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sign. Of t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low SES</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>51.9661</td>
<td>3.995</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>2.020</td>
<td>.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High SES</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>53.4783</td>
<td>3.544</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>52.7222</td>
<td>3.770</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the analysis reported above, t tests were computed to determine whether Enabling Others to Act scores were related to the following variables: gender, size of district enrollment, years of experience in current position, and years of experience as a superintendent. The results are shown in Table 7. They indicate that one variable, years of experience as a superintendent, was significantly related to these scores (p = .013). Superintendents with over six years of experience tended to have higher values on the Enabling Others to Act Scale.
Table 7

A Comparison of Scores on Enabling Others to Act by Gender, Size of District, Years of Experience in Current Position, and Total Years of Experience as a Superintendent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sign. Of t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>52.407</td>
<td>4.110</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>.476</td>
<td>.670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52.769</td>
<td>2.970</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Size</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5000</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>52.539</td>
<td>3.875</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>.377</td>
<td>.707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5000</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>52.268</td>
<td>4.147</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in Current Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>52.035</td>
<td>3.723</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>1.508</td>
<td>.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>52.985</td>
<td>4.145</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years as Supt.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 6</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>51.531</td>
<td>3.294</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>2.521</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 6</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>53.119</td>
<td>4.224</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Modeling the way. Research Question 4. Is there a perceived difference between the self rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding "Modeling the Way" as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory- Self?

Related Null Hypothesis: There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the "Modeling the Way" scale.

Table 8 indicates the scoring patterns of the respondents by category of district socioeconomic status regarding Modeling the Way. On this scale, respondents from low SES districts differed from respondents who worked in high SES districts by .19 points, an amount that was not statistically significant. The null hypothesis was therefore confirmed for the Modeling the Way scale.
In addition to the primary analysis reported above, t-tests were computed to determine whether Modeling the Way scores were affected by the following variables: gender, size of district enrollment, years of experience in current position, and years of experience as a superintendent. There were no statistically significant differences found. As shown in Table 9, the largest differences were just over one point, too small for statistical significance.
Table 9

A Comparison of Scores on Modeling the Way by Gender, Size of District, Years of Experience in Current Position, and Total Years of Experience as a Superintendent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sign.</th>
<th>Of t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>52.961</td>
<td>4.819</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>.656</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>53.615</td>
<td>3.589</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5000</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>53.368</td>
<td>4.595</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>1.337</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5000</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>52.243</td>
<td>4.689</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Current</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>52.523</td>
<td>5.012</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>1.608</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>53.718</td>
<td>4.078</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as Supt.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 6</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>52.381</td>
<td>5.347</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>1.542</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 6</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>53.543</td>
<td>4.034</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Encouraging the Heart. Research Question 5. Is there a perceived difference between the self-rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding “Encouraging the Heart” as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory- Self?

Related Null Hypothesis: There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the “Encouraging the Heart” scale.

Table 10 reflects the scoring patterns of the respondents by category of district socioeconomic status regarding Encouraging the Heart. On this scale, the mean score of respondents from low SES districts differed from the mean score of respondents from high SES districts by .087 points, which was not statistically significant. Thus there was no reliable difference between the mean scores of superintendents from high and low SES districts.
Table 10

Scoring Patterns for Encouraging the Heart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sign. Oft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low SES</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>50.033</td>
<td>5.632</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1.113</td>
<td>.268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High SES</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51.266</td>
<td>5.544</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>50.650</td>
<td>5.588</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the primary analysis reported above, t-tests were conducted for Encouraging the Heart scores of superintendents to compare high and low values of the following independent variables: gender, size of district enrollment, years of experience in current position, and years of experience as a superintendent. There was no statistically significant difference related to these variables for Encouraging the Heart. The results are illustrated in Table 11.
Table 11

A Comparison of Scores on Encouraging the Heart by Gender, Size of District, Years of Experience in Current Position, and Total Years of Experience as a Superintendent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sign. Of t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>50.789</td>
<td>5.751</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>.176</td>
<td>.861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>50.576</td>
<td>4.834</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Size</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5000</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>50.631</td>
<td>5.420</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>.455</td>
<td>.650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5000</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51.100</td>
<td>6.117</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in Current</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>50.428</td>
<td>5.413</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td>.432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>51.142</td>
<td>5.816</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years as Supt.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 6</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>50.322</td>
<td>5.250</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td>.435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 6</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>51.043</td>
<td>5.823</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

Chapter IV presented an analysis of the data collected studying the relationship between the self-perceived leadership practices of kindergarten through 12th grade superintendents in New Jersey and the socioeconomic status of their school districts. In addition, the results of the demographic survey containing the independent variables of gender, district size, years of experience as a superintendent and years in the current position were presented in relationship to the five leadership practices identified by Kouzes and Posner (1995).

The data was presented for each of the following leadership practices: Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart. Of the five scales measured there was no statistically significant difference found according to the hypothesis for high and low socioeconomic districts for the following scales: Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Modeling the way and Encouraging the Heart. There was a statistically significant difference for Enabling Others to Act for the types of district at p = .046.

