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**INTEGRATION OF MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP: A  
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EXPERIENCED AND NOVICE LEADERS**

by

**Rigoberto J. Rincones-Gómez**

**A Dissertation  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of The Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Educational Studies**

**Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
August 2002**

# **INTEGRATION OF MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EXPERIENCED AND NOVICE LEADERS**

**Rigoberto J. Rincones-Gómez, Ph.D.**

**Western Michigan University, 2002**

**The purpose of this study was to investigate a multiple-perspectives approach to educational leadership. Twelve superintendents from the state of Michigan participated in this study. A sampling strategy was used to differentiate six novices from six experienced superintendents. Interviews, thinking-aloud, and journals were used in order to capture information regarding superintendents' approaches to leadership.**

**The conceptual framework used in this study was defined by (a) a system of perspectives on leadership, and (b) the assumptions that lie beneath those perspectives, including the assumptions about the leader, follower, organization, and task. These two components turned into the two-level coding system for analyzing the data collected. The researcher inquired into (a) how educational leaders perceived the concept of leadership, and (b) whether or not they took a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership, and if so, how they integrated the multiple perspectives on leadership in their practices.**

**Among others, the following are the main findings of this study. First, the novice superintendents tended to use only elements from the democratic perspective. However, the experienced superintendent group used a combination of elements from**

the formal or structural, democratic, as well as the political leadership perspective. Overall, the data seem to suggest that the more experienced the superintendent is, he or she will tend to integrate more elements from the different leadership perspectives. Second, all the 12 superintendents exhibited a common mechanism or scheme – identifying the problem's context, considering time constraints, and making the necessary decision(s)– when dealing with leadership issues. Nevertheless, for the novice superintendents, time constraints meant to have the opportunity to look for more possible alternatives; for the experienced superintendents it meant to have the opportunities of increasing involvement from other members in the decision-making process.

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study (a) challenges the fragmentation of leadership theories and raises a critical issue about the integration of multiple perspectives, and (b) engages in an initial test of the ability of different groups of leaders to integrate multiple perspectives on leadership. Practically, the empirical findings have implications for the education and professional development of superintendents.

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**Rigoberto J. Rincones-Gómez**

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Over the past thirty years the term leadership has gained an incredible usage in the daily lexicon of professionals of many fields. Books, journal articles, professional development sessions, and universities graduate programs had clearly reflected all the new challenges and increasing pressures that today's leaders are facing.

All these new challenges have influenced toward the development of different perspectives on leadership in many ways. Although these perspectives have defined, structured, and analyzed all elements related to the concept of leadership, this process has been done in a fragmented way. These perspectives are usually presented as mutually exclusive ones, and the relationship among them has not been thoroughly examined.

Several authors have developed different systematic perspectives on leadership (e.g., Bolman & Deal, 1997; Bush, 1995; Carlson, 1996; Cheng, 1996; Cheng & Shum, 1997; Hallinger, Leithwood, & Murphy, 1993; Hsieh & Shen, 1998). For example, the formal perspective views leadership as a function of one's position in a structural organization, tending to treat organizations as systems, where decisions are made through a rational process (Bolman & Deal, 1997). On the other hand, the democratic or collegial perspectives view leadership as facilitating an essentially

participative internal process, where decisions are made by consensus instead of separation or conflict (Bush, 1995).

Several perspectives on leadership have been suggested as follows:

- ◆ Formal or structural perspectives, which emphasize viewing organizations as official structures (Bolman & Deal, 1997) working as open or closed systems (Bush, 1995);
- ◆ Democratic or collegial perspectives, where the main assumption is that a common set of values exists among the people inside the organization such that through a participative decision-making process common solutions can be reached (e.g., Bush, 1995; Campbell & Southworth, 1995);
- ◆ Political perspectives, in which the decision-making process carried out is the result of a continuous negotiation and bargaining process. Here, conflict is seen as a normal event, in which power and coalitions are always present (e.g. Bush, 1995; Bolman & Deal, 1997; Ball, 1987; Pfeffer, 1992);
- ◆ Subjective or human resource perspectives, where the emphasis is on the individuals inside the organization: their values, beliefs, and interactions (e.g., Bush, 1995; Greenfield, 1973, 1986; Gray, 1979);
- ◆ Ambiguity perspectives, where the main assumption is that uncertainty, turbulence, and unpredictability are common factors in organizations (e.g. Bush, 1995); and
- ◆ Cultural or symbolic perspectives, where the emphasis is on the informal aspects of organizations, focusing on people's beliefs, values, and perceptions (e.g. Bush, 1995; Bolman & Deal, 1997; Morgan, 1997; O'Neill, 1994).

The above, is an initial list of the major perspectives on leadership. Although in the literature Bolman and Deal (1991) have presented their work on integrating four organizational theories, leadership preparation and practice in 2002 have rarely developed, reflected, or made use of a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership.

### The Study

Although many studies describing the major perspectives on leadership can be found on the literature, the relationship, development, and integration of a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership has not been thoroughly examined. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate a multiple-perspectives approach to educational leadership, by school district superintendents.

Twelve superintendents from the state of Michigan participated in the study. A sampling strategy was used to differentiate novice from experienced superintendent. Six superintendents conformed the novice group, and the other six superintendents the experienced group. Also, interviews, thinking-aloud, and journals were used in order to capture information regarding superintendents' approaches to leadership.

The results of this study offer insights to educating and improving educational leaders. In addition, these results provide empirical evidence on superintendents' conception and practice in relationship to the multiple-perspectives approach to leadership. Moreover, Glass, Björk, and Brunner (2000) state, "While it is clear that change is inevitable, it is not yet clear what direction that change will take. The

superintendents of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have the opportunity to play a pivotal role in shaping the structure and content of education for the next generation.” (p. i).

### Significance of the Study

Different leadership perspectives have been dominating the field of educational leadership. Each individual perspective on leadership has been able to explain, to a certain extent, the phenomenon of leadership. Moreover, some authors emphasize power and political leadership; others stress the personal, cultural, or cognitive perspectives on leadership. However, with the development of various leadership perspectives, it is essential to inquire into how the combination of these perspectives can explain the phenomenon of leadership. This relates to Burn's (1978, p. 2) observation that “Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth.... Leadership as a concept has dissolved into small and discrete meanings.”

Due to the demanding and diversified situations in which educational leaders are involved in a daily basis, they might take a political or formal perspective depending on the situation. For example, a superintendent might take a political perspective to manage conflict situations, but a formal perspective to deal with professional development programs. Given the conditions of public education, a study of the multiple-perspectives approach to leadership is imperative.

As several empirical studies have point out, educational leadership is related to the quality of schools and students' learning (e.g., Cheng, 1994; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). These studies suggest that leadership influences education in general and

student learning in particular through governing the school, building the school climate, and organizing the instructional programs (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Heck & Marcoulides, 1992; Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990). Therefore, the proposed study is constructive in improving the context for enhancing schools and student learning. There are neither empirical studies which show how educational leaders take a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership, nor how these leaders integrate in practice the multiple perspectives on leadership. This study addresses these issues. Also, the information presented in this study can be useful for designing professional development programs for educational leaders. In addition, this information might also be useful for the selection, evaluation, and promotion of school district superintendents across the country.

### Theoretical Conceptualization

The conceptual framework of the study is (a) a system of perspectives on leadership and (b) the assumptions that lie beneath those perspectives, including the assumptions about the leader, follower, organization, and task. The initial component of the conceptualization is denoted by the list of perspectives on leadership introduced before. Based on these perspectives on leadership, the second component of the conceptualization is the assumptions of those perspectives integrating the four common premises of leader, follower, organization, and task. These two components will turn into the two-level coding system for analyzing the collected data (see Table 1).

-

**Table 1**  
**Two-level Coding Scheme for Analyzing the Assumptions Underlying the Major Perspectives on Leadership**

Leadership Perspective	Common Premises	Code	Sub-codes
<b>Formal or Structural</b>		<b>FP</b>	
	Leader		FPL
	Follower		FPF
	Organization		FPO
	Task		FPT
<b>Democratic or Collegial</b>		<b>DP</b>	
	Leader		DPL
	Follower		DPF
	Organization		DPO
	Task		DPT
<b>Political</b>		<b>PP</b>	
	Leader		PPL
	Follower		PPF
	Organization		PPO
	Task		PPT
<b>Subjective or Human Resource</b>		<b>SP</b>	
	Leader		SPL
	Follower		SPF
	Organization		SPO
	Task		SPT
<b>Ambiguity</b>		<b>AP</b>	
	Leader		APL
	Follower		APF
	Organization		APO
	Task		APT
<b>Cultural or Symbolic</b>		<b>CP</b>	
	Leader		CPL
	Follower		CPF
	Organization		CPO
	Task		CPT

### General and Particular Questions Guiding the Study

By carrying out the proposed qualitative study, the researcher collected and analyzed data regarding a multiple-perspectives approach to educational leadership. The researcher inquired into (a) how educational leaders perceive the concept of



leadership, and (b) whether or not they take a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership, and if so, how they integrate the multiple perspectives on leadership in their practices. In particular, the researcher asked the following questions: (a) how do school district superintendents conceive the concept of leadership? Do their conceptions include the elements of a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership? (b) How do school district superintendents practice leadership? (c) What is the relationship between school district superintendents' conception and practice of leadership?

What kinds of tacit knowledge do superintendents bring when dealing with multi-faceted leadership issues? What kind of knowing- and reflecting-in-action do the superintendents display when dealing with complicated leadership issues? If superintendents demonstrate the approach to integrate multiple perspectives on leadership, what is the mechanism or scheme with which they do so? (d) Are there any differences between the experienced and well-regarded superintendents and novice superintendents as to the findings related to questions (a) to (c)?

### Organization of the Study

The research problem, an initial list of the major perspectives on leadership; the purpose, significance, and the theoretical conceptualization, as well as the general questions guiding this study are presented in this chapter.

A review of relevant studies significant to the research questions guiding this dissertation is presented in Chapter 2. Both, theoretical foundations and empirical studies are also discussed in this chapter. The detailed methodology used in this

dissertation is presented in Chapter 3. In addition, the rationale for each part of the methodology is explained. The findings and analyses of data of this study are reviewed in Chapter 4. Finally, the findings' implications, limitations of the study, and directions for further studies are reviewed and summarized in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Many researchers have conducted empirical studies addressing issues such as new superintendents' approaches to leadership (Johnson, 1996); teachers', principals', and superintendents' conceptions of leadership (Hsieh & Shen, 1998); instructional goals of educational leadership programs (Shen & Hsieh, 1999); the impact of leadership preparation (Shen, Cooley, Ruhl-Smith, & Keiser, 1999); and changing leadership (Portin & Shen, 1998; Shen, Rodríguez-Campos, & Rincones-Gómez, 2000).

Despite all the studies related to leadership perspectives in general, and their implications on educational leaders practices in particular, a multiple-perspectives approach on leadership has not been thoroughly studied. Primarily, in the educational field, there has been no deliberate emphasis on using such an approach to educating and improving educational leaders.

Glass, Björk, and Brunner (2000) suggested that "The rapid increase in both number and diversity of students in our nation's largest urban areas demands new skills of teachers and administrators" (p. i). All of these issues and circumstances have contributed to the current fragmented approach to research, development, and practice of educational leadership. It is common to find studies developed within only

one perspective, for example the political perspective, in which only power, conflict, and bargaining processes are thoroughly investigated.

Recent studies on superintendents' perceptions of leadership have placed them among those emphasizing managerial and political knowledge (Hsieh & Shen, 1998, Johnson, 1996). In addition, some superintendents seem to view leadership from the managerial, personality, and moral perspectives (Hsieh & Shen, 1998), whereas others seem to emphasize educational, political, and managerial perspectives as well (Johnson, 1996). Although the political and managerial perspectives have been found to be consistently shared among many superintendents, Johnson (1996) suggested that, "While the formal authority of the superintendency is far more limited than it was fifty years ago, the possibilities for educational, political, and managerial leadership in the position have actually expanded" (p. 275).

Development in leadership theory and practice, and practical implications for educating and improving educational leaders attests to the importance of the study. As Hsieh and Shen (1998) have indicated, "It is constructive to analyze the leadership phenomenon by employing different perspectives because a rigorous analysis from systematic perspectives provides us with a disciplined approach to leadership analysis" (p. 107).

Recently, there have been efforts to develop standards for leadership preparation and practice (e.g., American Association of School Administrators, 1993; Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996; Thomson, 1992). Some of these standards present a common core of knowledge, disposition, and performance that intends to help relate leadership more forcefully to productive schools and superior

educational outcomes (CCSSO, 1996). Many elements from the different perspectives on leadership are present in these standards, but it is not clear how all these combined elements can contribute to effective leadership. In addition, Hsieh and Shen (1998) have pointed out that “in this line of work there is no consideration that there might be different perceptions of leadership for leaders in different positions” (p. 107).

There is no emphasis on using the multiple-perspectives approach as one of the foundations for leadership preparation and development. Also, Glass, Björk, and Brunner (2000), have suggested that “the common thread that is woven throughout the fabrics or critiques is recognition of the need for content and instruction to align with changes taking place in schools and to produce high quality leaders to improve American education” (p. 137)

#### Four Basic Elements in the Concept of Leadership:

##### Leader, Follower, Organization, and Task

Earlier studies of leadership have focused on (a) individual traits (Bass, 1960; Bird, 1940; Stogdill, 1948, 1974); (b) situations which lead to the concept of situational leadership (Henkley, 1973; Hoy & Miskel, 1987); and (c) types of behaviors (Barnard, 1938; Cartwright & Zander, 1960; Etzioni, 1961; Stogdill, 1963). However, Barnes and Kriger (1986) later suggested that those theories were not completely satisfactory because they “deal more with the single leader and multi-follower concept than with organizational leadership in a pluralistic sense” (p. 15). More recently, Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (1996) have suggested that “on the basis of the definition of the leadership process as a function of the leader, the

followers, and other situational variables, a single ideal type of leader seems unrealistic” (p. 114). In the following sections, the leader, follower, organization, and task premises will be described.

### Leader

Earlier definitions of leaders describe them as the individuals who direct groups’ activities toward achievement of a shared goal (Hemphill & Coons, 1950). More recently, Burns (1978) describes the leaders as the persons who induce followers “to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations – the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations – of both leaders and followers” (p. 19). Many studies in educational leadership have paid more attention to leaders in administrative positions, considering teachers as followers; however, others studies have focused on teachers as leaders rather than followers (Bellon & Beaudry, 1992; Boles & Troen, 1992; Howey, 1998; Wasley, 1991; Waugh & Punch, 1987).

### Follower

Many people have given different definitions regarding the relationship between leaders and followers. Some authors have suggested that leaders and followers work together around a common purpose (Chaleff, 1995; Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 1996; Kelley, 1992; Owens, 1998). Others emphasize the importance of followers over leaders; Chaleff (1995) stated, “Follower is not a term of weakness, but the condition that permits leadership to exist and gives it strength”(p. 17). Further, the same author affirmed that “A follower shares a common

purpose with the leader, believes in what the organization is trying to accomplish, and wants both the leader and the organization to succeed” (p. 13). Moreover, Kelley (1992) has also suggested that “followership and leadership are dialectic. Just as the word ‘right’ makes no sense without ‘left,’ they depend upon each other for existence and meaning. They can never be independent. But unlike right and left, it is not always so easy to sort out who is leading and who is following” (p. 45).

### Organization

Many definitions of leadership involve a relation of the leader with the accomplishment of organizational goals (Koontz, & O’Donnell, 1973; Owens, 1998; Penland, 1974). Others, such as Peters and Waterman (1982), have suggested that leadership is the capacity to influence and organize meaning for the members of the organization. Earliest definitions of the concept of organization have described it as social units that are purposely built to seek previously defined goals (Etzioni, 1964). Also, Banner and Gagne (1995) have described the main elements of organizations such as: (a) goal direction; (b) relatively identifiable boundaries; (c) social interactions; (d) deliberately structured activities, and (e) a culture common to the members.

### Task

According to Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (1996), the leader might develop an orientation for task accomplishment, which is defined by these authors as task behavior, or “the extent to which the leader engages in spelling out the duties and

responsibilities of an individual or group” (p. 191). However, the task premise is not limited to what leaders and followers work to achieve. Many authors have identified the following elements as part of the task premise: (a) task structure or complexity (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Fiedler, 1967; Kerzner, 1997; (b) core dimensions (Daft, 1994; Hackman & Olsman, 1980; (c) task demands (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Kerzner, 1997; Lewis, 1999); and (d) task obstacles (Daft, 1994; Kerzner, 1997). Furthermore, for the purpose of this study, the task premise is used as an integration of the preceding elements within the leadership perspectives.

### Major Perspectives on Leadership

Many different systematic perspectives on leadership have been developed by several authors (e.g., Bolman & Deal, 1997; Bush, 1995; Carlson, 1996; Cheng, 1996; Cheng & Shum, 1997; Hallinger, Leithwood & Murphy, 1993; Hsieh & Shen, 1998). Other authors argue that such perspectives “have been borrowed from a wide range of disciplines, and in a few cases developed specifically to explain unique features of educational institutions” (Cuthbert, 1984, p. 39). In addition, Bush suggests that “all the perspectives are limited in that they do not give a complete picture of educational institutions... The inadequacies of each theory, taken singly, have led to a search for a comprehensive perspective that integrates concepts to provide a coherent analytical framework” (1995, p. 150). For example, the formal perspective views leadership as a function of one’s position in a structural organization, tending to treat organizations as systems, where decisions are made through a rational process (Bush, 1995). On the other hand, the democratic (or



collegial) perspective views leadership as facilitating an essentially participative internal process, where decisions are made by consensus instead of separation or conflict.

In order to analyze the most commonly held leadership perspectives, Bush (1995) considered four main elements: (a) the level of agreement about the goals or objectives of the institution, (b) the meaning and validity of organizational structures within the institution, (c) the relationship between the institution and its external environment, and (d) the most appropriate leadership strategy for the institution. Based on these elements, the most commonly held leadership perspectives are as follows.