The researcher notes that while the variables of gender, size of district, years of experience as a superintendent, and years of experience in current district were examined and discussed, there was no control in the sample for those variables. Consequently, the results in regard to those variables are to be considered in terms of this limitation. The finding indicated that one variable, years of experience as a superintendent, was statistically significant at p = .013 for the Enabling Others to Act Scale. Superintendents with over six years of experience tended to more frequently report Enabling Others to Act.
The results of this study in terms of the null hypotheses are as follows:

H1. Fail to Reject - There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the “Challenging the Process” scale.

H2. Fail to Reject - There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the “Inspiring a Shared Vision” scale.

H3. Reject - There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the “Enabling Others to Act” scale.

H4. Fail to Reject - There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the “Modeling the Way” scale.

H5. Fail to Reject - There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the “Encouraging the Heart” scale.
Chapter V
Summary, Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This study investigated the relationship between kindergarten through 12th grade superintendents' perceived leadership practices and the socioeconomic status of their school districts. The chapter is divided into four sections: (1) Introduction; (2) Summary; (3) Discussion and Implications; and (4) Recommendations.

Summary

Purpose of the study. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between superintendents' perceived leadership practices and school district socioeconomic status.

Statement of the problem. There is a need for educational reform. Change efforts are more likely to succeed when the superintendent is actively involved however there is little known about what superintendents actually do (Coleman and LaRoque, 1990; Crowson and Glass, 1991; Cuban, 1984; Griffen, 1994; Hord, 1990; Murphy and Hallinger, 1986). The impetus for this study was the emerging literature portraying a model of transformational leadership that suggests that superintendents can make a significant contribution to the success of their school districts by the way they lead (Berg, 1996; Carter and Cunningham, 1997; Coleman and LaRoque, 1990; Griffen, 1994; Johnson, 1996; Leithwood, 1995; Musella and Leithwood, 1990). A review of the current research has indicated that by engaging in transformational leadership practices, a superintendent can not only change the existing culture of the school district but can
Chapter V
Summary, Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This study investigated the relationship between kindergarten through 12th grade superintendents' perceived leadership practices and the socioeconomic status of their school districts. The chapter is divided into four sections: (1) Introduction; (2) Summary; (3) Discussion and Implications; and (4) Recommendations.

Summary

Purpose of the study. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between superintendents' perceived leadership practices and school district socioeconomic status.

Statement of the problem. There is a need for educational reform. Change efforts are more likely to succeed when the superintendent is actively involved however there is little known about what superintendents actually do (Coleman and LaRoque, 1990; Crowson and Glass, 1991; Cuban, 1984; Griffen, 1994; Hord, 1990; Murphy and Hallinger, 1986). The impetus for this study was the emerging literature portraying a model of transformational leadership that suggests that superintendents can make a significant contribution to the success of their school districts by the way they lead (Berg, 1996; Carter and Cunningham, 1997; Coleman and LaRoque, 1990; Griffen, 1994; Johnson, 1996; Leithwood, 1995; Musella and Leithwood, 1990). A review of the current research has indicated that by engaging in transformational leadership practices, a superintendent can not only change the existing culture of the school district but can
make that change long-lasting (Avery, 1994; Berg, 1996; Carter and Cunningham, 1997; Griffin, 1994; Johnson, 1996; Konnert and Augenstein, 1990; Lashway, 1997; Leithwood, 1995; Musella, 1995).

At the same time, there is evidence stemming from situational leadership theory, and more recently from the effective schools research, that indicates leadership may be shaped by the context within which it exists (Hallinger, Bickman and Davis, 1990, Konnert and Augenstein, 1990, Louis, 1990, Hannaway and Talbert, 1993, Leithwood, 1995, Johnson, 1996, Carter and Cunningham, 1997). There is a need therefore to begin to develop a context-sensitive study of superintendent leadership practices.

Research questions. The five research questions were based on the five leadership practices that have been identified by Kouzes and Posner (1995) as effective in transforming an organization. The five practices include: Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way and Encouraging the Heart. An explanation of each of these practices can be found starting on page 36 in Chapter II.

The questions addressed whether or not superintendents in low socioeconomic status school districts practice leadership differently than superintendents in high socioeconomic status school districts. The five questions were:

1. Is there a perceived difference between the self rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding "Challenging the Process" as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory-Self?
2. Is there a perceived difference between the self-rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding "Inspiring a Shared Vision" as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory-Self?

3. Is there a perceived difference between the self-rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding "Enabling Others to Act" as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory-Self?

4. Is there a perceived difference between the self rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding "Modeling the Way" as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory-Self?

5. Is there a perceived difference between the self-rating of superintendents in high socioeconomic districts and superintendents in low socioeconomic school districts regarding "Encouraging the Heart" as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory-Self?

Description of the sample. All two hundred and nine K through 12th grade superintendents in the state of New Jersey were solicited and asked to participate in the study. Of the 209 superintendents, one hundred and sixty-six responded by the end of the second mailing, providing a response rate of 79%. One hundred and fifty-seven of the LPI-Self questionnaires were usable. One hundred and fifty-six demographic surveys were completed and returned.

The criteria for a district's designation as high or low socioeconomic status were discussed in Chapter III. Fifty-eight of the superintendents met the criteria for being a superintendent in a low socioeconomic district and forty-six met the criteria for being a
superintendent in a high socioeconomic district. Therefore a total of 104 respondents met the criteria for the study.

All 156 responses from superintendents that returned the demographic survey were used for that section of the study.

**Methods of research.** The research methodology in this study was quantitative, as reflected in the reporting of the data gathered from the survey instrument, The Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-Self). The results of The Leadership Practices Inventory-Self determined the way superintendents in kindergarten through 12th grade districts perceived their own leadership practices. The LPI-Self was developed by Kouzes and Posner (1997) and provided the researcher with a validated and theoretical basis for analyzing leadership practices that are transformational. The conceptual framework consists of five leadership practices and two related behaviors that exemplify the practices. The five practices are Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart. Superintendent’s responses to the LPI-Self were analyzed according to each of the five practices.

To study superintendent leadership practices, the researcher considered the district’s socioeconomic status as an independent variable that may be related to the way the superintendent leads. In addition, four other demographic variables were investigated as they related to superintendent’s leadership: gender, district size, years as a superintendent, and years in current position. The additional four variables were not controlled for in the selection process.

To determine a district’s socioeconomic status, the researcher utilized the ratings developed by the New Jersey Department of Education. The New Jersey Department of
Education uses District Factor Groups (DFG's) to provide an indicator of the socioeconomic status of citizens in each New Jersey school district. There are eight DFG's that have been used for the comparative reporting of school districts. The groups range from A (the lowest socioeconomic) to J (the highest socioeconomic).

The other demographic variables, gender, district size, years in current position, and total years as a superintendent were determined by a demographic survey that was mailed out with the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-Self).

Independent sample, two tailed t-tests, with level of significance set at $\alpha = .05$ were used to evaluate the differences in the mean scores of superintendents in high and low SES districts on the five scales of the LPI-Self. A significant result meant that district wealth was related to superintendent self-evaluation on an inventory scale of the LPI-Self. In addition, t-tests were computed to determine whether any LPI scale differences being attributed to DFG's might be related to gender, district size, years of experience in the current district, and total years of experience as a superintendent.

Summary of the findings. In this section the main findings of the study are discussed. Each null hypothesis is restated along with the statistical findings based on the analysis of the data.

**Null Hypothesis 1**

There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the “Challenging the Process” scale.
The null hypothesis was not rejected for the difference between superintendents in high and low socioeconomic districts on superintendent's reporting of Challenging the Process. This retention of the null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance. The mean score of administrators in high SES districts on Challenging the Process was 50.97 and the mean score of superintendents in low SES districts was 50.27. On this scale, respondents from low SES districts and respondents from high SES districts had a .70 difference between their mean score, which was not statistically significant. (p = .472).

**Null Hypothesis 2**

There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the “Inspiring a Shared Vision” scale.

The null hypothesis was not rejected since there was no statistical difference between superintendents in high and low socioeconomic districts on superintendents' reporting of Inspiring a Shared Vision. The retention of the null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance. Although the null hypothesis was retained, the findings indicated a strong trend (p = .064) suggesting that superintendents in high SES districts more frequently reported Inspiring a Shared Vision than superintendents in low SES districts. The mean score of administrators in high SES districts on Inspiring a Shared Vision was 51.32 and the mean score of superintendents in low SES districts was 49.13. There was a 2.18 point difference between the mean scores of the two groups.

**Null Hypothesis 3**
There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the "Enabling Others to Act" scale.

The null hypothesis was rejected \( (p = .046) \) for the difference between superintendents in high and low socioeconomic districts on superintendents' reporting of Enabling Others to Act. This retention of the null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance. The mean score of administrators in high SES districts on Enabling Others to Act was 53.47 and the mean score of superintendents in low SES districts was 51.96. Superintendents in high SES districts more frequently reported behaviors related to Enabling Others to Act than superintendents in low SES districts.

**Null Hypothesis 4**

There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the "Modeling the Way" scale.

The null hypothesis was not rejected since there was no statistical difference \( (p = .818) \) between superintendents in high and low socioeconomic districts on superintendents' reporting of Modeling the Way. This retention of the null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance. The mean score of administrators in high SES districts on Modeling the Way was 53.13 and the mean score of superintendents in low SES districts was 53.32.

**Null Hypothesis 5**
There will be no statistically significant difference in the mean score of superintendents in high socioeconomic level districts and the mean score of superintendents in low socioeconomic level school districts as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self on the “Encouraging the Heart”.

The null hypothesis was not rejected since there was no statistical difference ($p = .268$) between superintendents in high and low socioeconomic districts on superintendent’s reporting of Encouraging the Heart. This retention of the null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance. The mean score of administrators in high SES districts on Encouraging the Heart was 51.26 and the mean score of superintendents in low SES districts was 50.03.

In summary, mean scores for each of the scales on the Leadership Practices Inventory- Self were compared using independent sample, two tail t-tests, with a probability level for rejection of the null hypothesis set at .05. This operation revealed a significant difference in response between superintendents in high and low socioeconomic status school districts on one scale, Enabling Others to Act. Although no significant difference was found on the other four scales, there was a strong trend ($p = .064$) on the scale for Inspiring a Shared Vision that indicated that superintendents in high SES districts more frequently reported practices relating to Inspiring a Shared Vision.