#### Formal or Structural Perspectives

Formal perspectives emphasize the viewing of organizations as official structures (Bolman & Deal, 1997), working as open or closed systems (Landers & Myers, 1977). Several common features outline these formal perspectives. For example, organizations are treated as systems, where each department or unit is systematically related to each other (Landers & Myers, 1977). There is an emphasis on the organizational structure, which is represented throughout the organizational chart. Informal interactions within the system are not acknowledged on such charts (Bolman & Deal, 1997). In this perspective, there is a tendency to make the official structure hierarchical (pyramidal), emphasizing a means of control and a vertical relationship among staff; the person at the top of the pyramid holds the greatest amount of leadership (Packwood, 1989; Leithwood & Duke, 1998). The organization

is typified as goal-orientated. The decision-making process is carried out through a rational procedure, evaluating the different options and selecting those aligned with the organizational goals (Bolman & Deal, 1997). There is an emphasis on the authority of the leader, due to his/her “positional” power. Finally, there is an emphasis on the organization’s accountability to its sponsoring institution.

Other authors present some fundamental features that also describe formal perspectives. For example, Bolman and Deal (1997) emphasize the structural perspectives on organizations. They suggested that “the right structure depends on organizational goals, strategies, technology, and environment” (p. 57), and in order to manage the work, they place thrust upon authority, rules, and policies as their primary options. In addition, Leithwood and Duke (1998) suggested that “... the focus of leaders ought to be on functions, tasks, or behaviors, and that if these functions are carried out competently the work of others in the organization will be facilitated” (p. 9).

According to Landers and Myers (1977), Latcham and Cuthbert (1984), and Hoy and Miskel (1989), these perspectives emphasize the strong interaction within the internal parts (components) and the external environment of the organization. As a system, the organization and the environment have a specific boundary, which separates the organization’s members from the external environment. Other authors such as Weber (1989) argue that “in formal organizations, bureaucracy is the most efficient form of management” (p. 35). Bureaucracy emphasizes impersonal relationships between staff and clients; the decisions and behaviors are ruled and regulated based upon the hierarchical authority structure.

The rational approach, proposed by Cuthbert (1984), suggested that the emphasis is made on the process instead of the organizational structure and goals. Also, a cyclical and rational decision-making process characterizes this perspective. Finally, a hierarchical perspective proposed by Packwood (1989) stresses a vertical relationship within the organization, which emphasizes the figure of the leader at the apex of the structure.

Bush (1995) described five elements that show the down side of the formal perspectives. First, he says that characterizing educational organizations as goal-oriented might be wrong due to the fact that more than those official goals, which sometimes are not accomplished, unofficial goals are pursued by groups within the organization. Bush also agrees that the representation of a decision-making process as rational, is sometimes inaccurate, as "rationality" is often difficult to accomplish. Not all the options are thoroughly evaluated in decision making, meaning sometimes the most appropriate option is not chosen. The third criticism of formal perspectives is that the organization is seen as an entity where behaviors and actions resulting from the people inside the organization are considered a result of their official positions. Bush argues this is not always true. He argues that formal perspectives assume that the power is centered at the apex of the pyramid, but in reality, in order to avoid conflict within the organization, the leader may recognize the importance of the staff's role within the decision-making process. Finally, Bush argues that formal perspectives see organizations as stable entities, which may be unrealistic during multiple changes and turbulence. A summary of the formal or structural perspectives

on leadership, under the leader, follower, organizations, and task premises is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

**Summary of the Formal or Structural Perspective on Leadership under the Leader, Follower, Organization, and Task Premises**

Perspective	Common Premise	Description
Formal or Structural	Leader	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent takes the role of establishing any major official objective. Also, whenever he/she thinks that the overall power of the institution resides at the apex of the pyramid, this means, in his/her position.
	Follower	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent when making decisions with his/her administrative staff and/or teachers, shows aptitudes of rationalism*. Also, where aptitudes reflecting actions of direct support from followers take place, while communicating with any staff member or any teacher from the institution.
	Organization	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent plays a role of continuous interaction between the board and/or community members, associated with the internal decision-making process of his/her institution. Also, when an open system communicational-frame exists with these external entities, and everybody seems to be heard.
	Task	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent or any particular groups of individuals inside the institution define their objectives in terms of their roles within the formal structure. Also, when any task is performed, it is the result of objectives based on their professional roles within the institution.

\*Rationalism or rational process could be synthesized as a procedure in which any analysis of a problem follows a particular procedure (e.g., perception of the problem, analysis of the problem, formulation of alternatives, choice of solution, implementation of solution, and evaluation of effectiveness).

### Democratic or Collegial Perspectives

The main assumption of democratic perspectives is that a common set of values exists among the people inside the organization such that through a participative decision-making process, a common solution can be reached. In addition, the leadership style influences and is influenced by the decision-making

process (Bush, 1995). Furthermore, these perspectives emphasize a collaborative leadership role, which assumes that the decision-making processes of the group should be the central focus of its leader (Leithwood & Duke, 1998).

The democratic or collegial perspectives emphasize a strong normative orientation, which aims for a democratic principle to guide the decision-making process. These perspectives seem to be more appropriate for schools and colleges due to the significant number of professional staff. Because of the professionalism within the school, authority should be based on expertise, which allows teachers to participate in the decision-making process. In addition, Leithwood and Duke (1998) stated, "...authority and influence are available potentially to any legitimate stakeholders in the school based on their expert knowledge, their democratic right to choose, their critical role in implementing decisions, or a combination of the three" (p. 7).

Campbell and Southworth (1995) suggested that common sets of values are held by the members of the organization, which could lead to an optimistic assumption that "it is always possible to reach agreement about goals and policies" (p. 53). An important issue for this perspective focuses on the size of the decision-making group; because every single member has to be heard, small groups or subunits might work better than larger groups. A final assumption of this perspective is that all decisions are made through consensus instead of separation or conflict.

In these perspectives, the leader focuses on the collective will of the group rather than a single individual (Cassel, 1996). Each member is as important as the other, and the success for achieving group goals is always directly related to making

the best use of those people involved (Cassel, 1973). Also, Cassel (1996) said, “Building trust in leadership is directly and intimately related to the degree of honesty and fairness of judgment made by the leader” (p. 1).

Several authors assessed the weaknesses of the democratic or collegial perspectives. First, Baldrige (1995) argued that there is such a strong emphasis on being normative, that there is a tendency for ambiguity instead of a representation of reality. In addition, Hellawell, (1991) stated that because all members inside the organization should participate in the decision-making process, this process can result in a considerable investment of time with delays in general procedures. Consensus is sometimes a fallacy because a unanimous decision cannot always be reached; different individuals could represent different departments or subunits with particular common views. Bush (1995) argued that the decision-making process might be hard to maintain because some external groups (boards, etc.) could disagree with some policies or decisions made; and the leader must sustain those decisions that resulted from a collegial or democratic process. Finally, Hellawell (1991) said how effective the democratic or collegial perspectives can be, depends in part on the attitudes of the staff, which intervenes in the decision-making process. A summary of the democratic or collegial perspectives on leadership, under the leader, follower, organization, and task premises is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

**Summary of the Democratic or Collegial Perspective on Leadership under the Leader,  
Follower, Organization, and Task Premises**

Perspective	Common Premise	Description
Democratic or Collegial	Leader	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent encourages participation of staff and teachers, for a balanced involvement, in the institutional decision-making process. Also, where he/she while in the decision-making process, plays a role of acknowledgement of the experiences and skills of staff members and teachers. The superintendent then becomes a facilitator.
	Follower	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent promotes the creation of systems of committees, with his/her staff members and teachers, supporting the notion of equal opportunities and agreement by consensus. Also, when the institutional structure is seen as horizontal, allowing followers to have the same right to determine policy and influence decisions, then, the superintendent becomes a mentor.
	Organization	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent overlooks the possibility of conflict between his/her institution and the board and/or community members due to decisions already made. Also, whenever a superintendent gets involved in explaining decisions to external entities, with which he/she does not agree with completely.
	Task	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent believes there exists a common and shared organizational agreement on its goals. Also, when the superintendent promotes creation of systems of committees, in order to define any new needed task, by supporting the notion of expertise/experience over the official position within the institution.

### Political Perspectives

The decision-making process carried out in these perspectives is the result of a continuous negotiation and bargaining process. Here, conflict is seen as a normal event in which power and coalitions are always present. The following authors suggest major features presented in political perspectives. Becher and Kogan (1992) argued that political perspectives focus only on group activity instead of the

organization as a whole; interaction occurs only between interested groups or coalitions. In addition, Hoyle (1986) said that there are individual interests and group interests, without considering organizational interests as goals; individual interests may focus on status, promotions, etc., while professional interests may focus on syllabus, teaching methods, etc. Bush (1995) argued that conflict predominates in the organization due to the different interests among groups; different values and beliefs make different groups seek solutions that adapt the best to their particular needs. There is a permanent ambiguity and instability regarding organizational goals, because each group seeks to satisfy their particular interests based on their particular goals instead of the organization's. Bolman and Deal (1984) argued that reaching consensus is the result of an extensive and complex bargaining and negotiation process. Through an evaluation process, depending on the objectives, the most appropriate alternative is selected. Finally, Morgan (1997) states that power is fundamental to the political perspectives. Results of the decision-making process may be the result of an individual's or a particular interest group's power.

The focus on power, conflict, and bargaining process produces a negative effect in political perspectives. These negative effects or limitations are due to several forces. First, Baldrige (1995) argued that routine activities in an organization are ignored or underestimated in this perspective. Because this perspective is so immersed in power, conflict, and manipulation, it overlooks the fact that many solutions are the result of routine activities instead of political controversy. Bush (1995) argued that because this perspective emphasizes the effect of interest groups on the decision-making process, little attention is paid to the institutional level.



Bolman and Deal (1984) argued that political perspectives put so much stress on conflict, that the possibility of cooperation among groups is left aside; there is not an opportunity of working in collaboration with peers inside the organization.

In a qualitative study of new superintendents' approaches to leadership, Johnson (1996) found that regarding leadership perspective, the superintendents are concerned with external relations, such as securing funds and building coalitions, and with internal activities such as allocating and distributing resources. In addition, Johnson (1996) added that those superintendents exercising political leadership, who also "...understood the political implications of their decisions and could plan their strategies to improve education with those implications in mind fared better than those who did not" (p. 156).

According to Bush (1995), political models "...are regarded primarily as descriptive or explanatory theories" (p. 89); they are seen as pragmatic representations of the decision-making process. Finally, Campbell and Southworth (1995) argued that it is difficult to distinguish between what is done as participatory or democratic activity and what is done as a result of a political behavior. This is due to the fact that leaders or groups try to satisfy their own needs, but through the eyes of others it looks like the result of a democratic decision-making process. A summary of the political perspectives on leadership, under the leader, follower, organization, and task premises is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

**Summary of the Political Perspective on Leadership under the Leader, Follower,  
Organization, and Task Premises**

Perspective	Common Premise	Description
Political	Leader	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent acts as both participant and mediator but seeking to accomplish his/her own values and interests. Also, where he/she while in the decision-making process, plays a role of control over any decision that has could be made.
	Follower	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent with his/her administrative staff and/or teachers shows disagreement or any conflictive behaviors or aptitudes. Also, where aptitudes reflecting actions of negotiation and his/her power influences take place, while conversing with any staff member or any teacher from the institution.
	Organization	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent plays a role of mediator between the board and/or community members, associated with the internal decision-making process of his/her institution. Also, where some particular preferences from these external entities have been introduced and kept (by the superintendent) as significant elements in the decision-making process.
	Task	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent or any particular group of individuals inside the institution decide and promote their own objectives as the official purposes of the institution. Also, when any task has been reached as the result of bargaining, negotiation, alliances, and/or multiple coalitions activities.

**Subjective or Human Resource Perspectives**

The emphasis of these perspectives is on the individuals inside the organization: their values, beliefs, and interactions (e.g., Bush, 1995; Bolman & Deal, 1997; Greenfield, 1973, 1979, 1986; Gray, 1979). Bush (1995) said that the focal point of this perspective falls on individual beliefs and values instead of interest groups or the institution as a whole; "...the individual is placed at the center of the organization" (p. 93). The subjective perspectives focus on what people inside the

organization understand and give meaning to; here, the center of attention is on the meaning of each person's behavior instead of the situations themselves (Greenfield, 1979). People's values, background, and experience will rule the different meanings placed on events. Conflict has the possibility to occur due to the different perceptions held by individuals (Greenfield, 1979). The structure is seen as the result of human interaction instead of something that is set and prearranged. Subjective theorists suggest that more attention should be given to other aspects of human resource management instead of issues of organizational structure (Bush, 1995). Because of the emphasis made by these perspectives on individuals as the center of the organization, it is argued that the organization does not have goals; the goals are those of the individuals inside the organization.

These perspectives also have their limitations. For example, these perspectives emphasize a strong normative based on individuals' values and beliefs; when advocates of these perspectives present their positions, it is done in a promulgative way instead of asking for evaluation or feedback (Greenfield, 1979). Because the structure is seen as the result of human interaction instead of something that is set and prearranged, the nature of the organization is unclear and vague (Greenfield, 1979). Due to the emphasis made by these perspectives on individuals' beliefs and interpretations as the center of the organization, it is assumed that as many interpretations exist as people working inside the organization (Bush, 1995). Finally, subjective perspectives offer hardly any guidelines for management actions. Because the emphasis is on the individual and not on the organization, the subjective perspective does not offer any development of leadership strategies (Bush, 1995). A

summary of the subjective or human resource perspectives of leadership, under the leader, follower, organization, and task premises is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Summary of the Subjective or Human Resource Perspective on Leadership under the  
Leader, Follower, Organization, and Task Premises

Perspective	Common Premise	Description
Subjective or Human Resources	Leader	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent describes his/her institutional position as one being the result of personal qualities and skills rather than an official authority. Also, whenever he/she represents a source of concerns, emphasizing his/her interpretations over the ones from staff members and teachers.
	Follower	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent emphasizes activities of task definitions based on personal aims and needs instead of institutional task or goals. Also, when any particular staff member or teacher relates the descriptions of any action to personal career development or job satisfaction.
	Organization	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent overlooks the recognition of direct external forces; instead, he/she emphasizes individual links between staff members or teachers, and board and/or community members.
	Task	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent shows that task-definition and development activities are based on individual wishes and beliefs. Also, when the superintendent shows a small-scale concern for staff members' and teachers' professional actions, instead of a macro-level institutional performance.

### Ambiguity Perspective

The main assumption of the ambiguity perspective is that uncertainty, turbulence, and unpredictability are common factors in organizations (e.g. Bush, 1995; Cohen & March, 1986). A major feature of this perspective is that the organization's goals are unclear or nonexistent, so there is no driving force that

guides the activities in the organization. Because of this ambiguity, any behavior can be justified (Bush, 1995). Another feature of the ambiguity perspective is that it assumes that “organizations have a *problematic technology* in that their technology is not properly understood” (Bush, 1995, p. 112). It is not clear how products are the result of their activities.

After testing several models of organizational structure in 42 U.S. colleges and universities, Cohen and March (1986) concluded that a college or university can best be described as “organized anarchy” (pp. 2-3); which does not denote a bad organization or an unorganized one, though “...they do make it a problem to describe, understand, and lead” (p. 3). An organized anarchy represents those organizations that show evidence of some general properties such as: (a) *problematic goals*, characterized by a wide collection of shifting ideas instead of a rational structure; (b) *unclear technology*, where organizational processes are not understood, and products are the results of trial-and-error procedures; and (c) *fluid participation*, where people inside the organization dedicate different and irregular amount of time to their tasks, and where the boundaries of the organization are unclear and continually changing (Cohen & March, 1986).

Ambiguity theorists argue that organizations are internally fragmented, which means that individuals inside the organization form groups with common values and goals (Weick, 1976). The organizational structure is seen as problematic. Because not all groups within the structure have specific duties and rights, the environment is more turbulent (Noble & Pym, 1970).

The Ambiguity perspective is more oriented to client-serving organizations (Enderud, 1980). It emphasizes the idea of decentralization. In order to improve the decision-making process, decentralization will help to assign decision-making processes to subunits or individuals (Weick, 1976). There is an emphasis on unplanned decisions. Other perspectives suggest that solutions come from an evaluation or logic process, but when there are not agreed-upon goals, decisions do not have clear focus (Bell, 1980).

Because of the assumptions of uncertainty, turbulence, and unpredictability as common factors in organizations, the ambiguity perspective also presents major limitations. For example it is difficult to adjust the ambiguity perspective with the common structure and process. Although there is an emphasis on unplanned decisions, people seek to agree because of common sense (Bush, 1995). This perspective exaggerates the degree of uncertainty. Even though ambiguity, turbulence, and uncertainty exist, people are expected to behave in accordance with their common sense (Baldrige et al., 1995). This perspective is not appropriate for any institution during periods of stability. Finally, other perspectives at least offer a minimum of guidance to leaders; the ambiguity perspective does not. A summary of the ambiguity perspective on leadership, under the leader, follower, organization, and task premises is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

**Summary of the Ambiguity Perspective on Leadership under the Leader, Follower,  
Organization, and Task Premises**

Perspective	Common Premise	Description
Ambiguity	Leader	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent interacts with staff members and teachers, based on tactical maneuvers and unobtrusive management. Also, whenever he/she describes ambiguity situations to be common in his/her institution. In addition, they may manifest the existence of ambiguity of power, as the result of a hard-to-measure situation, due to an unclear situation of leader's power.
	Follower	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent considers that the leader-follower relationship is based on unpredictable settings and anarchic situations. Also, whenever any decisions reached are the results of a complex process of interactions.
	Organization	Situations and/or comments made by the superintendent where exist a continuous climate of uncertainty with an increased sensitiveness of external demands. Also, whenever any major official activity could be directly affected by the actions of external entities such as board and community members.
	Task	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent shows that the tasks defined are the results of unpredictable decisions, totally unrelated to organizational goals. Also, whenever institutional goals seem to be unclear, which will result in a difficulty for assessing future institutional actions.