There was one statistically significant finding related to the demographic variables of gender, district size, and years in the current position, and years as a superintendent. Superintendents with six or more years of experience as a superintendent more frequently reported the use of practices that Enable Others to Act when compared to superintendents with less than six years of experience.
Discussion and Implications

Since the intent of this study was to investigate leadership practices and their relationship to context variables, it is important to begin this section with a brief discussion of the current context of school districts in the state on New Jersey. A more detailed description can be found on page 64 of Chapter II.

New Jersey is the second wealthiest state in the country. It is also one of the nation's most urban. The schools in New Jersey have been reported to be the most segregated in the country, with student achievement consistent with the rich-poor dichotomy. Statewide testing consistently demonstrates that students in districts having a low socioeconomic status (SES) fail to demonstrate at least a minimal level of academic competency while students in districts having a high socioeconomic status (SES) are some of the nation's best ranking districts. The debate over school funding in New Jersey has lasted for 30 years despite a Supreme Court ruling that the existing educational funding system was unconstitutional. As a result of a Supreme Court decision in May, 1998, the Commissioner of Education was required to develop regulations for reforming 28 of the state's poorest school districts. Along with this decision, it was ordered that spending in the 28 districts, designated "special needs districts", be raised to equal the spending of the state's wealthiest districts.

The regulations developed by the Commissioner for the 28 special needs districts became effective on July 17, 1998. The broad purpose of the regulations, according to the Commissioner, was to "guide a sweeping reform of education in which the program, staffing, operations and financing of each individual school will be rebuilt from the ground up using research-proven programs and strategies". The emphasis of the reform
movement clearly is on the improvement of education in individual schools. The rules require districts to decentralize finance and authority, delegating appropriate decisions to the school level (Commissioner Klagholz letter to Abott School Superintendents, July 17, 1998).

At the same time this reform is occurring in the 28 special needs districts, the other school districts in New Jersey are also experiencing new state initiatives. These include new state tests in grades 4 and 8, implementation of the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards, and new standards for professional development.

Given the above context, the following conclusions and related implications were determined to be relevant to the findings of this study.

Superintendents in high and low SES districts do not differ in the way they perceive their own leadership practices on three of the five scales related to transformational leadership. Specifically, there was no significant difference in the way the two groups of superintendents perceived their own practices regarding Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart. This data supports a conclusion that the socioeconomic status of the school district is not related to the way that superintendents view themselves as leaders who search for opportunities to improve the district, experiment and take risks, set an example for their constituents, plan small wins, recognize contributions, and celebrate accomplishments. Interpretation of this finding must be done cautiously with a reminder that the findings reflect the perception of the superintendent and may not necessarily reflect the actual practice. Further, the researcher suspects that the current findings might indicate the
ideal that the superintendent strives for based on the recent literature on educational leadership, and not what the superintendent does on a regular basis.

Superintendents in low SES districts tend to perceive themselves, when compared to superintendents in high SES districts, as less frequently practicing behaviors related to Inspiring a Shared Vision. The behaviors related to this practice are envisioning the future and enlisting others. The literature on educational leadership strongly advocates for superintendents to craft a vision as a way of providing a bridge from the present to the future. Therefore, it is important to understand why superintendents in low SES districts tend to report Inspiring a Shared Vision behaviors less frequently than superintendents in high SES districts. It could be speculated that three important components of Inspiring a Shared Vision, clarity, focus, and continuity, are more difficult to apply in low SES districts than in high SES districts. The school environment of low SES districts may impede the establishment of these three components since so many problems are occurring simultaneously. Drucker (1976; as cited in Evans, 1996) advised leaders to concentrate on a few important areas, where superior performance produces outstanding results. Effective leaders target their energies. Superintendents must be definite about which program or constituency has top priority. Few people can accomplish more than one significant change at a time. Consequently, choosing where to concentrate one's efforts is essential. School improvement cannot succeed as an endless string of add-ons (Evans, 1996). Given the compelling needs of so many poverty-stricken school children, low SES school districts have several reform efforts going on simultaneously. In New Jersey's low SES districts, particularly the 28 identified special needs districts, the priorities that have been established by the state department are massive. They include
hiring staff to reduce staff size, implementing the state's new Core Curriculum Content Standards, setting up early childhood education programs and centers, curriculum development and alignment, alternative high school programs, school-based management, counseling of all types, preparation of teachers and students in the requirements of state tests, extended day, longer year, increased time programs, enrichment/tutorial programs before school, after school, in the evenings, on Saturdays and in the summers, reading programs, ordering new books, supplies and materials, student activities and field trips, high tech programs, labs for science and foreign language, parent involvement programs, and community connections. This extensive list does not include the initiatives reflecting professional development, integration of technology, and facilities improvement. Although superintendents in high SES districts may feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of their district initiatives such as the implementation of the state's Core Content Standards, the infusion of technology into their curriculum, and the opening of a new facility, their priorities are limited when compared to superintendents in low SES districts.