### Cultural or Symbolic Perspectives

These perspectives emphasize the informal aspects of organizations, focusing on people's beliefs, values, and perceptions, assuming that the central focus of leadership ought to be the commitments and capacities of organizational members (e.g. Bolman & Deal, 1997; Bush, 1995; Leithwood & Duke, 1998; Morgan, 1997; O'Neill, 1994;). Some major features of cultural perspectives follow. First, "these perspectives focus on *values* and *beliefs* of members of organizations" (Bush, 1995,

p. 131); each person behaves and understands other people's behaviors based on their own ideas and values and preferences.

Norms and meanings are essential factors in cultural perspectives; personal meanings and norms held by an individual can be transformed into group meanings and norms, to finally become organizational norms or culture (Bolman & Deal, 1997). The presence of rituals and ceremonies are common factors in cultural perspectives. Heroes and heroines are accepted figures in cultural perspectives. These heroes or heroines are the best example of the embodiment of organizational values and beliefs (Bolman & Deal, 1997).

Leithwood and Duke (1998) argued that authority and influence are not necessarily linked to those occupying formal administrative positions. Rather, "...power is attributed by organization members to whomever is able to inspire their commitment to collective aspirations, and the desire for personal and collective mastery of the capacities needed to accomplish such aspirations" (p. 4).

Although cultural perspectives reinforce the human factor in organizations, some limitations are present. First, ethical dilemmas can come with the "imposition" from leaders of new organizational culture; organizational culture can be the result of a leader's beliefs, values, and behaviors, and not a common, agreed culture (Morgan, 1997). In the cultural perspective, it is assumed that the leader is responsible for creating and implanting an organizational culture. Finally, the primary focus on people's beliefs, values, and perceptions might jeopardize other organizational elements (Hoyle, 1986). A summary of the cultural or symbolic perspective on



leadership, under the leader, follower, organization, and task premises is presented in Table 7.

**Table 7**

**Summary of the Cultural or Symbolic Perspective on Leadership under the Leader, Follower, Organization, and Task Premises**

Perspective	Common Premise	Description
Cultural or Symbolic	Leader	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent seems to be representing an institutional symbol, with the role of defining the institutional culture. Also, where he/she plays a role of successful professional, who also communicates the institutional values and beliefs, inside and outside the institution.
	Follower	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent reflects that the leader-follower relationship is based on rationalism, considering values and belief as a vital element of their culture manifestation.
	Organization	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent emphasizes the importance of the external entities, with whom he/she shares values and believes. Also, whenever a superintendent recognizes that board members as well as community members become the source of values and beliefs which shape the institutional culture.
	Task	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent considers that the development of goals and tasks are consistent with the values and beliefs of the institution. Also, when the superintendent agrees that many official goals are interpreted through particular aspirations of individuals inside the institution.

The above mentioned perspectives are just one facet of leadership. The leaders' levels of experience also play a key role in how they make decisions and lead organizations. The following section describes various studies of leaders' experience.

### Experienced and Novice Leaders

On a daily basis, superintendents deal with a wider range of issues than principals and teachers do. Based on this, the present qualitative study explored leadership characteristics of six experienced and six novice superintendents. In addition, since it is possible that educational leaders are not very explicit about the multiple-perspectives they hold on leadership, the study also investigated their tacit knowledge and reflection-in-action (Argyris & Schön, 1996; Schön, 1983, 1987) as to how to integrate the multiple-perspectives on leadership. This last subject is explored in detail in the next section.

Several studies considering novice and expert professionals have been made with physicists (Chi, Feltovich, & Glaser, 1980), pilots (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1980, 1985), nurses (Benner, 1982, 1983, 1984; Benner & Tanner, 1987; Tanner, Padrick, Westfall & Putzier, 1987), physicians (Groen & Patel, 1988; Patel, & Groen, 1991), radiologists (Lesgold, Robinson, Feltovich, Glaser, Lopfer, & Wang, 1988), trainers (Swanson & Flakman, 1997), teachers (Cleary & Groer, 1994; Kremer-Hayon, 1991), environmental educators (Tudor, 1992), counselors (Etringer, Hillerbrand, & Claiborn, 1995), judges (Lawrence, 1988), English students (Peskin, 1998), and Navy personnel (Randel & Pugh, 1996).

Some of the preceding studies, for example with nurses and pilots, have indicated that novice professionals tend to administer their practices with rule-oriented behaviors (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1985; Benner, 1982, 1984; Benner & Tanner, 1987). However, with physicists, the studies have shown that “experts initially apply

abstract physics principles to approach and solve a problem representation, whereas novices base their representation and approaches on the problem's literal features" (Chi, Feltovich, & Glaser, 1980, p. 121).

As a result of the literature review concerning experts and novices, different characteristics for each of these groups have been found. For example, for experts those characteristics are the following: (a) the experts are seen as persons who perceive large meaningful patterns in their domain (Glaser & Chi, 1988); (b) they have special skills and knowledge acquired through experience rather than inherent talent (Ericsson & Charness, 1994); (c) when facing a problem, usually experts construct a rational illustration that both defines and constrains the task, and then in a short moment they solve the problem (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993; Chi, et al., 1988; Ericsson & Smith, 1991; Stemberg & Horvath, 1995).

On the other hand, the main characteristics for novices are the following: (a) they are seen as beginners, or those people whose performances "lack the speed, accuracy and efficiency of the expert" (Green & Gilhooly, 1992, p. 46); and (b) because of their lack of expertise, novice will follow the rules they have learned in previous preparation or training activities (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1985; Benner, 1982, 1984; Benner & Tanner, 1987). In summary, most of the studies have shown that "experts either use the same or less information than novices to make their decisions, but that the information they focus upon is different" (Lamond & Farnell, 1998, p. 281).

By looking into what experienced superintendents know and what strategies they use regarding leadership concepts and approaches (that novice superintendents

do not know and do not use) this study has made evident the differences between experienced and novice superintendents' approaches to leadership. Also, this study helped to identify and recognize those elements underlying each leadership approach used by all the superintendents.

### **Tacit Knowledge and Reflection-in-Action**

Tacit knowledge, as defined by Reber (1993), is a "base as doubly refractory to consciousness, the knower being incapable of explaining what was known to others but similarly incapable of explicating it to himself or herself" (p. 118). This knowledge "is action-oriented knowledge acquired without the direct help of others that allows individuals to adapt, select, and shape their environments in ways that enable them to achieve their goals" (Nestor-Baker & Hoy, 2001, p. 86).

Review of the literature shows that earlier studies on tacit knowledge, mainly philosophical investigations, were carried out by Wittgenstein, Husserl, Putman, and most significantly, Michael Polanyi (Reber, 1993). More contemporary contributions on understanding tacit knowledge have also been made in areas such as management (Argyris, 1990, 1993; Argyris & Schön, 1996; Nelson & Winter, 1977; & Hatsopoulos & Hatsopoulos, 1999), teaching (Torff, 1999; Sternberg, 1999), sales (Wagner, Sujana, Sujana, Rashotte, & Stenberg, 1999; & Gregory, 1999), law (Marchant & Robinson, 1999; & Spaeth, 1999), the military (Ulmer, 1999; Sternberg et al., 1995; & Horvath et al., 1999), medicine (Patel, Groen, & Norman, 1991; Cimino, 1999; & Patel, Arocha, & Kaufman, 1999), and school superintendency (Nestor-Baker, & Hoy, 2001).

Several problems faced on a daily basis are commonly resolved by knowing “how” rather than knowing “that” (Nestor-Baker & Hoy, 2001). This ability for resolving practical problems is what Williams (1991) calls practical intelligence, or the basic ability leading the capacity to gain tacit knowledge, which involves interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and insights into goal achievements. In addition, most of the real-life success is the result of the capacity to inhibit an instinctive adjustment without formal instruction, and even without recognition (Wagner & Sternberg, 1985, 1986).

Horvath et al. (1994a, 1994b), have presented three broad features of tacit knowledge that describes it as: (a) procedural in structure, (b) related to goal achievement, and (c) obtained with minimal help from others. When facing real-world environments, tacit knowledge takes place, which involves decision making under certain conditions and time pressures, characterized by a conjunction of multiples factors. Tacit knowledge constitutes a critical factor for development of professional expertise (Patel, Arocha, & Kaufman, 1999). In addition, Allison and Allison (1993) suggested that there is an implicit knowledge acquired in practice and an explicit knowledge achieved in formal training; both types of knowledge are truly important for understanding such a complex role of the implicit and explicit knowledge in experts. Moreover, the work of Johnson (1996), Glass (1992), and Glass, Björk, and Brunner (2000) reported that the success of superintendents may be related to acquisition and utilization of tacit knowledge. Furthermore, Sternberg’s idea (1995) regarding practical intelligence is “that underlying successful

performance in many real-world tasks is tacit knowledge of a kind never explicitly taught and in many instances never verbalized” (p. 269).

A most recent study on school superintendents’ tacit knowledge (Nestor-Baker & Hoy, 2001) considers a group of reputationally successful superintendents and a group of typical superintendents, and shows that “...the overall picture is of a profession heavily focused on interpersonal relationships and reliant on people skills for goal achievement. There is a strong connotation of involvement with external constituencies as well as with employees” (p.99). In addition, Nestor-Baker and Hoy (2001) report that both groups shared eleven out of the twenty-one tacit knowledge categories. Furthermore, the major findings for the groups of reputationally successful and the group of typical superintendents are as follows:

The reputationally successful superintendents tend to exhibit greater attention to the authority of the position and to specific goal agreement between board and superintendent, while giving less attention to process of subordinate inclusion and to maintaining low-conflict operations with staff. Additionally, the reputationally successful superintendent is less likely to be involved in the minutiae of daily operations and more likely to be involved in building the overall performance capacities of the organizations.

The focus of the typical superintendent appears to be directed more toward staff than toward the office of the superintendent. The typical superintendent is more likely to place relationships with employees as a high priority and more likely to evince concern over the effects of nonrenewal on administrators. Processes of shared decision making may be more important to these superintendents than the decision arising from the process. (Nestor-Baker & Hoy, 2001, p. 117).

In their work, regarding superintendents’ tacit knowledge, Nestor-Baker and Hoy (2001) state, “... superintendents have an integrated perspective, encompassing

large amounts of interpersonal tacit knowledge and lesser amounts of intrapersonal and organizational tacit knowledge” (p. 121).

Based on the foregoing findings, it is valid to conclude that the nature of tacit knowledge is procedural knowledge, which leads actions but is not accessible for introspection. It is gained mostly from experience in situations that the leader expects he/she will experience again, in which the tacit knowledge will be required later, and its use often results in highly successful implementation of actions. While executing those intelligent actions, the know-how expertise demonstrated is what Schön (1983, 1987) and most recently Argyris and Schön (1996) call *knowing-in-action*. This is the ability for reflection-in-action, which questions “the assumptional structure of knowing-in-action” (Schön, 1983, p. 28). Moreover, this capacity is expressed by skilled practitioners often thinking about what they are doing while they are doing it in unique and uncertain situations (Schön 1983, 1987).

What separates it from other kinds of reflections is that reflection-in-action conveys an instant meaning for action (Schön, 1983, 1987). This ability of reflection-in-action allows practitioners to formulate and criticize their action strategies and their ways of framing the problems. Therefore, this study examined the superintendents’ tacit knowledge and reflection-in-action particularly on leadership’s concept and its integration into a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership. The superintendents’ tacit knowledge has been identified and analyzed between experienced and novice groups, and among all superintendents as a whole.

Finally, the main purpose of this chapter was to review, analyze, and summarize the literature on leadership perspectives, differences between novice and

experts, as well as tacit knowledge, knowing-in-action, and reflection-in-action. The procedure followed in this study, while integrating the foregoing outline, is explained in detail in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The present study, as was introduced in chapter one, has two main theoretical components. First, a system of perspectives on leadership, and second, the assumptions that lie beneath those perspectives including the assumptions about leader, follower, organization, and task.

The purpose of this study was to inquire into whether different groups of educational leaders have different patterns in taking multiple perspectives on leadership. Twelve superintendents in the Michigan area were interviewed. The approach of inquiry followed by this study was qualitative. Data collection techniques, such as interviews, thinking-aloud, and journals, were used.

#### The Qualitative Study

As presented by Creswell (1998), qualitative research is “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem” (p. 15). Moreover, Marshall and Rossman (1999) proposed the idea that typical formats for qualitative research include three sections: *introduction, discussion of related literature, and research design and methods*. The overall design of this study has followed the mentioned format.

In qualitative research, any manipulation of research outcomes in order to make the process more “naturalistic” rather than “rationalistic” should be avoided

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Also, Creswell (1997) stated, “The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15). Here, the researcher becomes the instrument, which with the help of the research questions, looks into patterns of unexpected in addition to anticipated relationships (Stake, 1995). Moreover, using qualitative methods, as Polkinghorne (1991) has suggested, is valuable in the “generation of categories for understanding human phenomena and the investigation of the interpretation and meaning that people give to events they experience” (p. 112).

For the purpose of this qualitative study, initial contacts with potential participants were made in order to explain the rationale of the study. Also, it was explained to the superintendents what was expected from them as participants, as well as how the information was going to be collected and analyzed. In addition, specific information regarding consent and confidentiality were submitted and discussed with the participants.

### Research Questions

Through this study, the researcher addressed the following sets of questions:

(a) How do superintendents conceive the concept of leadership? Do their perceptions include common or uncommon elements within their definitions? (b) How do superintendents practice leadership? Does their practice contain the elements of a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership? (c) What is the relationship between superintendents’ conception and practice of leadership? What kinds of tacit knowledge do superintendents bring when dealing with multi-faceted leadership

issues? What kind of knowing- and reflecting-in-action do the superintendents display when dealing with complicated leadership issues? If superintendents demonstrate the approach to integrate multiple perspectives on leadership, what is the mechanism or scheme with which they do so? (d) Are there any differences between the experienced and novice superintendents as to the findings related to questions (a) to (c)?

### Sampling Strategy

In the educational system, superintendents face complicated and multi-dimensional leadership challenges on a daily basis. The change of form and texture of educational reform (Murphy, 1990) requires educational leaders to support, assist, and share leadership roles with teachers, parents, and school boards (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Crowson, 1987). All these and other issues make superintendents ideal informants for the study. The researcher originally sent out a total of twenty-six letters of invitations.

The superintendents were asked to participate in a voluntary manner. Also, it was carefully explained to participants their right to withdraw themselves from the study. Thirteen of these letters were sent to experienced and well-regarded superintendents who received the Superintendent of the Year Award in the state of Michigan and who have been in a superintendency position for at least fifteen years. These superintendents were identified with information provided from the Michigan Association of School Administrators (MASA). At the same time, the researcher sent out another thirteen letters of invitations to different superintendents in the state of

Michigan. The last thirteen superintendents were randomly selected from a MASA list.

Out of the thirteen initial experienced superintendents, six accepted to participate in the study. Sadly for the researcher and this study, four of these superintendents later decided to withdraw themselves from the study justifying their decisions on personal and professional reasons. In addition, another experienced superintendent claimed impossibility to participate in the study due to sickness. Furthermore, the last experienced superintendent expressed impossibility to keep collaborating in this study. Although these six experienced and well-regarded superintendents could not participate in the study, the researcher sought the participation of another group of experienced superintendents from the state of Michigan. A second round of twelve invitations was sent out.

After receiving the letters of agreement from those superintendents who decided to participate in the study, the researcher contacted them by phone to inquire into the number of years they have been working as superintendents in their school districts. This question was asked in order to be able to differentiate them, either as novice or experienced superintendents.

The criterion used to differentiate experienced versus novice superintendents was number of years of experience. All those superintendents who have been working in the same position at the same school district for less than ten years were identified as novice superintendents. Those superintendents who have been working at the same position for more than ten years were identified as experienced superintendents.

The final group of superintendents who participated in this study consisted of six novice superintendents (three female, three male), and six experienced superintendents (all male), all from the state of Michigan. In both groups of superintendents, three out of six superintendents hold doctorate degrees. Due to confidentiality issues, the superintendents' names used throughout the dissertation were pseudonyms that had been assigned to the participants for protecting their anonymity. Furthermore, any other information that could lead to the identification of the participants has been modified (e.g., names of students, teachers, staff members, and board of education members).

The purposive sample of twelve superintendents, representing Lee Shulman's strategy of best cases (Grossman, 1990), allowed the researcher to control for, to a certain extent, the leadership context and facilitated an efficient comparison of experienced and novice superintendents. Although leadership is situational (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 1996), the proposed sampling strategy controls for not only the state context (given the fact that constitutionally, public education is a state's responsibility), but to a certain extent the local and individual contexts as well. This sampling strategy also permitted the comparison of experienced and novice superintendents, a strategy that had been effective in investigating professional knowledge.

Schön (1983, 1987) and, more recently, Argyris and Schön (1996) described the tacit knowing-in-action that practitioners bring to their everyday lives; the capability for reflection-in-action through which skilled practitioners often think about what they are doing while they are doing it in situations of uncertainty,

uniqueness, and conflict; and the capability for reflecting on knowing- and reflecting-in-action, through which practitioners can formulate and criticize their action strategies and their ways of framing the problems. Through this study, practitioners' – especially experienced practitioners' – tacit knowledge of a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership was investigated.

### Data Collection

In order to increase the richness of the data, and due to the qualitative nature of this study, triangulation was used. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined triangulation as “a way to get to the finding in the first place — by seeing or hearing multiple *instances* of it from different *sources* by using different *methods* and by squaring the finding with others it needs to be square with” (p. 267). In this study, interviews, thinking-aloud, and journals were used in order to capture information regarding superintendents' approaches to leadership.

### Interviews

The original design of this study suggested carrying out three one-on-one interviews with each participant. Most superintendents preferred to reduce the number of interviews to a total of two. For this reason, two one-on-one, in-depth interviews were conducted with each superintendent between the months of September and December of 2001. All the superintendents preferred to be interviewed at their workplaces during the normal business hours. Each interview ranged from one to two-and-a-half hours in length.

All the questions asked during the interviews were open-ended question, as suggested by McCracken (1988); the superintendents would have the choice of addressing such questions in an unstructured way. For each informant, the first interview focused on (a) how their leadership theory and practice has developed over their careers and their current conceptions of leadership and (b) asking them to tell three stories of successful leadership. Also, during the first interview, the first leadership case study (See appendix A) was presented to each superintendent.

During the second one-on-one interview, a video was presented to the participants, showing how an experienced superintendent dealt with several issues in a new school district (See appendix B). After viewing the video, the researcher interviewed the participants in regard to which aspects of the superintendent's leadership struck them the most, what they agreed with, and what they would do differently. All these interviews were taped-recorded. Also, during the second interview, the second leadership case study (See appendix C) was presented to each superintendent.

These interviews were used to generate dialogue surrounding the major research questions of this study. As suggested by Worthen, Sanders, and Fitzpatrick (1997), interviews are useful when a greater depth of information is needed. Also, they suggest, "The more specific the information desired, the more structured the interview should be" (p. 380).

### Thinking-aloud

During each session, each informant was presented with one leadership case, and the method of thinking-aloud was used to collect data. The first leadership case was about a failed bond issue. A school district of about 2,000 students in a suburban/rural area tried three times in as many years to get a bond issue passed so that school buildings could be renovated and new technology and equipment purchased. However, due to a poor school-community relationship, low teachers' morale, poor performance of students' academic achievement, and parents' general dissatisfaction with the schools, the bond issues were rejected three times in a row (See appendix A). The second case was about a sudden drop in a middle school's performance on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), a mandatory, statewide, high-stakes test administered by the state for accountability purpose. The MEAP scores in a middle school had been improving from 1995 to 1998, but there was a precipitous drop in 1999. Suddenly there was an uproar in the community. The local newspaper reported the MEAP results, school board members raised the issue during the board meetings, and some parents demanded that their students be transferred to other schools in the district. The middle school was under attack and in turmoil (See appendix B).

The informants read the case of bond issue first and respond to the probe, "What would you do if you were the superintendent in the school district and why?" Informants were engaged in a thinking-aloud process as to what they would do and why. At the end of the thinking-aloud process the researcher summarized what the informants had said and posed the "why" question. The same procedure applied to the



case of the MEAP score in a middle school. The thinking-aloud technique was particularly useful and effective in investigating participants' tacit knowledge on integrating multiple perspectives on leadership.

### Journal

Given the complex and sensitive nature of a superintendent's job, it is unfeasible to shadow a superintendent for an extended period of time. Therefore, the researcher asked the superintendents to keep a journal for two weeks. Every week each superintendent recorded one leadership case from her or his job. They described the nature of the leadership issue, their own analysis of the leadership issue, the approach that they decided to take, and their reflections on the leadership approach. The superintendents were given continuing education credit hours for keeping those journals of their leadership experience.

### **Data Analysis**

The interview and thinking-aloud sessions with the informants were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. For each informant, the interview, thinking-aloud, and journal data were coded using in part the major perspectives on leadership as codes and the assumptions of each perspective based on the leader, follower, organization, and task premises as sub-codes. The layout of this coding scheme is shown in Table 1. In addition, a specific example for analyzing the assumptions underlying the structural or formal leadership perspective is shown in Table 7. All the

six coding schemes used to analyze each leadership perspective are showed in Appendix E.

The additional part of the data analysis process used the process called consensual qualitative research (CQR) (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) to study superintendents' perception and practice in relation to the multiple-perspectives approach to leadership. The CQR process involves three general areas: (a) responses to open-ended questions were divided into *domains* (i.e., participants' perception of the concept of leadership, participants' practice of leadership, and a description of the relationship between participants' perception and practice of leadership as well as a description of the knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action that participants display when dealing with complex leadership issues.); (b) *core ideas* (i.e., basic elements of the concept of leadership presented in their arguments); and (c) a *cross-analysis* (i.e., the clustering of core ideas across cases into categories) were conducted to look at consistent responses across participants arguments.

After completing the cross analysis, frequencies on (a) the common and uncommon elements found in the superintendents' conceptions of the concept of leadership; (b) their integration of the multiple-perspectives approach to leadership; and (c) superintendents' tacit knowledge, knowing-in-action, and reflection-in-action, were identified and tabulated.

Segments of the data were coded by a colleague who was unfamiliar with the study for a check on reliability, and Cohen's (1960) coefficient of agreement was 0.85. As suggested by Cohen (1960), this coefficient of "interjudge agreement... is directly interpretable as the proportion of joint judgments in which there is

agreement, after chance agreement is excluded. Its upper limit is +1.00, and its lower limit falls between zero and –1.00, depending on the distribution of judgments by the two judges.” (p. 46).

The frequency of using the perspectives and assumptions was tallied, the pattern of employing different perspectives on leadership was noted, the justification for the leadership approach was investigated, and the relationship between conception and practice of leadership was inquired into. After finishing the above process for each informant, the data were aggregated to inquire into the characteristics of the whole group as well as the comparative characteristics of the experienced and novice groups. The two-level coding scheme for analyzing the assumptions underlying the structural or formal leadership perspective is showed in Table 8.

The purpose of the empirical studies was to inquire into (a) how superintendents conceive the concept of leadership, and (b) whether or not they took a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership, and if so, how they integrated the multiple perspectives in their practice. Given the increasingly complicated and challenging environment of public education, it was hypothesized that it was more imperative to take a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership, and that experienced leaders were more likely to take a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership than their novice counterparts. This study provided empirical evidence on superintendents’ conception and practice in relationship to the multiple-perspectives approach to leadership. The general steps followed in this study during the data collection and data analysis processes are showed in Figure 1.

**Table 8**

**Two-level Coding Scheme for Analyzing the Assumptions Underlying the  
Structural or Formal Leadership Perspective**

Perspective	Common Premise	Code	Description
Formal or Structural	Leader	FPL	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent takes the role of establishing any major official objective. Also, whenever he/she thinks that the overall power of the institution resides at the apex of the pyramid, this means, in his/her position.
	Follower	FPF	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent when taking decisions with his/her administrative staff and/or teachers, shows aptitudes of rationalism*. Also, where aptitudes reflecting actions of direct support from followers take place, while communicating with any staff member or any teacher from the institution.
	Organization	FPO	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent plays a role of continuous interaction between the board and/or community members, associated to the internal decision-making process of his/her institution. Also, when an open system communicational-frame exists with these external entities, and everybody seems to be listened.
	Task	FPT	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent or any particular groups of individuals, inside the institution, define their objectives in terms of their roles within the formal structure. Also, when any task performed, is the result of objectives based on their professional roles within the institution.

\*Rationalism or rational process could be synthesized as a procedure in which any analysis of a problem follows a particular procedure (e.g., perception of the problem, analysis of the problem, formulation of alternatives, choice of solution, implementation of solution, and evaluation of effectiveness).

### Validity and Reliability

Kirk and Miller (1986) defined objectivity as “the essential basis of all good research” (p. 20). In addition, they argued that objectivity has two subcomponents: reliability and validity, where reliability is “the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research” and validity is “the degree to which the finding is interpreted in a correct way” (p. 20). Furthermore, the

simultaneous realization of as much reliability and validity as possible would enhance the objectivity of the study (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

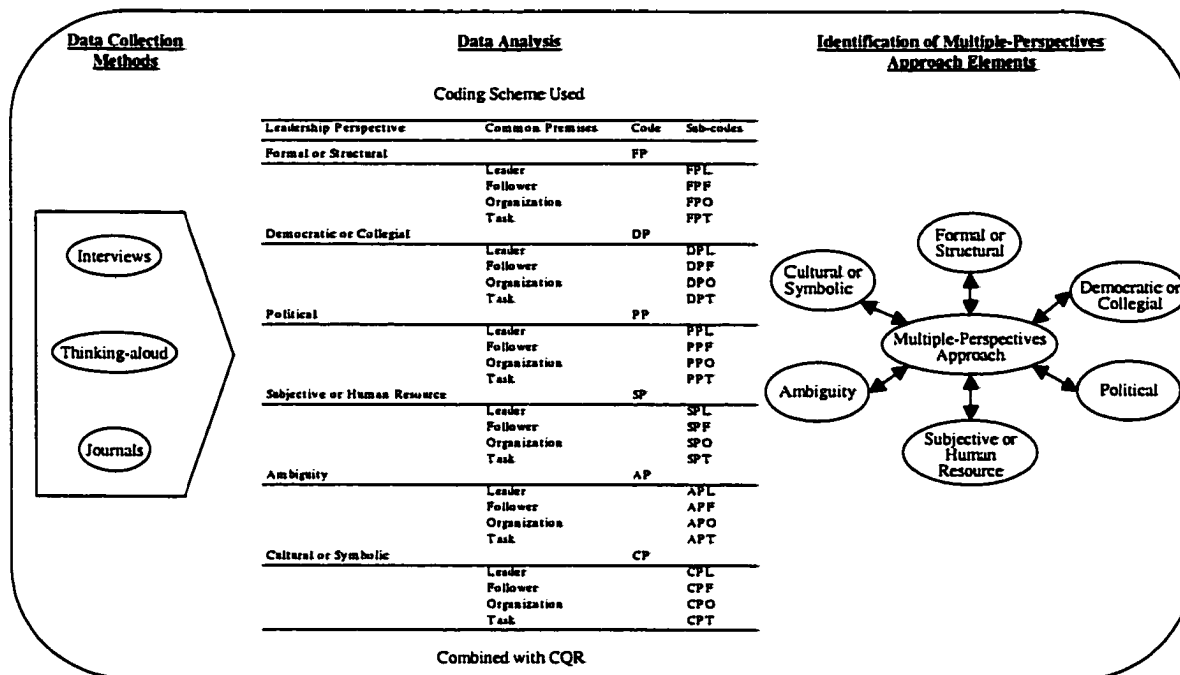


Figure 1. General steps followed during the data collection and data analysis processes

Some qualitative research authors have modified the terminology of validity and reliability to match their own perceptions. For example, Lincoln and Guba (1985) used the terms “credibility” for “internal validity,” “transferability” for “external validity,” “dependability” for “reliability,” and “confirmability” for “objectivity” (p. 300). In addition, Lather (1991) identified four types of validity including construct validity, face validity, catalytic validity, and triangulation.

Regardless of these modifications Miles and Huberman’s (1994) general definitions of validity and reliability were used in this study when addressing their

standards for the quality of conclusions. By validity, they referred to the degree to which the findings of the study make sense, and the extent to which the researchers “have an authentic portrait of what we were looking at” (p. 278). In addition, they defined reliability as the determination of “whether the process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods” (p. 278).

The following are queries, “not rules,” suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 278) to accomplish the validity and reliability issues in this study.

1. Objectivity, confirmability, or external reliability with some questions such as: (a) Are the study’s general methods and procedures described explicitly and in detail? (b) Are the conclusions explicitly linked with exhibits of condensed/displayed data? and (c) Were competing hypotheses or rival conclusions really considered? At what point in the study?
2. Reliability, dependability, or auditability with some questions such as: (a) Are the research questions clear, and are the features of the study design congruent with them? (b) Are basic paradigms and analytic constructs clearly specified? (Reliability depends, in part, on its connectedness to theory), and (c) Were coding checks made, and did they show adequate agreement?
3. Credibility, or authenticity with some questions such as: (a) Are the presented data well linked to the categories or prior or emerging theory? Do the measures reflect the constructs in play? (b) Were the conclusions considered to be accurate by original informants? If not, is there a coherent explanation for it? and (c) Were any predictions made in the study, and how accurate were they?

4. External validity, transferability, or fittingness with some questions such as:
  - (a) Do the findings include “thick descriptions” for readers to assess the potential transferability, appropriateness for their own settings?
  - (b) Are the findings congruent with, connected to, or confirmatory of prior theory?
  - (c) Does the report suggest settings where the findings could fruitfully be tested further?
5. Utilization, application, or action orientation with some questions such as:
  - (a) Are the findings intellectually and physically accessible to potential users?
  - (b) Do the actions taken actually help solve the local problem?
  - (c) Have users of findings learned or develop new capacities?

As shown in appendix D, these questions have been adapted into a checklist form, which have been used as a monitoring and guiding tool for the assessment and development of this study. Again, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), these questions are queries, “not rules.”

The researcher suggested at the beginning of this study the inclusion of a reviewer who revised, analyzed, critiqued, and suggested additional ideas, questions or criteria for the accomplishment of the validity and reliability issues in this study. One colleague was asked to become the reviewer. Because the questions listed on the checklist are “just queries,” the reviewer was encouraged to eliminate, change or incorporate pertinent questions or criteria in order to create a more extensive and refined list tailored to this study.

The reviewer carried out one review as soon as the study begun. The second review was done after the data analysis process was concluded, with the hope that all

possible changes and adjustments for accomplishing reliability and validity issues were completely and correctly made.

In order to address the validity and reliability issues, two reviews were done through this study; one at the beginning and the other at the end of the data analysis process. Another numbers of reviews, instead of only two, could also be carried out through any project's duration, which could provide both assurances regarding the validity and reliability issues as well as direction for continuous assessment, development, and improvement. Although all possible changes made to the original list suggested by Miles and Huberman were the result of an adaptation to this particular study, other researchers are encouraged to use and adapt these questions to their own particular needs.



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

The purpose of this study was to inquire into whether different groups of educational leaders have different patterns in taking multiple perspectives on leadership. In this chapter, the results of the study are presented. A description of the context in which the study was conducted is provided in the first section. Also, a description of the participants is given in the second section of the study. In addition, the general steps followed by the researcher in the data analysis process are presented in the third section. Furthermore, the participants' perceptions of the concept of leadership are described in the fourth section. Moreover, a description of the participants' practice of leadership is offered in the fifth section. Finally, a description of the relationship between participants' perception and practice of leadership as well as a description of the knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action that participants display when dealing with complex leadership issues is provided in the last section. Quotes from participants' interviews as well as journals are incorporated throughout the chapter.

#### **Context of the Study**

This study offers a snapshot of the leadership perceptions and practices of school superintendents in the state of Michigan. The interviews were conducted

between the months of September and December of 2001. All the superintendents preferred to be interviewed at their workplaces.

The data collection methods used in this study were interviews, thinking-aloud, and journals. A summary of the data collection methods and the accompanying techniques used in this study is showed in Table 9.

Table 9  
Summary of Data Collection Methods

Data Collection Method	Technique
Interview	Open-ended questions
Thinking-aloud	Case Studies Video
Journal	Analysis and Reflection

### Participants

This study was designed to gather information from twelve school district superintendents from the state of Michigan. Six of those superintendents, who have been working in the same position at the same school district for less than 10 years, were identified as novice superintendents. The other six of those superintendents, who have been working at the same position for over ten years, were identified as experienced superintendents. The length of time served as superintendents for the twelve participants ranged from less than one year to twenty-three years. Among the six novice superintendents, three were female. Also, among this group, three superintendents hold doctorate degrees. Among the group of experienced superintendents, all were male, and three of them hold doctorate degrees as well. A

summary of those characteristics for the purposive sample used in this study is showed in Table 10.

Due to confidentiality issues, general demographic and background information is provided only in the group summary table. Also, the names used in this chapter and through the dissertation are pseudonyms that had been assigned to the participants for protecting their anonymity. In addition, any other information that can lead to the identification of the participants has been modified (e.g., names of students, teachers, staff members, and board of education members).

**Table 10**  
**Summary of the Purposive Sample Characteristics**

<b>Characteristics of the Purposive Sample</b>			
	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Years in Superintendency</b>	<b>Highest Degree</b>
<b>Novice Superintendent</b>			
#1	Male	5	Doctorate
#2	Male	7	Masters
#3	Female	2	Doctorate
#4	Male	1	Masters
#5	Female	8	Masters
#6	Female	1	Doctorate
<b>Experienced Superintendent</b>			
#1	Male	12	Masters
#2	Male	10	Doctorate
#3	Male	11	Masters
#4	Male	19	Doctorate
#5	Male	10	Doctorate
#6	Male	23	Masters

### Procedure

After the data collection process was completed, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. A coding scheme was developed using the major perspectives

on leadership as codes, and the assumptions (leader, follower, organization, and task) for each perspective as sub-codes. Then, the researcher separated the data transcribed by methods (interviews, thinking-aloud, and journals). Within each method, the researcher looked across the information of all the twelve participants, in order to identify and recognize those elements underlying each leadership approach used by them. A second rater, unfamiliar with the study as well as with the backgrounds of the participants, used the same coding scheme with part of the data. Cohen's (1960) inter-rater reliability was 0.85, and disagreements regarding the coding process were resolved through discussion.

After identifying and recognizing the leadership elements across participants' arguments, the researcher separated the data by groups (novice and experienced). The final step in the data analysis was to look into what experienced superintendents knew and what strategies they used regarding leadership concept and approaches, that novice superintendents did not know and did not use.

### **Superintendents' Perception of the Concept of Leadership**

#### **Novice Superintendents**

In order to inquire into how superintendents perceive the concept of leadership and if their perceptions include common or uncommon elements, participants were asked, "With your own words, how do you define leadership?" The answers from the novice superintendents group to this question were as follows:

**[Leadership is] a vision that's translated into action. Looking down the road to see what things are possible and trying to formulate plans and resources to accomplish goals. (Novice #1, p. 3)**

I guess in its most basic definition, it's difficult to be a leader without followers...I would say it's an ability to move something or someone from where they are to some other point. (Novice #2, p. 2)

I think leadership is the ability to get the work done, that transforms a school system and doing it through and with people. (Novice #3, p. 2)

To be a leader, you have to be visible.... You have to be a person who's willing to make decisions based upon the best information; you have to solicit information all the time. The fool is the leader who makes decisions on their own. That's crazy. (Novice #4, p. 2)

Generation. What I mean by that is if you see it in action, it's the generation of other leaders. Leadership is capacity building, it's generating, it's like spontaneous combustion. Okay. But lots of it going on all over the place. And if I were to have a visual metaphor for an organization with lots of distributive leadership, you'd see lots of little combustion, you know, firing off all over the place; it'd be kind of like fireworks and sparklers. That would be my visual metaphor. (Novice #5, p. 5)

Leadership takes on a life of its own, depending on where you are, and who you're with. But I think one of the things that drive me to want to share what I think I've learned over the years, is to provide opportunities to people around me. And to create opportunities for people to continue to learn, in ways that in my position now will move the organization forward. I think leadership can be defined in a variety of ways.... I think leadership is simply providing people opportunities to lead in their own way. To learn, to take charge of their own life if you will, and being strategic about how you create those opportunities for people. (Novice #6, p. 2)

In summary, the novice superintendents' group defined leadership as a set of collective actions with proactive behaviors, in which the leader seeks to gather the best information available, shares responsibilities, and provides opportunities to others, with the final goal of moving the organization forward by getting the work done.