Continuity is also essential in Inspiring a Shared Vision because change causes so much loss. The leader must emphasize continuity and make change more familiar by linking the future to the past and emphasizing existing strengths. This means framing change so that it maintains connections with previous routines. In districts where there has been frequent turnover of superintendents, as has been reported to be the case in low SES districts, the previous superintendent's actions may constrain what the new superintendent is able to do. Constituents must believe that a leader will stay put to see an innovation through. In low SES school systems in particular, it takes considerable time
and repetition for a teacher to believe a superintendent will remain in the position for an extended time period. "This too shall pass" is a common response to new administrative initiatives. Too many reform projects in low SES districts have gone by the wayside when the superintendent departed. In a recent Star Ledger article (Alaya, 1999), it was reported that the state department was searching for a new superintendent for the Newark School System, one of New Jersey's special needs districts as well as a state-takeover district. Under the state's take-over law the commissioner of education has the responsibility of appointing a new district leader. The departing superintendent was in the position for four years before announcing her resignation. The article noted that contributing to the difficulties the superintendent had was her appointment as an "outsider who didn't understand Newark's culture and children". According to the report, the criteria for hiring a new superintendent will be someone familiar with the schools and the politics. Although there are reported improvements in the district, there is still no evidence of increases in student achievement. The corporate community, which has been contributing to the district, has declared the need for a "clear vision for the district."

In addition to the difficulties in establishing clarity, focus and continuity that the superintendents in the low SES districts may encounter, it is also conceivable that new state mandates for New Jersey's 28 special needs districts have made Inspiring a Shared Vision a more difficult task for superintendents in low SES districts in other ways as well. The current study included 22 of New Jersey's 28 special needs districts among the 58 low SES school districts considered. Currently, New Jersey superintendents in the 28 poorest districts, are required to adopt the state's vision for urban education. The research
has shown that a leader must articulate goals he or she believes in. For the situation to be ideal, the superintendent's vision should be consistent with that of the state department of education. If the superintendent's vision is not consistent with that which is being mandated, the ultimate outcomes of the reform movement may be impacted.

This study found one statistically significant difference ($p = .046$) between the leadership practices reported by superintendents in high SES districts and the leadership practices reported by superintendents in low SES districts. There was a significant difference found in Enabling Others to Act, with superintendents in high SES districts reporting Enabling Others to Act more frequently than superintendents in low SES districts. Behaviors that are related to Enabling Others to Act include fostering collaboration and strengthening others.

As cited in the literature on superintendent leadership, each of these two behaviors is essential to school district success. School improvement, is embedded in an ethos of empowerment and collegiality. Organizations that draw on the knowledge of its staff make better decisions and show improved performance. Participation is a primary path to commitment. People are much more likely to commit to something that they shape. The rationale, according to Evans (1996), to make schools collegial places is that it will not only enrich teacher's work lives but also their classroom practices. Collaborative opportunities build knowledge and enhance job satisfaction and performance and help schools become learning organizations. Shared governance and collegiality have often been hailed as the two main ideals in school improvement. The researcher speculates that the less frequent engagement in these behaviors on the part of
superintendents in low SES districts may be a contributing factor to the lack of student success in poor school districts.

Although the current move towards school-based management in low SES districts in New Jersey should provide an impetus for superintendents in these districts to more frequently engage in enabling behaviors when compared to superintendents in high SES districts, the data indicated the opposite. In a school-based management approach, power is at the individual school site with teachers taking an active role in the decision making. Despite the fact that shared governance and collegiality have often been hailed as the two main ideals in school improvement, teachers are often hesitant and resistant when being offered a chance to become involved in making change. It is conceivable that problems characteristic of low SES districts such as poor motivation and low morale among the staff, may be obstacles that interfere with superintendent’s practicing these behaviors. The researcher further suggests that the opposition may be magnified in low SES districts when parents and community members are also invited to participate because of the animosity that sometimes occurs between teachers and these two outside groups. In many low SES districts, teachers are frequently blamed for poor student academic performance and parents are blamed for too little support for the school and too little involvement in their child’s education.

It is also conceivable that superintendents in low SES districts may have to work harder to foster collaboration. Teacher and principal resistance may be exacerbated by years of demoralization and enforced passivity in poorly managed schools, or skepticism from past reform effort promises that never came to be. Engaging teachers and principals in reform efforts in low SES districts may be particularly difficult because so many have
been numbed by a decade of urgency and shifting priorities (Johnson, 1996). Similarly, the rapid turnover of superintendents in many of these districts may contribute to the skepticism of teachers and principals. Superintendents in low SES districts may encounter increased difficulty in providing the groundwork that must occur first to create a climate in which teachers are comfortable becoming involved. Therefore, superintendents in these districts may be required to display increased persistence and more sophisticated leadership skills to engage teachers in collaborative efforts.

Collaborative efforts are not only fragile and hard to get started, but are difficult to sustain. Teacher resistance to forming and maintaining a participatory community may hamper a superintendent’s efforts to engage in behaviors that foster collaboration and strengthen others. Evans (1996) noted that shared governance always implies more work, as well as more complex work, and increased adult communications rather than student relationships. While this may be a problem in both high and low SES districts, already overloaded low SES district faculty may find that meetings are held in the evenings or after school and teaching responsibility is not decreased to allow for release time.