Analysis of the novice interviews' transcripts provide evidence that there were both similar and different elements among those superintendents' leadership definitions. All the elements identified as common among superintendents' definitions of leadership were not necessarily stated using the same words. Instead, superintendents used several phrases that illuminated common meanings. A summary of the most important leadership elements for the novice superintendents is showed in table 11.

**Table 11**  
**Frequency of The Most Important Leadership Elements for The Novice**  
**Superintendents**

Elements	Data Collection Methods		
	Interview	Thinking-aloud	Journal
Common	Gathering inputs from others (3)	Sharing responsibilities (1)	Accomplish goals (2)
	Giving opportunities to others (2)	Goal achievement (2)	
	Accomplishing goals (2)		
	Sharing responsibilities (2)		
Uncommon	Honesty (1)	Integrity (1)	Organizational skills (1)
	Flexibility (1)	Persistency (1)	Compassion (1)
	Tenacity (1)		
	Empathy (1)		
	Being approachable (1)		
	Purpose (1)		
	Facilitation and coaching skills (1)		
	Knowledge (1)		
	Intuition (1)		
	Situational leadership (1)		
	Being healthy (1)		
	Capacity building (1)		
	Acknowledgement (1)		

Those elements that were found to be similar among the novice superintendents were to gather information from others, to share responsibilities, to give opportunities to others, and to accomplish goals. On the other hand, the

following elements – often included in the definition of leadership – were not mentioned in common among the novice superintendents: honesty, integrity, knowledge, flexibility, tenacity, persistence, intuition, situational leadership, organization skills, empathy, compassion, being healthy, being approachable, capacity building, acknowledgement, purpose, and facilitation and coaching skills. A graphical representation of those common and uncommon elements found in the novice superintendents' leadership definitions is showed in figure 2.

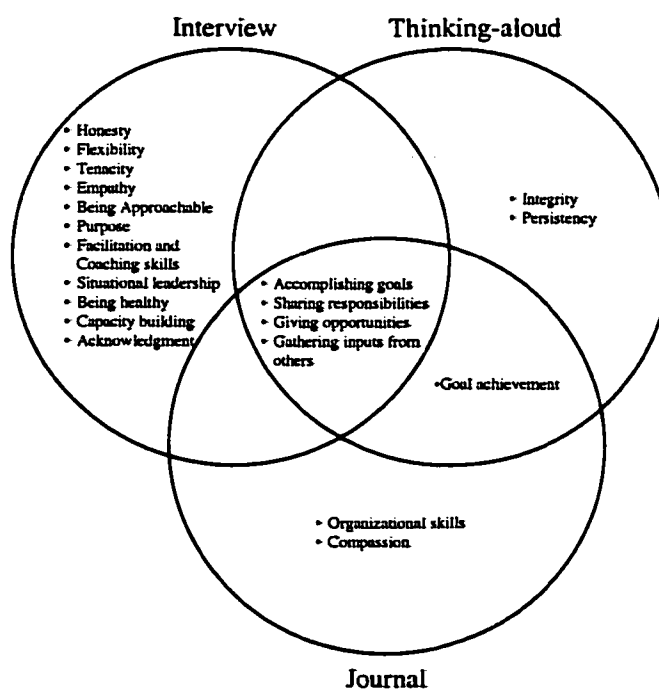


Figure 2. Graphical representation of the elements for novice superintendents

### Experienced Superintendents

When the experienced superintendents were asked to give a general definition of leadership, their answers were as follows:

I think leadership begins by setting the right example... I think leadership is finding strengths in other people and letting them do the job, and not trying to micro-manage everything.... And I think leadership is also a factor of its communication and honesty.... And I think also leadership involves, you've got to be there to take the blame when things go wrong, but when things go right, you've got to distribute the credit. (Experienced #1, p. 2)

I think that leadership is a condition. It's a take-charge, take responsibility attitude.... I think leaders have to be visionary. I think they have to set the tone.... So, I guess if I had to characterize it in one word, a leader is someone who takes charge of something and moves it forward. (Experienced #2, p. 3)

I guess it has something to do with wanting to move a particular entity such as the school district in this case, in a particular direction. I think that the leader sets the tone for the school district in terms of, you know, how we're going to go about that. I think effective leadership deals with utilizing the resources that are available to you. (Experienced #3, p. 3)

[Leadership is] that living the passion of your beliefs, and it's bringing optimism into the organization, in such a way that people can together achieve more than they could individually. (Experienced #4, p. 3)

Well leadership is the ability to create change. To create quality products, to grow, to allow the organization to grow, to perform its mission, to perform its function. The leader is the person that makes that happen.... And the role of the leader is to define the direction, the goals, the aims of the organization. (Experienced #5, p. 8)

Well, it is the old thing that you can only lead people who want to follow.... [Leadership] is behaving in a way that others wish to follow in a positive manner. (Experienced #6, p. 3)

In summary, the group of experienced superintendents defined leadership as an action of collective participation; where the leader uses the right resources, and suggests the path to follow, while moving followers forward in order to accomplish the organization's vision and mission.



An analysis of the transcripts of the experienced group provided evidence that there were both common and uncommon elements among those superintendents' leadership definitions. Those elements that were found to be common among the experienced superintendents were (a) to create a vision and make it happen, (b) to empower others, (c) to move the organization forward, and (d) to indicate the course to take. A summary of those most important leadership elements for the experienced superintendents is showed in Table 12.

**Table 12**  
**Frequency of The Most Important Leadership Elements for The Experienced Superintendents**

Elements	Data Collection Methods		
	Interview	Thinking-aloud	Journal
Common	Suggesting the path to follow (3) Moving the organization forward (2) Creating a vision and making it happens (2)	Moving the organization forward (1)	Empowering others (2)
Uncommon	Setting the right examples (1) Communicating honestly (1) Having charisma and a friendly personality (1) Having organizational skills (1) Taking risks (1) Being competent (1)	Being intelligent and knowledgeable (1) Acknowledging participation (1)	Getting commitments (1)

On the other hand, the following elements – often included in the definition of leadership – were not mentioned in common among the experienced superintendents: setting the right examples, communicating honestly, acknowledging participation, taking risks, getting commitments, having organizational skills, being intelligent and knowledgeable, and being competent. A graphical representation of those common

and uncommon elements found in the experienced superintendents' leadership definitions is showed in Figure 3.

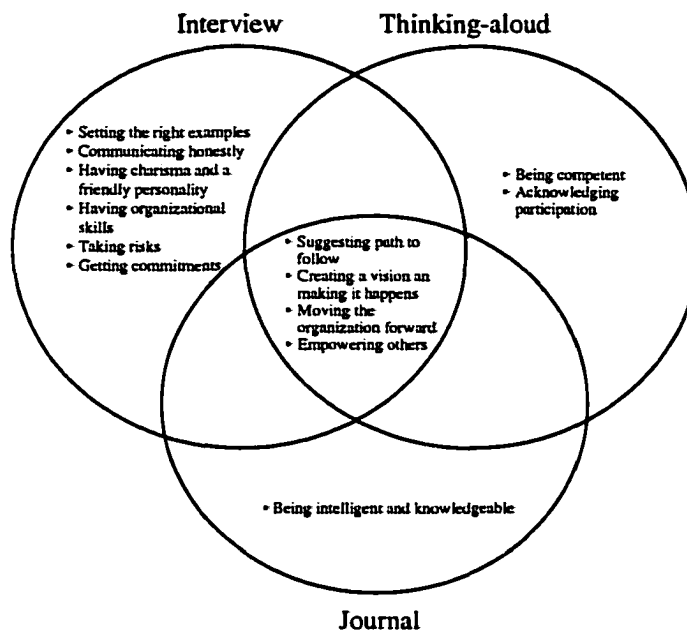


Figure 3. Graphical representation of the elements for experienced superintendents

### Summary of Novice and Experienced Superintendents' Perceptions of the Concept of Leadership

Analysis of the data suggests that the novice superintendents perceive a leader as someone who searches for information and inputs from others while sharing responsibilities. These superintendents agreed that before making any decision, it is imperative to involve others and gather the most information available regarding the issue being analyzed. In contrast, the experienced superintendents would normally indicate or suggest the course to follow, paying more attention to the final result than to others' involvement in the decision-making process. In addition, the experienced

superintendent creates a common vision, with a final goal of making it happen, in order to move the organization forward.

The novice superintendents recognized the value of task accomplishment as the common and shared goal of those involved in the school system, while the experienced superintendents recognized the value of the overall accomplishment of the organization's vision and mission. A summary of those elements presented in both groups of superintendents' arguments is showed in Figure 4.

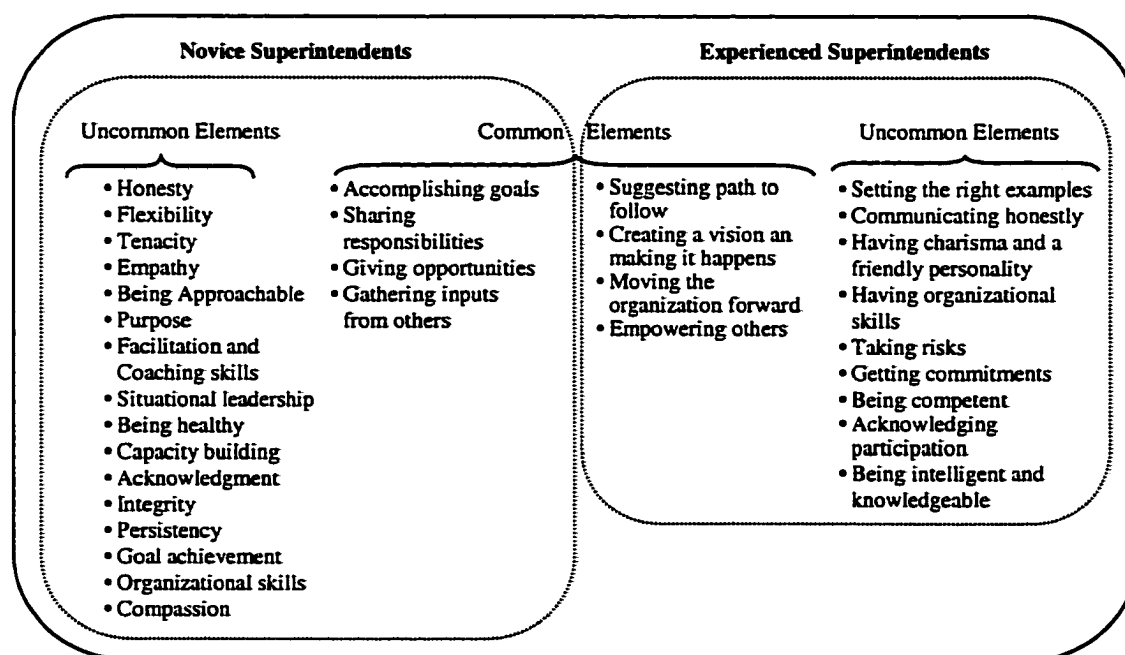


Figure 4. Summary of elements presented in superintendent's argument

## Superintendents' Practice of Leadership

### Novice Superintendents

Novice Superintendent No. 1. The interviews, case studies, as well as the journals, have yielded many stories about superintendents' perception and practice of leadership. Some of the novice superintendents, when giving examples of leadership issues from their own lives, presented some elements that characterize formal or structural perspectives on leadership. A situation in which the superintendent plays a role of continuous interaction between the board and the community members or any external entity associated to the internal decision-making process will reveal the existence of an element from the formal or structural perspective. For example, the novice superintendent #1 needed to deal with a construction firm that was not completing the work under the required period previously agreed upon. In this case, the superintended argued:

I mean some of the project is completed.... So they've done some of the work so they should be entitled to some of the money. Well right now they've been paid about half of what they've proposed, but the board doesn't feel that the total amount is fair or equitable based on the size of the project. So we're negotiating. I'm trying to keep the project on track. And it's been a difficult assignment. See, leadership skills are knowledge about the project, tenacity, trying to keep people working together, what is in the best interests of the district. If we terminate that relationship, some of our board members might feel good that they protected taxpayers' money. But it's like shooting yourself in the foot. In the long run we still have to have an architectural firm. So we'd have to hire someone else to do that. And ultimately, we would not be saving any money. It's my opinion we would be spending more than what we have currently.... So as a leader, I'm trying to make these connections fit together, to bring those together, to finish the project. It's not ideal. (Novice #1, p. 6)

Also, when the same superintendent was asked if he followed a particular pattern when dealing with leadership issues, he said:

Well, normally, I try to resolve problems. I try to find out what the problem statement is. I try to find out who's been involved, what the current status is, the implications of the problem. Try to bring resources together to formulate ideas, how to address the problem. And then the final part would be implementation of that. Whatever the strategies might be to address the problem. And then over time making sure, go back, try to evaluate, assess, whether or not the right decisions were made or are modifications or adjustments necessary for continued improvement or a problem resolution.... Implement strategies if it's been a problem, it may not be a problem at all. It might be dealing with some other kind of issue. But essentially, it would be a systematic way of trying to deal with problems or issues at hand. (Novice #1, p. 12)

In this case, the superintendent has shown a rational way of resolving problems. Whenever he perceives a problem, he analyzes it, looks for inputs, formulates alternatives, makes a choice for a solution, implements that choice, and finally evaluates the effectiveness of his act. In addition, when the first case study was showed to him, regarding Mr. Johnson's situation, the superintendent recognized the existence and importance of the board and the community associated with the internal decision-making process. Again, this reflects the presence of some elements from the formal or structural leadership perspective. This superintendent argues:

So I would suggest, one, that he brings in somebody from outside to try to help build that relationship and to identify roles and responsibilities. Additionally I think it would be helpful for Mr. Johnson to meet individually with school board members, particularly those that are being most critical about student performance, or pointing fingers as to why the bond issue isn't passing.... I would question, "What role has the board taken on with respect to the bond proposals themselves? What active approach have they used?" It might be helpful after [phase three] to bring in an outside assessment team, to take a look at, one, conducting their own survey, apart from what the school's done before, to try to assess the state of schools. What are the problem areas? And what are the perceived needs of the community with respect to the bond

issue itself. Is it too great? Does it not address some of the things that other people feel are important in a bond? (Novice #1, p. 12)

Through the various meetings, it would ultimately be helpful to Mr. Johnson to formulate a long-term strategic plan for increasing student performance, building relationships with board members, the community and the faculty and staff. School-community relations is critical for success. (Novice #1, p. 13)

There are lots of issues Mr. Johnson needs to address. But in order to do so he's got to have an audience that's going to allow him to take the necessary steps to at least communicate what his thoughts are in terms of that vision. (Novice #1, p. 14)

In another moment of the interview, the same superintendent showed some characteristics from the democratic or collegial perspective. In this case, the issued addressed was regarding bringing new personnel to the school district. The main characteristic presented was the encouragement for a balanced decision-making process, playing a role of acknowledgement of the experiences and expertise of his staff members.

But I expect our principals to be good leaders, ones that can grow, or ones that have an interest in being an instructional leader as well.... I have three principals that are doing an outstanding job. And that's not to say mistakes aren't made, but I still support them, and mistakes are miniscule. They take initiative to bring about positive change in kids and that's what I'm looking for. We have a whole different team right now. I don't know what the future has in store. I've got one more year after this on my contract. But a lot of good things have happened under these changes.... And it's nice when I talk about the team, office team here, of three people...but we've worked hard to build that trust, work together for common purposes, and I think we've done a pretty good job.... That relationship has improved and it's easier for me to get things accomplished, to get things done in a timely fashion. (Novice #1, p. 11)

What would I do differently? ... I would do it differently in that I would work with staff and let staff decide that a coordinating council was the best way to coordinate district efforts. I think that would emerge, it would take a little longer, but it would emerge from that. I would certainly not use the word "I" or "my" when speaking to people, especially when you're trying to get people to follow a vision, whether it's a shared vision or a person's individual vision. There's no team building in that, and he talked about building staff and administration's trust, but he did not appear to be a team player, so I would look for opportunities to build team rather than to just tell people what to do. (Novice #2, p. 12)

Although the information from the data reveals that this superintendent most of the time uses a more democratic/collegial approach by taking only suggested general decisions in his school district; there are also some elements present that relate him to the cultural or symbolic perspective on leadership.

I hired a principal for that building. And I used a completely different approach in that. We publicized the position. I invited, I think, there were a dozen people to come in and interview with me personally, and what I did was I focused my questions around the values of our organization, and I tried to match the person to our values. I didn't want to bring anyone that didn't meet our values. That was the first step of the process, and so I narrowed the field down to three or four candidates that I felt matched our organizational values. (Novice #2, p. 6).

While still commenting on the hiring process of a new staff member, the superintendent uses again some elements from a more formal point of view rather than a cultural point of view.

And then formed a committee of parents and teachers and fellow administrators to meet with these candidates and to give me their individual opinions about the candidates.... And then I made, based on everyone's input to me, and my own feelings, and those of the individuals, then made the selection. To me I think that when we bring in people to an organization, we have the potential of having to live with them through their retirement and so it's very important that the right people come in. (Novice #2, p. 6)

Later, the superintendent once more uses some elements that reflect the cultural or symbolic leadership theory.

And I think that process for me anyway, helped me feel more comfortable that the culture that's trying to be established in the organization will remain here and will become part and enrich that culture that's already here. So that's, I think, that's certainly a way that we can show. (Novice #2, p. 7)

Novice Superintendent No. 3. Information from the data have revealed that another novice superintendent argues that, when a decision has to be made, it is important to consider others' points of view; but the decision-making process depends on the situation in which she is involved. In this case, there is a combination of elements from the structural or formal perspective and the democratic or collegial perspective. From the formal or structural perspective's point of view, the leader may ask for inputs but he or she finally will make the decision. On the other hand, from the democratic or collegial perspective's point of view, the leader encourages and supports others to make the final decision.

I believe that you have to be very situational in how you lead. Sometimes you have to be the person that makes the decision, sometimes you have to ask people to give you advice and make the decision. And sometimes you have to say, "Here's what we need to do. How will it be done?" So it's a variety of different degrees and different types of decision-making, and you have to be smart enough to know when to use what type. (Novice #3, p. 3)

When it was asked to the same superintendent, if she has any particular pattern or procedure when dealing with leadership issues, she said:

Yes. I have, I always ask what type of decision needs to be made. Do I need to make it, do I need input, or is it a decision for somebody else to make. So the first thing in my mind I go through, is okay, what kind of decision is this. What's the best way to do decide? And then once I



decide, more often than not it's not something I just routinely say, "This is what we're going to do." I get those people together and have a discussion around it, and if I'm ultimately going to be the one to decide, I usually say, "I want your input, it's really critical but I'm the one that's going to decide, so please give me your best input." If it's the third kind of a decision where, we just have to make a decision and involve people, then I say, "You decide, this is what needs to be done. How you get there is up to you, let me know." So, you know, that's the kind of thing that I do, is try to figure out what kind of decision needs to be made. (Novice #3, p. 6)

Although for this superintendent, information from the data revealed that some elements from the formal or structural perspective exist, most of the time she approaches leadership issues based in a more democratic or collegial point of view.

So everything falls into that category, and we have work groups that cross all different positions and everything depending on the kind of decision that needs to be made. I am not a person that will not meet anybody. I'll meet with everybody. I'm very inclusive, and I believe that whatever the position, the ideas are there, so we really base our groups on the decisions that need to be made, and we heavily involve teachers in our decisions. So that's basically how it's done. It's complicated. (Novice #3, p. 6)

When the first case study was presented to this superintendent, and it was asked, "From a leadership perspective, what would you do if your were Mr. Johnson, to improve the school district?" she said:

What he should really be doing is getting out in his schools, getting out in his community and getting as much information about what people believe are the problems, and he has to do this through a very careful planning process. He may even want to bring in someone to facilitate a planning process, to create a vision for the school district and to move this school district forward.... So he has to bring together a group of representative board members, community members and teachers, and engage in a process for planning, and establishes what the priorities are and really include in that some marketing and some communication and some public relations to change the image of this school district, so he has to put a system in place so people can start talking about the schools.... You can take what I think is a pretty despondent situation

and transform it very quickly if you engage the community and the teachers. (Novice #3, p. 7)

Later, when the video was showed to this superintendent, and the question, “What did strike you the most?” was asked, she used again some elements from the democratic or collegial leadership perspective. She said:

He’s talking about his goals, and then he’s talking about a participation, and it doesn’t match. So that’s what strikes me first. The second thing that I truly agree with, having a coordinating council and doing visitation, but as a new superintendent, what you’re trying to do is establish your goals on the basis of the input and the information that you have from your community teachers and principals and the larger community and not necessarily dictate them. It doesn’t matter what your leadership style is, who you are, or whatever, I can promise you that people will do what they want to do. And your job is to move them in the direction that’s best for the entire district. So to say what your goals are before you get the input, to me, I really disagree with that. (Novice #3, p. 9)

Finally, the superintendent was asked, “What would you do differently and why?” She presented again some elements from the democratic or collegial perspective, where the community, the staff members, and the teachers give their inputs for any particular decision that has to be made.

If he had described the strategic planning process where the greater community was involved, and where the teachers were involved and where his leadership team, the principals, were heavily involved, he wouldn’t have that anxiety. He went and established those separately. I agree that the goals are fine. I agree with the processes of having a coordinating council and so on, I disagree with this conflicting style of what he says in his leadership. (Novice #3, p. 10)

Novice Superintendent No. 4. Information from the data have revealed that, when addressing the issue of the decision-making process, the novice superintendent #4 pointed out that the leader per se should not make the decision; this should come

from a participative process, in which all the voices have to be heard. It is clear that this superintendent emphasizes the use of some elements of the democratic or collegial leadership perspective.

The fool is the leader who makes decisions on their own. That's crazy. We meet every two weeks with our full administrative cabinet. We meet with the executive group, which is a representative of every building, once a month. Why? We want to hear their issues. We want to throw out topics to let them voice their thoughts on it. Okay? So, yeah, I think that old adage is if you're going to lead the band, you've got to be out front. You can't be in the rear, watching, but you can't get so far out front, that the band can't see you. So I'm a hands-on type of person, yet I don't want to run these buildings, I expect the principals to run the buildings. Keep me posted, call me if you need help. (Novice #4, p. 2)

In addition, when this superintendent was asked how to improve the school district if he were Mr. Johnson, he concentrated on creating a committee formed by parents and teachers, in order to address school district issues.

I would go to the board and ask permission to form a citizen-teacher committee to study the district and to make recommendations about where the district should be heading.... Step back, bring in the power of the community, you may put together a 25-member, with teachers, and community members and board members, have them [the committee members] come in and say, "Okay, let's review and study this community's facilities, and technology." And then I would, your job as a superintendent would be to facilitate, to gather information, to help them do their research. The point being is, bring the power of the community in, make, have them do that research to lead to a final decision and reckoning with the board of education. (Novice #4, p. 6)

Furthermore, when the second case study was shown to this superintendent, one more time, he used some elements from the democratic or collegial leadership perspective. In this case, the researcher asked the superintendent how he would deal with the local newspaper, the superintendent answered:

I try to foster a relationship with them and I try to give them example.... So, again I think you foster a relationship with the press, they're going to be there no matter what. So don't fight them. Bring them in. Feed them information. (Novice #4, p. 10)

Novice Superintendent No. 5. Information from the data has revealed that the novice superintendent #5, since the first interview, showed several elements of the democratic or collegial leadership perspective. She referred to the school district in which she works as a conjunction of balanced leadership positions.

Because we work with what I would call a distributed leadership model here, there are a lot of work teams and work groups that are out there, engaged in specific projects, specific improvement initiatives. (Novice #5, p. 5)

When the interview focused on her leadership episodes, this superintendent mentioned one case regarding a district-wide building program. This program was carried out in her school district. The main focus of this superintendent was on a participatory process in which all members worked in a collaborative way; this superintendent clearly emphasized the word "we" instead of "I".

We recruited people from a very broad cross-section of our community to assess all of the information we had amassed over a five-year curriculum review process. About the things that were either contributing to a good solid educational program or the things that were getting in the way. We took those folks in buses and took them all around, and let them see for themselves not only what was going on in their schools, but what was going on in schools all around them. We let them spend some time with good pieces of succinct literature that talked about the direction of curriculum and learning was going. We let them grapple with those things. We let them argue with each other. We let them grapple with priorities. We let them grapple with the best way to package their recommendations. (Novice #5, p. 6)

She clearly promotes the participation of parents, and people from the community in general, her role being one of a catalyst for the process.

Then they went out and they did the work, the hard work of going out and selling it to the community.... They were people who represented parents from all levels, they were community leaders, they were members of the clergy, they were former board members. They were everybody. It was pretty much an inclusive. And my role in the whole thing was their facilitator and their cheerleader. I just kept them moving. (Novice #5, p. 7)

When the same superintendent was asked concerning a second case in which she played a significant leadership role, she talked about starting her actual job as superintendent. In this case, elements such as the encouragement and participation of staff and teachers in the decision-making process, which are elements from the democratic or collegial leadership perspective, were part of her story.

I cultivated a team of teaching staff leaders who became what I call the instructional team. And they became the on-site, hands-on extension of the work that I had been doing as assistant superintendent.... The real accomplishment there was their ability to take leadership without a power position. Actually go out and create meaningful leadership venues for themselves and for their work as a team.... Through this whole evolution, we've continued to spin-off more autonomous, high-functioning teams whether they be two or three people working on a particular instructional problem, or a pod of teachers in the middle school, or a committee charged with certain process. (Novice #5, p. 7)

This superintendent also described her school district as one with "collective leadership." She said, "I like to look for people who have high energy and high initiative. But we also have to look for people who can combine their own energies and initiatives with others, who aren't threatened by sharing the story, sharing the vision, letting it evolve. Who are comfortable with evolution as a constant." This, once more, reflects the use of some elements from the democratic or collegial leadership perspective. In addition, when the researcher asked her to define collective leadership, she answered:

You know how you are, you put a bunch of kids in a circle in a gym class, and they toss the ball to one another, and sometimes you don't know when you're going to get the ball, so you're always in a state of readiness. The point is to throw the ball in such a way that even though somebody might, they don't know it's going to come to them, they have every chance of catching it. That's what I'm talking about. Distributive leadership. That people are asked to engage in their own personal development in such a way that they can become comfortable with taking the ball when they need to. They can feel supported by the others, when it's their turn to take the ball. They can feel empowered to choose and make decisions about where to throw the ball next. And they feel that the responsibility for that ball not dropping to the ground is shared with others. (Novice #5, p. 8)

Finally, this superintendent addressed the second case study regarding the parents' involvement, by saying, "You got to start getting them in studies where their rubbing elbows with principals, teachers, and students. Bringing them together around again these doable things. Find the achievable goals, short term, find the doable things, start bringing people together, don't worry about getting the whole world on board." And concerning the case with the local newspaper, she said, "So one of the things that I would do if I was her, is spend a lot of time with the press, trying to teach them about trend lines, instead of year-to-year data." In summary, this superintendent has reflected through several scenarios, the use of several elements from only one perspective, the democratic or collegial leadership perspective.

Novice Superintendent No. 6. Information from the data has revealed that one of the leadership episodes that the sixth novice superintendent described dealt with the common vision around the instructional technology plan of her district. She wants the board members to "have a full understanding of how our spending was going to go. They've already approved the budget, but I don't want them to do it blindly."

Also, this superintendent addressed the need for a promotion of an environment in which the individuals can share their thoughts in an open way, which represents one of the elements from the democratic or collegial leadership perspective. In addition, when she was asked if she followed a particular pattern or procedure to follow when dealing with leadership issues, she said, “Well, in any situation, the one thing that I pretty much do, I think, in every single situation is a lot of listening first,” which also represents the use of an element from the democratic or collegial leadership perspective. Furthermore, the same superintendent added in this conversation:

Seek first to understand before wanting to be understood. So I think when it comes to decision making, when it comes to working with people, that particularly in the early part of my administration, I have to do a lot of listening, because there’s a tremendous amount of history here. And while that may not drive my decisions, I have to honor the environment in which I find myself. And so I think listening, being able to have conversation with people that indicates that I am listening, that I can feed back to them what they’ve said. I invite input. (Novice #6, p. 6)

When the subject of responsibility was addressed, the superintendent showed her notion of being very clear of the opportunities that every member in her community has.

... being able to find those people who sometimes have not been asked to do the work. And giving them the opportunity to do the work, and not just walking away from them. But doing kind of the check-in, and not – to some extent, it’s certainly monitoring, – it’s not looking over people’s shoulders.... So, I have to make sure that I check in, and that I learn the people. I learn who has what strengths and define opportunities for them and to move forward with those strengths. (Novice #6, p. 6)

When the video of Dr. Wilson’s case was shown to this superintendent, and she was asked, “With what would you agree or disagree, and why?” she answered, “I didn’t

find his approach to be as collaborative as he professed it to be.” In addition, she added, “So if that’s a leadership style, that I would respond to, I would say I don’t like that. I wouldn’t put the staff development around technology. I would say my investment was going to be in structural technology and finding ways that technology can support and extend learning with kids” (Novice #6, p. 12). In summary, as the superintendent #5, this superintendent has also reflected through several scenarios, the use of numerous elements from only one perspective, the democratic or collegial leadership perspective.

#### Summary of Novice Superintendents’ Practice of Leadership

The data have revealed that all of the six novice superintendents used in their arguments some elements from the democratic or collegial perspective of leadership. On the other hand, only three of these novice superintendents used some elements from the formal or structural perspective on leadership. In addition, only one superintendent used in his arguments some elements from the cultural or symbolic perspective of leadership. Furthermore, none of the novice superintendents used any elements from the political, subjective or human resources, or the ambiguity perspective of leadership in their arguments. A summary of the elements used by each of these novice superintendents is showed in Table 13.



Table 13

Frequency of The Perspectives on Leadership in Each Novice Superintendents'

Argument across Methods Used

Superintendent	Method Used	Perspectives of Leadership					Ambiguity	Cultural or Symbolic
		Formal or Structural	Democratic or Collegial	Political	Subjective or Human Resources			
#1	Interview	2	2					
	Thinking-aloud	1						
	Journal	1	1					
#2	Interview	1	2					2
	Thinking-aloud		2					
	Journal		1					
#3	Interview	1	2					
	Thinking-aloud		3					
	Journal		1					
#4	Interview		3					
	Thinking-aloud		2					
	Journal		1					
#5	Interview		4					
	Thinking-aloud		2					
	Journal		1					
#6	Interview		2					
	Thinking-aloud		2					
	Journal		1					

**Experienced Superintendents**

**Experienced Superintendent No. 1.** Information from the data revealed that several experienced superintendents, throughout their arguments, used a combination of elements that represent formal or structural, democratic or collegial, and political perspectives of leadership. For example, information from the data revealed that the first experienced superintendent clearly emphasized the important role that all possible participants play in the decision-making process in his school district. The encouragement of a complete participation of staff, teachers, and community members was his main goal. This is a clear characteristic of the democratic or

collegial perspective of leadership. This superintendent addressed the subject of one particular bond issue that was approved by the board members, indicating that if it were not for the community and staff involvement in the process, the bond issue would hardly be approved by the board members.

Well, to begin with, people were involved. The community and the teachers were involved right from the planning. They were right there. They were part of the planning. As a result, they thought it was their idea. It wasn't my idea or the school board's idea, it was their idea. So once they determined that, then it was easy for them to work for it, because it was their idea.... And along with that, not only providing the support, you've got to make sure that the right key people are in charge. So in other words, once you get the volunteers to serve on the committee, and you give them the authority to do what they need to do, you need to make sure that you've got the right people in the right spot .... And I think that's why we were successful with it.  
(Experienced #1, p. 3)

When Dr. Wilson's case study was shown to this superintendent, he reflected the use of some of the elements that represent the political perspective as well as the structural or formal perspective of leadership. When addressing the issue of the relationship between the board members and Dr. Wilson, this superintendent suggested "suiting the board members' needs as imperative" in order to have the continuity in his contract. This action not only reflected the acknowledgment of an external entity with some political preferences but also reflected how that entity may influence the decision-making process favoring their own needs.

Because the school board doesn't know, always, really, what the goals are. They're just community volunteers that spend a couple hours a month in a school district. But they're the ones he's got to please if he wants his contract renewed. (Experienced #1, p. 11)

Finally, the same superintendent, when addressing the question, "What would you do differently and why?" suggested that he would prefer an open and participatory

discussion of priorities. His focus would be on listening to everybody's ideas and suggestions first, showing an aptitude of rationalism, but after all, his own ideas and objectives should be heard as well. His argument clearly indicates the use of some elements from the formal or structural leadership perspective.

I think I'd want to start out with that coordinating council first and find, start figuring out what other people, what the staff sees as the needs and problems are. And if I could identify two or three issues that they saw as needs, and commit to those, then, it would be a little easier to push the schools' agenda, and my agenda. You've got to show that you've listened to them so that when you've got you're agenda, they'll listen to you. (Experienced #1, p. 11)

Experienced Superintendent No. 2. The data have also revealed that the experienced superintendent #2 demonstrated in his arguments the use of some elements from the formal or structural perspective, the democratic or collegial perspective, as well as the political perspective on leadership. In some cases, this superintendent encouraged the participation of staff members and teachers, highlighting his role as mentor by giving advice and setting the right direction for the participants. When he was asked if he had any particular pattern or procedure to follow when dealing with leadership issues, he emphasized the use of some elements from the democratic or collegial leadership perspective; he answered:

I like to empower my administrators to do their own thing. I don't like interfering. I will give them direction. I let them try to run their own buildings, their own departments. I oversee those kinds of things, I set the direction for the district, and then turn them loose to do the nuts and bolts kinds of things. I try not to interfere but I'm there to give them advice if they need advice or they ask for it, or if I think they do I will steer them back in the right direction. But I do not operate by intimidation, I do not, I operate more by cooperation, collaboration. (Experienced #2, p. 8)

In a larger district I think you can stand back as an orchestra conductor and you can conduct various parts of the orchestra out there and not have to go play the instrument. But in a small district, a lot of times, a superintendent gets very close to having to play the instrument at some point. I use some site-based things with my administrators and I try not to interfere with the buildings, but I do keep a close eye on what's going on and orchestrate things, you know and I suspect that's what he's attempting to do here. (Experienced #2, p. 14)

On the other hand, the same superintendent mentioned that his relationship with the board members was open and participatory, but when the decision has to be made, he was the one who made it. Although he considers the board as an external influential force in the decision-making process – which clearly represents an element from the formal or structural leadership perspective— this superintendent recognizes the power he has as the person at the apex of the pyramid due to his position.

It's a team decision, ultimately it's mine. I try to involve my school board, and I'm part of that team. My school board is very much a part of the team and as am I, and I work very closely with my board president to try to develop that team leadership but I like to sit in administrative meetings, take a lot of input in from my administrators, pros and cons and things, but ultimately the end decision's mine, and they know that. (Experienced #2, p. 9)

Sometimes, in order to accomplish some particular goals for the district, this superintendent agreed that it was necessary to build coalitions where negotiation activities were part of the interaction among participants. This action clearly reflects the use of some elements from the political leadership perspective. In addition, this superintendent recognized the presence and interests that an external group had on the school district decision-making process. He approached this group, by searching for a person who was a “very believable, trustworthy person.”

The campaign started and it was a very targeted campaign where people said they called their friends, their neighbors, their relatives,

and talked to them one on one.... People are fired up right now, they are looking forward, chomping at the bit to see ground broken and see buildings going up and stuff. So it's an exciting time for our district and I'm convinced the process was successful because the board of education, and the administration stayed out of it. All the way through. We did not get involved, we turned it over to the citizen's group and we turned it over to our construction management firm, we trusted them to get the job done, the experts, so to speak, and we were successful. (Experienced #2, p. 8)

Experienced Superintendent No. 3. The data have revealed that experienced superintendent #3 only demonstrated in his arguments several elements from the democratic or collegial perspective on leadership. This superintendent encouraged participation from staff and teachers for a balanced involvement in the decision-making process. When he explained his point of view regarding teamwork, he said, "I really believe that sometimes the best ideas are created by a group of people rather than one single individual." In addition, this superintendent argued that by setting a good educational environment or "tone within the district" the teacher turnover rates and support staff have decreased considerably in the last years. His argument is based on the teamwork approach they have used lately in his school district.