Relevant to Enabling Others to Act, a closely related finding in this study, indicated that there was a statistically significant difference \(p = .013\) on the Enabling Others to Act scale when superintendents were compared based on years of experience as a superintendent. Superintendents with more than six years of experience more frequently reported engaging in behaviors that enabled others to act than did superintendents with less than six years experience. The researcher has already discussed the challenge superintendents’ face in low SES districts when they attempt to engage in behaviors that foster collaboration and strengthen others. Although superintendents in
low SES districts face exacerbated obstacles in this area, all superintendents must overcome teacher resistance to win commitment to school reform. In high SES districts, the reform movement may take a different form than in low SES districts, but superintendents in all districts must foster collaboration and strengthen others to allow their districts to move forward. All school superintendents that wish to foster collaboration will have to overcome challenges that include the fact that few teachers have worked in a collaborative environment or have been held accountable outside the classroom. They may not automatically be adept at group problem solving or understand consensual decision-making.

In addition, the school superintendent must depend on staff willingness and internal motivators to accomplish meaningful school reform. In the corporate world, some subordinates may be more inclined to respond to bureaucratic authority and do what they are told. They also respond to psychological authority, with job commitment dependent on extrinsic rewards such as promotions, positive evaluations, or a bonus. Pressures such as the fear of a demotion or being fired also serve to motivate subordinates. In school systems these types of external rewards are less available than in other systems. Most school administrators cannot control their subordinates with fears of demotion or a promise of extra pay. Laws regarding tenure as well as contracted union negotiations limit the amount of administrative motivators available. Evans (1996) discussed the need for "followership" (p. 171). Followers subscribe to the teachings of another but they do so because they want to. They are committed to a belief of what the school can become. Because of this commitment they are enthusiastic and take the
initiative in the pursuit of the organization’s goals. When this occurs with staff in schools, teaching is no longer a job but a source of personal satisfaction.

These findings suggest that the increased and sophisticated leadership practices superintendents need to overcome teacher resistance to change may come as a result of experience in the position of superintendent. If substantive change is related to transformational practices, and superintendents with more years of experience report that they engage in the critical transformational practice of enabling others to act more frequently than those of superintendents with less years of experience, then this researcher suspects that superintendents with more years of experience may be able to have greater success in implementing change. If this is accurate, then the contention that “leaders are born, not made” may not be accurate.

This conclusion is supported in the literature that suggests that leadership can be cultivated or nurtured primarily through experience. Learning to lead can be attributed to both positive and negative experiences. Aspiring administrators can learn as much from their failures as from their successes. The test of ultimate success is not so much whether a person succeeded in mastering a specific situation, but whether or not a lesson was learned along the way (Bolman and Deal, 1994).

The data indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in superintendent’s self-perception of their own leadership practices in relationship to the demographic variables of gender, district size, and years in current position. These findings are consistent with other research findings using Kouzes and Posner’s Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) which indicated that LPI scores are not related to demographic factors.
These findings are not consistent with other studies that have indicated that leadership practices may be influenced by gender, district or school size, or years in current position. There are several studies that have looked at women in leadership positions in particular and have concluded that women prefer a more transformational leadership style than do men.

The researcher urges caution in the interpretation of the demographic data since these variables were not controlled for in the selection process. In addition, the sample size for gender (male = 129, female = 26) and district size (under 5000 = 114, over 5000 = 41) were not of equal distributions.

Recommendations for Superintendent Preparation

If the goal of superintendent preparation is to develop leaders, we must revisit the training that we currently offer future and current school district administrators. The findings from this study, as well as the related literature, suggest the following:

1. Superintendents must be able to assess the context of their school districts. Each situation must be diagnosed before an action is taken. What might be effective in one context may not work in another. It is difficult to learn this type of skill in a conventional university classroom setting. Johnson (1996) suggests a more meaningful experience would include various pedagogical approaches such as case discussion, simulation, field-based research, and internships. This would be done with the purpose of engaging future superintendents in actively diagnosing organizational problems, collaboratively devising solutions, and planning for implementation and change.
2. Professional development programs should be cautious in offering prescriptions for leadership success. New superintendents should be context sensitive and should be aware of the obstacles they will have to overcome in a variety of different contexts.

3. Decentralization begins to transfer power from the district office to the school site. What is the role of the superintendent as the system shifts towards increased decentralization? Superintendent preparation programs should assist in the defining and teaching of the appropriate role of the superintendent in this type of system.

4. Professional Development should stress the role of the superintendent in creating district capacity for change. The superintendent should be required to learn how to best utilize the central office staff to move a district forward rather than using them to provide a highly bureaucratic model that slows down progress.

5. Superintendents must learn that they cannot force compliance in schools. Asking principals and teachers to work more hours on more complex tasks may be met with resistance unless very sophisticated levels of leadership are applied. Superintendents must learn how to enlist others and enable them to act so that they will participate more frequently. Superintendents must understand that participation is a primary path to commitment, since people are more likely to commit to something that they shape (Evans, 1996).