Our approach has been one, generally to try to get together, talk about it, and see if we can find a solution that we both can live with. I think I've been an integral part of trying to make that happen. I can tell you in this district at one time, that's not what we did.... I've been a strong advocate of trying to create an atmosphere that people like to work in, because I really believe that if they have an atmosphere they like to work in, that that's when they're going to do their best job. And if our commitment is to try to make the best educational environment for kids, that means that everybody's doing their best job and ultimately the people who get the most of that are the kids. (Experienced #3, p. 9)

Later in another interview, when the question, “Do you have any particular pattern or procedure that you follow when dealing with leadership issues?” was asked to this superintendent, he answered:

Generally I get, we, when we have an issue at the school, if the issue allows us to have time to deal with it, I oftentimes bring that issue together with the administrative staff first, perhaps the board in some cases, but usually the staff together first. We talk about the issue. I try to listen very carefully to what they have to say.... I think that their collective wisdom is better than mine by itself. And so, we’ll address issues that are going on in the school, and generally that results in us deciding which direction we want to take.... Initially we’ll talk about it as a group of administrators.... We again further discuss that and then eventually we go to the board with a recommendation. The board generally accepts our recommendations, not always, but generally does. (Experienced #3, p. 9)

Experienced Superintendent No. 4. Analysis of the data suggests that experienced superintendent #4 demonstrated in his arguments some elements from the formal or structural perspective on leadership most of the time; although in other arguments, this superintendent presented some elements from the democratic or collegial perspective on leadership as well.

When the first case study was presented to this superintendent, he recognized the importance that the continuous interaction between the board members, community members, staff members, and parents play in the decision-making process. He encouraged the use of an open-system communication frame with any external entity, where everybody listens.

If I were him, I would recognize that you will never get any support for a bond issue or technology expenditures in the district until you improve the relations in the school district. So first things first. One thing that leaders need is social capital, and new superintendents need to build it quickly. Inexperienced superintendents need to recognize

that they need it. Now social capital is spending time with the leaders and influencers in the school district. The opinion makers. The mavens who can change people's minds or direct people's thoughts. You need to connect with them and build a relationship, and that's that social capital. You are investing in your community. (Experienced #4, p. 9)

When the second case study was presented to this superintendent, he, as in the first case study, recognized the importance that the continuous interaction between the board members, community members, and staff members have in the decision-making process. He clearly separated the different roles that each entity plays in the organizational structure as well as with the board members; this separation of roles clearly indicated the presence and use of an element from the formal or structural leadership perspective. In addition, in regards of the sudden drops of the MEAP scores the superintendent said:

I would get the people together, the people who were concerned. But first of all I would get together with my administrative staff. I'd tell the board, just relax. Let me solve this problem for you, and I need a few days to think about it and I will meet with the press and I will put together a plan for your review, but let me get together with the administrative staff. We will develop a plan to respond to this... but here's our plan and how we're going to deal with it. And here's a role you can play to help us as a school system, improve these results. (Experienced #4, p. 13)

When this superintendent addressed the topic of the leadership concept, he described his ideal institutional structure as one that seems horizontal, where all staff members and teachers have a balanced involvement in the institutional decision-making process. For example, he said, "Every individual in the organization can provide leadership to the organization in a given set of circumstances." This "balanced involvement" illuminates the presence of some elements from the democratic or

collegial leadership perspective. Additionally, this superintendent recognized the importance of teachers in the instructional process.

The technical delivery of instruction to an individual student in a classroom, that's a very complex process. I need to listen to the teachers. They need to lead the organization around those kinds of issues.... We try to put authority to make decisions in the hands of the people who need it. (Experienced #4, p. 4)

When an institutional issue regarding parents and staff involvement took place in his school district, this superintendent recognized how important it was to listen to all parents' and staffs' concerns. He said, "I learned the hard way."

What I learned the hard way, was, and this is kind of a corny adage, but when emotions and facts collide, emotions always win. And so you better be mindful. And what I learned from that was I need to be mindful of the emotional side of things first. And deal with the science later. Because the heart will drive the head, more than the head will drive the heart. Particularly when it comes to parents and their concerns about the personal safety of their children in school. When it comes to employees and their concern about their personal safety in the workplace.... With the parents, with the staff, listen to their concerns, and not talk to them like a scientist. Talk to them a person with compassion and empathy, who understands their concerns and I [wouldn't] even deal with the scientific end of things. I would, tell me how you feel, tell me how you feel, how can we help. (Experienced #4, pp. 6,7)

Experienced Superintendent No. 5. Analysis of the data suggests that experienced superintendent #5 demonstrated in his arguments some elements from the formal or structural perspective on leadership most of the time; although in other arguments, this superintendent presented some elements from the political perspective on leadership as well.

This superintendent emphasized the continuous interaction that it has to exist among teachers, staff members, community members, and himself. He is always



supporting an open communication-frame with any external entity, where everybody listens to others' opinions. The recognition of different entities across the educational system indicates the presence of some elements from the formal or structural leadership perspective. Although his goals were attained accordingly with the institutional goals, this superintendent recognized his role as the precursor of the idea. In addition, he also considered the role of others who have participated in that process.

We would be the staff, and my leadership team. And I pretty much; I had this vision about the way education ought to be...but in order to do that you have to have a vision about what your education is about in terms of being a leader. The vision is every student. See I believe every superintendent needs to have a vision. And that vision needs to be articulated. Every student coming to school healthy and ready to learn. Every student coming to a safe school environment. Both physically and emotionally safe, where students feel comfortable. (Experienced #5, pp. 10,11)

In another segment of the interview, the superintendent recognized his main role when he was addressing the issue of the drop-out-rate for a junior high school in which he played the leadership role.

The staffs then got together and started to deal with how can we improve student performance, student discipline and all of that. "What's wrong with our school?" kind of things. They decided to develop a house program....so I fixed the junior high. (Experienced #5, p. 11)

Furthermore, the same superintendent clearly demonstrated to have and use a pattern or rational procedure whenever he needed to deal with any leadership issue, which also indicates the presence of some elements from the formal or structural leadership perspective. His answer was, "Most of the time I like to analyze the data...and then discuss the options, and, use as much time as I can...and get as much input as I can

possibly get and then go forward.” However, after planning a process, based on his point of view, he would move into the next step of asking for inputs from other sources.

You need to have, first of all, a vision. And you need to have a plan. And maybe this means that you need to go into some type of planning process, with the community and staff, and say, “What’s wrong with this situation.”... I mean you need to have a plan. Once you’ve developed that plan. However you develop it, and you start to involve the stakeholders, for lack of a better term. The business community, the school staff, the unions, the board of education, the teachers, maybe some of the older students. (Experienced #5, pp. 12,13)

Finally, this superintendent saw the necessity of building coalitions, by strategically involving community members in the process of getting a bond issue passed. He argued that the first step is getting as many people involved as possible. Secondly these people will feel ownership on what has been attained. Finally, the board members will have no other option other than go for a bond issue. By building coalitions, this superintendent clearly uses some elements from the political leadership perspective.

And you get a strategic plan, and the strategic plan may say we need more technology, we need to renovate our buildings, we need to change this curriculum, it may say a lot of different things, and then you develop a way to implement that plan. And, gain more people, involved in it. So now, hopefully, you’ve got buy-in from the community... And then, as a result of the plan, the outcome of the plan. The board has no choice but to say, “We want to put a bond issue on the ballot, to improve the facilities or to buy technology,” because you’ve got all these citizens engaged in the process. They put the issue on the ballot, and you gain more citizen support, and guess what? It passed. But if you don’t start out here, determining the first part of it, and then moving through this process over time, it is just another money issue. (Experienced #5, p. 13)

Experienced Superintendent No. 6. Information from the data revealed that experienced superintendent #6 demonstrated in his arguments some elements from the formal or structural perspective, the democratic or collegial perspective, as well as some elements from the political perspective on leadership.

This superintendent mentioned that, in his second year as superintendent, a decision was needed related to an instruction coordinator position, and he took the leadership role and made the decision by himself. This is a situation that reflected some elements of the formal or structural perspective of leadership, where the final decision is made based upon the hierarchic position hold by the person inside the organization, in this case, the superintendent. The final result of that decision was negative for the school district, although he recognized it.

I had the idea or the goal of saying we've got to get more instruction organized, and so what happened the second year I was here then is that we took a reading, remedial reading teacher, and I established at that point the coordinator of instruction, in our building only. And that was that. We didn't have a lot of money so that meant we had to get a teacher freed up.... Pretty much that was a unilateral decision on my part to say we're going to attack this sucker, and I mean, this wasn't done brazenly but I mean, they knew where I was going because I told them. (Experienced #6, p. 5,6)

However, the same superintendent also presented in his arguments some elements from the democratic or collegial perspective of leadership. He encouraged the creation of systems of committees with his staff members and teachers, supporting the notion of equal opportunities and agreements by consensus. When it was asked what he would do differently from Dr. Wilson's case study, he answered:

I believe leaders are paid to be leaders, and we're not paid to be headcounters. Now we could facilitate, he's basically taking the position that he's for change and he wants to facilitate change, and it

occurs through site-based [management]. And, that's one way of doing it. I don't subscribe to that as much as he does. I believe that the model that we use is that when we have a decision to be made, there's a committee of teachers that get together, working with the instructional supervisor and the principal, so it's basically a team effort. (Experienced #6, p. 19)

Finally, this superintendent has also showed some elements from the political perspective of leadership. He recognized the importance of external forces, and among the possible actions needed to get things done, he emphasized presence and communication. In one opportunity he said:

But I did all the coffees when I first became superintendent. I probably did thirty coffees in homes. I'd get invited to homes and they'd invite, you know, people, get out there, touch the flesh, you know, do all this stuff, you know, again you're on the line. Because you're right there, they're either going to be with you again or they're going to be thinking you ain't so much you know. I was able, I think, to gain people's confidence. (Experienced #6, p. 11)

In another opportunity, this one related to the board members, the superintendent recognized the alliance that he and the board members had. His argument described an element of the political perspective of leadership, where the superintendent, in this case, plays a role of control over the decision-making process.

I got big pockets; I've got all the board members in my pocket.... Okay, and so my usual thing with new board members is, say, how long do you think it will before [you're] here, in my pocket. You know, because the board members we have are, I mean, it's almost funny to think that some of the people that we've had on the board with their personalities could be in anybody's pocket, because they're really stronger than any of them. (Experienced #6, p. 11)

### Summary of Experienced Superintendents' Practice of Leadership

Information from the data has revealed that among the six experienced superintendents, five of them have used in their arguments some elements from the

formal or structural perspective of leadership. Five of these superintendents also used in their arguments some elements from the democratic or collegial perspective of leadership. In addition, four of these experienced superintendents used some elements from the political perspective of leadership. Furthermore, none of the experienced superintendents used in their arguments any elements from the subjective or human resources, the ambiguity, or the cultural or symbolic perspective of leadership. A summary of the elements used by each of these experienced superintendents is showed in Table 14.

#### Summary of Novice and Experienced Superintendents' Practice of Leadership

Analysis of the novice superintendents' interview transcripts provided evidence that there is a higher frequent use of the elements from the democratic or collegial perspective on leadership. Five of the six novice superintendents, when discussing Mr. Johnson's issue of failing to pass the bond issue for renovating the buildings and updating the technology resources and equipment in his school district, addressed the situation by only using elements from the democratic or collegial perspective of leadership. Also, all the novice superintendents have used, through the different scenarios presented to them in this study, different elements from the democratic or collegial leadership perspective. In addition, only three superintendents showed to use some elements from the formal or structural leadership perspective. Furthermore, none of the novice superintendents used at all any element from the political, subjective or human resources, and ambiguity leadership perspectives.

**Table 14**  
**Frequency of The Perspectives on Leadership Presented in Experienced**  
**Superintendents' Argument Across Methods Used**

Superintendent	Method Used	Perspectives of Leadership					
		Formal or Structural	Democratic or Collegial	Political	Subjective or Human Resources	Ambiguity	Cultural or Symbolic
#1	Interview		1				
	Thinking-aloud	1	1	1			
	Journal	1	1				
#2	Interview	1	2	1			
	Thinking-aloud						
	Journal	1	1				
#3	Interview		1				
	Thinking-aloud		1				
	Journal		1				
#4	Interview		2				
	Thinking-aloud	2					
	Journal	1	1				
#5	Interview	3					
	Thinking-aloud			1			
	Journal	1		1			
#6	Interview	1		1			
	Thinking-aloud		1	1			
	Journal	1		1			

However, only superintendent #2 used some of the elements from the cultural or symbolic leadership perspective when he was being interviewed. Although three of the novice superintendents have addressed some issues by using some elements from the formal or structural, and one of these superintendent the cultural or symbolic leadership perspectives, the frequency with which all of the six novice superintendents used the elements from the democratic or collegial leadership perspective was, in fact, much higher. In general, it can be concluded that the novice superintendents addressed every single situation or scenario, by using more frequently several elements from the democratic or collegial leadership perspective.

Information from the data revealed that although five experienced superintendents used some elements from the democratic or collegial perspective of leadership, they would normally use a combination of elements from other perspectives at the same time or in the same situation. In this study, only the experienced superintendent #3 used elements from the democratic or collegial perspective all the time; while the other five superintendents used a combination of elements from the formal or structural, the democratic or collegial, and the political perspectives of leadership. Also, only five of the experienced superintendents used in their arguments some elements from the formal or structural leadership perspective. Furthermore, within this group of superintendents, only four of them used some elements from the political leadership perspective. Moreover, the frequency with which the experienced superintendents used several elements from the formal or structural, democratic or collegial, and the political leadership perspective, through the different scenarios, is much higher than those showed by the novice superintendents.

In summary, both the novice and the experienced superintendents first analyzed and clearly identified the situation in which they were involved. However, where the practice of leadership were concerned, the experienced superintendents differed from the novice superintendents in using a combination of elements from three different leadership perspectives, rather than addressing the issue with one particular perspective of leadership most of their times.

### Superintendents' Knowledge:

#### Tacit, Knowing-in-Action, and Reflection-in-Action

When facing real-world situations, tacit knowledge takes place, which involves decision making under certain conditions and time pressures, characterized by a conjunction of multiples factors. Tacit knowledge, as defined by Reber (1993), is a “base as doubly refractory to consciousness, the knower being incapable of explaining what was known to others but similarly incapable of explicating it to himself or herself” (p. 118). Similarly, Nestor-Baker and Hoy (2001) assert that several problems faced on a daily basis are commonly resolved by knowing “how” (tacit knowledge) rather than knowing “that.” Tacit knowledge is accrued through reflection upon one’s actions while undertaking the actions, also called *knowing-in-action* and *reflecting-in-action* (Argyris & Schön, 1983, 1987).

Analysis of the superintendent interviews’ transcripts provided evidence which suggests that by reflecting upon their way of approaching leadership issues, the superintendents recognize an intrinsic knowledge acquired in practice, or that knowledge picked up through experience. Also, information from the data revealed that whenever a decision needed to be made, several superintendents said they might consider either looking for alternative solutions or involving more groups in the decision-making process.



### Novice Superintendents

Information from the data revealed that several novice superintendents, throughout their arguments, used a combination of elements that represent their patterns when dealing with specific leadership issues.

In order to inquire into superintendents' procedural tacit knowledge, or the procedures they take when dealing with leadership issues, participants were asked, "Do you have any particular pattern or procedure to follow when dealing with leadership issues?" The answers from the novice superintendents group to this question were as follows:

Well, normally, I try to resolve problems. Dealing with problems, I try to find out what the problem statement is. I try to find out who's been involved, who's been involved, what the current status is, the implications of the problem. Try to bring resources together to formulate ideas, how to address the problem. And then the final part would be implementation of that. Whatever the strategies might be to address the problem. And then over time making sure, go back, try to evaluate, assess, whether or not the right decisions were made or are modifications or adjustments necessary for continued improvement or a problem resolution. (Novice #1, p. 3)

To tell you the truth, normally I would say, you know, let's bring some people from the community, some teachers, some staff, to form a committee for taking decisions. Now, you know, I just trust my intuition; I take full responsibility for what I do. Of course, I involve some folks for making decisions, I listen to them, I analyze the situation, come up with some solutions, and I come again with my intuition. (Novice #2, p. 6)

Yes. I have [a pattern]. I always ask what type of decision needs to be made. Do I need to make it, do I need input, or is it a decision for somebody else to make. So the first thing in my mind I go through, is okay, "What kind of decision is this? What's the best way to do decide?"...And then once I decide, more often than not it's not something I just routinely say, "This is what we're going to do." I get those people together and have a discussion around it, and if I'm

ultimately going to be the one to decide, I usually say, "I want your input, it's really critical but I'm the one that's going to decide, so please give me your best input." If it's the third kind of a decision where, we just have to make a decision and involve people, then I say, "You decide, this is what needs to be done. How you get there is up to you, let me know." (Novice #3, p. 6)

... I've learned a lot in my lifetime and the biggest thing is, is don't ever rush in right away. Step back, look, listen and learn before you make decision. And one of the biggest thing is, is there is always more than one side to every issue. Bother to find them out before you make a decision. Because I've been burned in my past, making decisions on one piece of information, and then found out there was a whole lot more out there. (Novice #4, p. 5)

...The first thing you do is you go back to, what are your basic operation principles? If you don't know what those are, you're in trouble. So, as we, as I work with the other members of our administrative group and we start fielding decisions, and incidents that come up and whatever, the first thing I try to model and I try to get everybody else to do is, okay, let's just calm down and what do our basic principles tell us here? And it's some pretty simple things. (Novice #5, p. 8)

Well, in any situation, the one thing that I pretty much do I think in every single situation is a lot of listening first....So I think when it comes to decision making, when it comes to working with people, that particularly in the early part of my administration, I have to do a lot of listening, because there's a tremendous amount of history here. And while that may not drive my decisions, I have to honor the environment in which I find myself. And so I think listening, being able to have conversation with people that indicates that I am listening, that I can feed back to them what they've said.... So I think what plays into there is the whole notion of being strategic, being thoughtful, being very clear about what the end is you have in mind, being willing to find the people who have strengths in the areas and then allow them to get the work done. (Novice #6, p. 6)

Analysis of the novice interviews' transcripts provided evidence that there were both similar and different elements among those superintendents' procedures used when dealing with leadership issues. Also, many elements from the democratic or collegial leadership perspectives were found to be frequently used by this group of

superintendents, in comparison with other leadership perspectives. Only one superintendent used in his argument some of the elements from the structural or formal leadership perspective. In addition, when dealing with leadership issues, none of the novice superintendents used any elements from the political, subjective or human resources, ambiguity, and cultural leadership perspective. The frequencies of the perspectives on leadership presented in novice superintendents' arguments are showed in Table 15.