6. Superintendents must learn to not only develop their own leadership skills, but learn ways in which they can develop leadership skills of individuals in the schools.

Recommendations for Future Research

The data in this study generated a number of questions that justify further investigation.
1. This study found a relationship between district context and superintendent leadership practices. Comparative studies of leadership practices of superintendents should occur in many different contexts: elementary level districts and K through 12th grade; urban, suburban and rural districts; large medium and small districts; and culturally and geographically distinct districts. Research should focus on the similarities and differences across contexts as well as leadership practices and processes and effects.

2. The data in this study indicated that there was no relationship between district socioeconomic context and superintendent's perception of their own leadership practices in the areas of Challenging the Process, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart. This may be the result of the superintendent's self-reporting of their own practices rather than the actual behaviors that they engage in. Research should be conducted to determine what the observed leadership behaviors are of superintendents in diverse socioeconomic school districts by using the Leadership Practices Inventory-Other. This questionnaire could be presented to principals, teachers, and central office administrators to determine if their perceptions of the superintendent match the superintendent's own perceptions.

3. Although there was no report of or intention to gather this data, the researcher found that superintendents in New Jersey kindergarten through 12th grade districts, in both high and low socioeconomic status school districts, fell within the moderate to high range on all five scales measuring transformational leadership practices. Research should be conducted to determine if this is unique to K to 12th grade districts, unique to New Jersey or if the self-reported practices are consistent with the perceptions of others.
4. The data in this study indicated that superintendents in high SES districts tend to more frequently report behaviors that are constant with Inspiring a Shared Vision than do their counterparts in low SES districts. Since this practice is a critical step in the change process it is important to determine what independent variables within the low SES school district environment are related to Inspiring a Shared Vision. The researcher has suggested possible variables such as the multitude of district priorities, the lack of continuity due to the high rate of superintendent turnover, the move towards decentralization, and state mandates.

5. The data indicated that superintendents in high SES districts more frequently report behaviors that are consistent with Enabling Others to Act than do their counterparts in low SES districts. Since the two behaviors associated with this practice are reported in the literature as essential to school district success, it is important to determine what variables within the low SES district environment are related to Enabling Others to Act. The researcher has suggested possible variables such as decentralization, school-based management, level of parent/community involvement, staff morale, number and outcome of previous initiatives, superintendent turnover, superintendent characteristics, and release time for meetings.

6. The data in this study indicated that superintendents with more years of experience in the superintendency more frequently reported behaviors that are consistent with Enabling Others to Act than did their counterparts with less years of experience in the superintendency. Since this finding suggests that leadership is a skill that can be learned, research looking at years of experience and specific leadership practices are encouraged. Mediating variables such as gender and career path should also be
considered. Reviewing the specific experiences a superintendent had as he or she worked toward obtaining a superintendent position might shed some light on the importance of various job experiences needed to become a successful superintendent. For example, is it more important to have had a background that included being a principal or a central office administrator?

7. Although there was no report in the study of this finding, nor was there an intention to gather it, the researcher was able to look at the returned data and determine that the higher SES school districts (CH, I, and J) hired superintendents with more years of experience than did the lower SES school districts (A, B, and CD). Specifically, the data indicated that 71.1% of the superintendents in the high SES districts had more than six years experience as a superintendent as compared to 59.3% of the superintendents in the low SES districts. It would be important to understand if this was intentional on the part of the school district or if the more experienced superintendents have a greater interest in being employed by a higher SES school district. The researcher suggests that a study be conducted to determine the relationship of district SES status, years of experience as an administrator, and types of leadership practices the superintendent is engaged in. Further, it would be of value to investigate the relationship between years of experience as a superintendent and school district effectiveness.

8. The data for this study was gathered in New Jersey at a time that the state is undergoing a considerable amount of educational reform. Several of the low SES districts studied were designated as special needs districts and were mandated by the State Department of Education to institute a site-based management model. The new
regulations went into effect approximately six months prior to the current study. A follow-up study should be conducted in three to five years to determine the difference in leadership practices of the low SES superintendents who participated in this study. It would broaden the knowledge base of the role of the superintendent in districts that are decentralized. It would also be important to note if a model of mandated decentralization influences the pattern of a high rate of turnover for low SES superintendents.

9. The literature supports the use of transformational leadership practices as an effective model for the use of school superintendents. Research should continue to investigate the influence of transformational leadership practices of effective superintendents on student achievement. Studies of this nature should be done in varying context to ensure that they are context sensitive.

10. This study indicated that the transformational leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act is related to years of experience as a superintendent. Research should investigate how an individual acquires transformational skills. Can transformational leadership be taught? If so what is the best way to gain the needed knowledge. Can an individual become a transformational leader by extensive reading or by being mentored by someone who already possesses the needed skills? Can an individual learn to be a transformational leader by identifying and emulating exemplary leaders?


Dear

I am writing to request your participation in a study I am conducting for my doctoral dissertation at Seton Hall University. As a New Jersey central office administrator for more than thirteen years I have observed that administrative leadership practices are often related to district factors such as socioeconomic status and district size. I would like to find out more specifically how these factors are associated with the way New Jersey Superintendents display leadership.

I am requesting your assistance with my research which, I believe, may help current superintendents and those preparing for a superintendency to better understand their leadership approach as it relates to the situation in which they find themselves.

If you agree to participate, kindly complete the brief demographic survey and the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). I have selected this instrument because it meets my needs for accuracy of measurement and can be completed in approximately 10 minutes. Please return it to me by November 18, 1998. I have enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope for your convenience. Your completion and return of this survey indicates that you understand and agree to participate in this study. Although I must code the surveys to insure the match between the superintendent and district for follow-up purposes, please be assured that all responses will remain confidential and no identifying data will be released. Your responses will be combined with the responses of other superintendents and will be held anonymous within the data collected. The data will be destroyed following completion of the study.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is 973-275-2974.

I know how very busy you are at this time of the year. Please accept my appreciation for taking a few minutes to help with this research. It is important that I have a high response rate to complete the study with meaning. If you would like a copy of the summary of my findings at the completion of this project, please check the appropriate box at the bottom of the demographic survey. If you have any questions or concerns you can reach me at 732-257-8553 (evening) or 732-364-4999 (day).

Yours truly

Enid Golden

The Catholic University in New Jersey - founded in 1856
APPENDIX B

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO NON-RESPONDENTS
Dear

Recently you were sent an invitation to participate in a study as part of my dissertation research at Seton Hall University. It's possible that you did not receive the survey in the mail. I would greatly appreciate it if you would complete the attached demographic survey and Leadership Practices Inventory and place them in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. If you wish not to participate, please send the blank forms back to me in the envelope.

I have attached a copy of my original letter which describes the purpose of my research and discusses the confidentiality and anonymity of the study.

Your participation in this study is critical to my obtaining meaningful results. If you have any questions or concerns you can reach me at 732-257-8553 (evening) or 732-364-4999 (day). Once again, thank you in advance for your professional cooperation and support.

Sincerely

Enid Golden
APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY INSTRUMENT
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Please complete the following information by checking the appropriate blank.

1. Size of the district (based on student enrollment)
   a. ___ 1-1999  b. ___ 2000-4999  c. ___ 5000-9999  d. ___ 10,000 and over

2. Number of years in current position
   a. ___ less than 1 year  b. ___ 1-2 years  c. ___ 3-5 years  d. ___ 6-10 years
   e. ___ 11 years or more

3. Number of years total as a superintendent in any district
   a. ___ less than 1 year  b. ___ 1-3 years  c. ___ 4-6 years  d. ___ 7-10 years
   e. ___ 10 years or more

4. I am a
   a. ___ Male  b. ___ Female

I would like a copy of the completed research ________ YES ________ NO
APPENDIX D

APPROVAL LETTER TO USE THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY
October 1, 1998

Ms. Enid Golden
37 Boston Post Road
East Brunswick, New Jersey 08816

Dear Elvira:

Thank you for your facsimile (dated 30 September 1998) requesting permission to use the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) in your dissertation. We are willing to allow you to reproduce the instrument as outlined in your letter, at no charge, with the following understandings:

(1) That the LPI is used only for research purposes and is not sold or used in conjunction with any compensated management development activities;

(2) That copyright of the LPI is retained by Kouzes Posner International, and that the following copyright statement be included on all copies of the instrument: "Copyright © 1997 James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. All rights reserved. Used with permission.; and,

(3) That one (1) bound copy of your dissertation, and one (1) copy of all papers, reports, articles, and the like which make use of the LPI data be sent promptly to our attention.

If the terms outlined above are acceptable, would you please so indicate by signing one (1) copy of this letter and returning it to us. Would you also provide a telephone number and the anticipated completion of your research.

Best wishes for every success with your research project. If we can be of any further assistance, please let us know.

Cordially,

Barry Z. Posner, Ph.D.
Managing Partner

I understand and agree to abide by these conditions:

(Signed) Enid Golden Date: October 2, 1998
Telephone Number: 617-354-9170 Expected Date of Completion: May 1999
APPENDIXE

LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY - SELF
LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY [LPI]

SELF

INSTRUCTIONS

On the next two pages are thirty statements describing various leadership behaviors. Please read each carefully. Then look at the rating scale and decide how frequently you engage in the behavior described.

Here’s the rating scale that you’ll be using:

1 = Almost Never       6 = Sometimes
2 = Rarely             7 = Fairly Often
3 = Seldom             8 = Usually
4 = Once in a While    9 = Very Frequently
5 = Occasionally       10 = Almost Always

In selecting each response, please be realistic about the extent to which you actually engage in the behavior. Do not answer in terms of how you would like to see yourself or in terms of what you should be doing. Answer in terms of how you typically behave—on most days, on most projects, and with most people.

For each statement, decide on a rating and record it in the blank to the left of the statement. When you have responded to all thirty statements, turn to the response sheet on page 4.
16. I ask “What can we learn?” when things do not go as expected.

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

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

19. I am clear about my philosophy of leadership.

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

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

22. I am contagiously enthusiastic and positive about future possibilities.

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

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

25. I find ways to celebrate accomplishments.

26. I take the initiative to overcome obstacles even when outcomes are uncertain.

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

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

29. I make progress toward goals one step at a time.

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