**Table 15**

**Frequency of The Perspectives on Leadership in Novice Superintendents' Arguments**

Superintendent	Perspectives of Leadership					
	Formal or Structural	Democratic or Collegial	Political	Subjective or Human Resources	Ambiguity	Cultural or Symbolic
#1	1	1				
#2		1				
#3		1				
#4		1				
#5		1				
#6		1				

All the elements identified as common among superintendents' definitions of leadership were not necessarily stated using the same words. Instead, superintendents used several phrases that illuminated common meanings. Those procedural elements that were found to be similar among the novice superintendents were to identify the problem's context, to look for input, and finally to make the necessary decision(s). On the other hand, the following elements – often included in their procedures – were not mentioned in common among the novice superintendents: identification of each part

involved in the issue, analysis of problem's implications, and identification of the decision maker.

Although analysis of novice superintendents' transcripts provided evidence that common elements such as the identification of the problem's context, the need for inputs, and the making decision(s) were recognized; time constraints was also identified as a significant element for them. The novice superintendents looked at time constraint as a fundamental component to consider, because it will limit or allow seeking for other possible solutions before making any final decisions. The frequencies of those most important common and uncommon elements presented on the novice superintendents' procedures when dealing with leadership issues are showed in Table 16.

Table 16

Frequency of the Most Important Common and Uncommon of the Procedural  
Elements for Novice Superintendents

Elements	Superintendents					
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Identification of problem context	1	2	1	1	2	1
Identification of decision maker(s)		1				
Making the decision	2	1	1	2	1	1
Analysis of problem's implications	1				1	
Need for inputs	1	2	3	1	1	3
Identification of each part involved			1			
Time constraints*	1	1	2	1	1	2

\* Will limit the ability to look for alternative solutions.

### Experienced Superintendents

Information from the data revealed that several experienced superintendents, throughout their arguments, used a combination of elements that represent their patterns when addressing leadership issues.

In order to inquire into superintendents' patterns or procedures when dealing with leadership issues, participants were asked, "Do you have any particular pattern or procedure to follow when dealing with leadership issues?" The answers from the experienced superintendents group to this question were as follows:

Well I think the first thing is, when it comes to a leadership issue, you first have to listen. You should not react. Anytime you are in a position where you feel obliged to react, like that, I think you're more subject, more liable to make a bad decision if you react. So listen, do not react, and then once the decision is made, you try to make sure that you've explained what the decision is and why. But the last thing is to avoid decisions and let other people make them first. Let other people make those decisions. Now again you've got to have a staff that you trust. Which I do here, and I don't feel I have to make every decision. (Experienced #1, p. 6)

I like to empower my administrators to do their own thing. I don't like interfering. I will give them direction. I let them try to run their own buildings, their own departments. I oversee those kinds of things, I set the direction for the district, and then turn them loose to do the nuts and bolts kinds of things. I try not to interfere but I'm there to give them advice if they need advice or they ask for it, or if I think they do I will steer them back in the right direction. But I do not operate by intimidation, I do not, I operate more by cooperation, collaboration... So, I try to support and as a leader, support my administrators to move forward and to, you know I give them the vision; I give them the direction and then turn them loose to get it done. I don't interfere. (Experienced #2, p. 8)

Generally I get, we, when we have an issue at the school, if the issue allows us to have time to deal with it, I oftentimes bring that issue together with the administrative staff first, perhaps the board in some cases, but usually the staff together first. We talk about the issue. I try to listen very carefully to what they have to say. I think that

collectively we all have six other administrators in the building, but generally I think that their collective wisdom is better than mine by itself. And so, we'll address issues that[are] going on, in the school, and generally that results in us deciding which direction we want to take. Sometimes again, depending on the issues, we'll even filter that down to members of the teaching staff, if it's something that impacts them. (Experienced #3, p. 9)

It's more intuitive. It's probably related to my scientific background. At this point in my career I find myself a very good problem solver.... The other thing if you're keeping through your own actions and communications, keeping people in the organization focused on the big picture, they tend not to focus on the little picture. And you can help drag the organization forward, which is again I think is my role as a superintendent.... It's intuitive. There's, really, I'll give you two different answers. And one is for the problem with which you're faced. And that's the intuitive response. [A crisis management tool]... The other is the more strategic and long-term leadership. That is it's more complex in that you really develop and communication plans. Who do I need to meet with? What's their concern? How do I respond to their concerns and [issues]? How do I get them to support and buy into this growth and development plan [for] the organization. So that's more scientific than intuitive. (Experienced #4, p. 8, 9)

Most of the time I like to analyze the data. You know, what facts do we know, that's like this situation. And then discuss the options. And, use as much time as I can. Because oftentimes, if you knee-jerk or overreact, you may well make the wrong decision, and get as much input as I can possible get and then go forward... I would, I'll try to bring in as many people as I possible can and gain their input. (Experienced #5, p. 12)

Okay, I usually go, "Okay what's the worst thing that can happen? What's the best thing that can happen?" and then you know, it's like the old bell-shaped curve, and I know that's fallen into disfavor, but it's pretty true. Because usually there's some folks over here that'll love anything you do, usually some over here that felt they don't like anything you do, and everybody else standing in the middle saying, "What should I think?" And so my feeling is always you go for the 68 in the middle. Because if you can influence the 68 in the middle to stick with you, then you pretty much, you know, you're going to make it. So I'm assuming some folks are going to love me. I'm assuming some folks are going, but I need to keep the numbers down here, down. But it's the 68% in the middle that I've got to make sure are

solid. And if they're with you, then the 16 will just be over there leading them this way. (Experienced #6, p. 9)

Analysis of the experienced superintendents' transcripts provided evidence that there were both similar and different elements among those superintendents' procedures used when dealing with leadership issues. Also, many elements from the formal or structural, and the democratic or collegial perspectives were found to be frequently used by this group of superintendents. Only two superintendents used in their arguments some of the elements from the political leadership perspective. Also, when dealing with leadership issues, none of the novice superintendents used any elements from the subjective or human resources, ambiguity, and cultural leadership perspective. The frequencies of the most important elements presented in experienced superintendents' arguments are showed in Table 17.

Table 17

Frequency of The Perspectives on Leadership Presented in Experienced  
Superintendents' Arguments

Superintendent	Perspectives of Leadership					
	Formal or Structural	Democratic or Collegial	Political	Subjective or Human Resources	Ambiguity	Cultural or Symbolic
#1	1	1	1			
#2	1	1				
#3	1	1				
#4	1	1				
#5		1				
#6		1	1			

All the elements identified as common among superintendents' definitions of leadership were not necessarily stated using the same words; instead, superintendents

used several phrases that illuminated common meanings. Those procedural elements that were found to be similar among the experienced superintendents were to identify the problem's context, and to make the necessary decision(s). On the other hand, the following elements – often included in their procedures – were not mentioned in common among the experienced superintendents: being calm before making any decisions, empowering other staff members, advising others when making decisions, and including board members in the process.

Although analysis of the experienced superintendents' transcripts provided evidence that common elements such as the identification of the problem's context as making decision(s) were recognized; time constraints were also identified and significant for them. The experienced superintendents looked at time constraint as a fundamental component to consider, because it will limit or allow seeking more involvement of staff members before making any final decisions. A summary of those common and uncommon elements presented on the experienced superintendents' procedures when dealing with leadership issues is showed in Table 18.

#### Summary of the Procedural Elements for Novice and Experienced Superintendents

Information from the data has revealed that when the novice superintendents' reflection-in-action and knowing-in-action take place – while dealing with any leadership issues – they most frequently use only those elements from the democratic or collegial leadership perspective. On the other hand, the experienced superintendents' group used, in many cases, a combination of some elements from the



formal or structural, democratic or collegial, and the political leadership perspectives while dealing with different leadership issues.

**Table 18**

**Frequency of the Most Important Common and Uncommon of the Procedural Elements for Experienced Superintendents**

Elements	Superintendents					
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Identification of problem context	2	1	2	1	1	2
Empowering other staff members	1					
Time constraints*	1	2	1	1	1	2
Advising others when making decisions		1				
Being calm before making any decisions	1					
Including board members			1			
Making the decision	2	1	1	2	1	1

\* Will limit the ability to seek others' input.

When comparing the novice and the experienced superintendent groups, only three procedural elements were found to be common among them. These elements were the identification of the problem's context, time constraints, and the action of making the necessary decision(s). Also, two elements were found to be different between those two groups of superintendents. First, among the novice superintendents group, they always needed to count on extra input from other staff members. Second, although the element of time constraint was found to be common, the groups referred to two different aspects. The novice group considered time constraints as a limiting factor for finding alternatives solutions, while the experienced group considered time constraints as a limiting factor for seeking more involvement of other staff members in the decision-making process. Finally, the data revealed that both groups of superintendents, depending on their experiences as superintendents or their tacit

knowledge, might use some elements from only one perspective, or a combination of elements from multiple leadership perspectives.

In summary, the entire group of twelve superintendents made decisions based on others' inputs and their own tacit knowledge. All twelve superintendents also followed the same mechanism or scheme of identifying and analyzing the problem's context first, considering time constraints, and making the necessary decision(s) as the last step. The main difference is that "time constraints" has a different meaning for each group of superintendents. For example, for the novice superintendents it means not having enough time to have the opportunity to look for alternative solutions, while for the experienced superintendents it means not having the opportunity to look for more inputs from staff, community, and board members. A graphical representation of the procedural elements found among the twelve superintendents is showed in Figure 5.

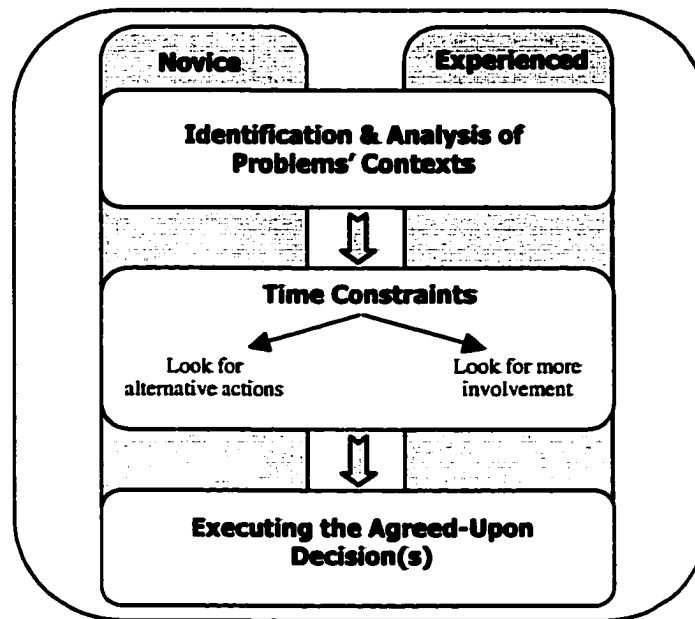


Figure 5. Graphical representation of the procedural elements for the novice and experienced superintendents

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **Findings**

Although many studies describing the major perspectives on leadership can be found in the literature, the development and integration of a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership has not been thoroughly examined. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate a multiple-perspectives approach to educational leadership.

The conceptual framework of the study was (a) a system of perspectives on leadership and (b) the assumptions that lie beneath those perspectives, including the assumptions about leader, follower, organization, and task. Twelve superintendents in the Michigan area participated in this study. The structure and approach of inquiry followed by this study was qualitative. Data collection techniques, such as interviews, thinking-aloud, and journals, were used.

This study addressed the following set of questions regarding superintendents:

(a) How do superintendents perceive the concept of leadership? Do their perceptions include common or uncommon elements within their definitions?

(b) How do superintendents practice leadership? Does their practice contain the elements of a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership?

(c) What is the relationship between superintendents' conception and practice of leadership? What kinds of tacit knowledge do superintendents bring when dealing with multi-faceted leadership issues? What kind of knowing- and reflecting-in-action do the superintendents display when dealing with complicated leadership issues? If superintendents demonstrate the approach to integrate multiple perspectives on leadership, what is the mechanism or scheme with which they do so?

As to question No. 1, "How do superintendents perceive the concept of leadership? Do they include common or uncommon elements in their perceptions?" Two main differences were found among all the superintendents.

First, although all twelve superintendents agreed that the decision-making process needed to be participatory, a particular element was found to be different between novice and experienced superintendents. While novice superintendents paid more attention to involving every possible member they could for making a decision, experienced superintendents considered that activity as a given; rather, they concentrated their efforts in what the final result of the process would be.

The novice superintendents' action of involving every possible member in the decision making-process, is one element that has characterized school administrators as those who value their co-workers' efforts and contributions (Becker, et al. 1971; Bossert, et al. 1982; Crowson, 1989; Gordon & McIntyre, 1978, Hoy & Brown, 1988; Niece, 1989; Sarason, 1982). In addition, this ability to relate to others is a common characteristic found in effective administrators (Aplin, 1984; Crowson & Morris, 1990; Kohan, 1989; Mahoney, 1990; Schmuck and Schmuck, 1989; Wilson, 1980).

Second, the novice superintendents were typically orientated to the accomplishment of agreed-upon tasks, while the experienced superintendents emphasized the importance of the overall fulfillment of the school district's vision and mission. These findings reflect the American Association of School Administrators' (1986) description of leadership, which includes the leader's capacity of transforming a vision into reality as well as the capacity of articulating the vision to others. In addition, Nestor-Baker and Hoy (2001) have found that "...the reputationally successful superintendent is less likely to be involved in the minutiae of daily operations and more likely to be involved in building the overall performance capacities of the organization." (p. 117).

In addressing research question 2, "How do superintendents practice leadership? Does their practice contain the elements of a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership?" The researcher found that almost all the superintendents – eleven out of twelve – normally use some elements from the democratic or collegial perspective. However, there was one particular difference between the novice and the experienced superintendents. The novice superintendents tended to use the elements from the democratic or collegial perspective most of the time; they would address each particular situation by using one or several elements from only one perspective.

The experienced superintendents in each situation tended to integrate several elements from at least two or more perspectives (e.g., the formal or structural, the democratic or collegial, or the political perspective of leadership in this case). In addition, five out of six the experienced superintendents used most of the time some elements from the formal or structural perspective on leadership. Moreover, those

superintendents tend to encourage participation of staff and teachers, for a balanced involvement in the institutional decision-making process (Bush, 1995; Cassel, 1996). Furthermore, the decision-making process was carried out through a rational procedure, evaluating the different options and selecting those aligned with the organizational goals (Bolman & Deal, 1997). Overall, the data seem to suggest that the more experienced the superintendent is, he or she will tend to integrate more elements from the different leadership perspectives.

In addressing the research question 3, “What is the relationship between superintendents’ conception and practice of leadership? What kinds of tacit knowledge do superintendents bring when dealing with multi-faceted leadership issues? What kind of knowing- and reflecting-in-action do the superintendents display when dealing with complicated leadership issues? If superintendents demonstrate the approach to integrate multiple perspectives on leadership, what is the mechanism or scheme with which they do so?” The researcher identified one fundamental difference between the novice and experienced superintendents. He also identified three common elements in the conceptions and practices of leadership for the whole group of twelve superintendents while knowing- and reflecting-in-action.

When the novice superintendents dealt with multi-faceted leadership issues, they tended to use only elements from the democratic or collegial perspective. However, the experienced superintendent group used a combination of elements from the formal or structural, democratic or collegial, as well as the political leadership perspective. This difference between the two groups could be the result of the experience they have gained through those years in their superintendency positions,

which directly differentiate one group from the other one. Also, this difference could be one distinctive characteristic of their tacit knowledge or an “action-oriented knowledge” which is “acquired without the direct help of others that allows individuals to adapt, select, and shape their environments in ways that enable them to achieve their goals.” (Nestor-Baker & Hoy, 2001, p. 86).

Although the group of novice superintendents most of the time used only elements from the democratic or collegial leadership perspective, and the experienced superintendent integrated several elements from different leadership perspectives, all the 12 superintendents exhibited a common mechanism or scheme when dealing with leadership issues. When the superintendents are knowing- and reflecting-in-action, they first analyzed the problem context, then considered any time constraints before making any decisions, and finally executed the agreed-upon decision. Also, the main difference found between the novice and the experienced superintendents focused on their own definition of time constraints. While for the novice superintendents, time constraints meant to have the opportunity to look for more possible alternatives; for the experienced superintendents it meant to have the opportunities of increasing involvement from other members in the decision-making process.

What is evidently clear between these kinds of knowing and reflection-in-action is that conveys an instant meaning for action (Schön, 1983, 1987). This ability of reflection-in-action allows superintendents to formulate and criticize their action strategies and their ways of framing the problems. Also, based on the foregoing findings, it is valid to conclude that the nature of tacit knowledge is procedural knowledge, and the success of superintendents might be linked to acquirement and



utilization of tacit knowledge (Johnson, 1996; Glass, 1992; and Glass, Björk, and Brunner, 2000).

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study (a) challenges the fragmentation of leadership theories and raises a critical issue about the integration of multiple perspectives, and (b) engages in an initial test of the ability of different groups of leaders to integrate multiple perspectives on leadership.

Practically, the following two empirical findings have implications for the education and professional development of superintendents. First, twelve superintendents only used a small portion of the available perspectives. It appears that although the literature describes six general approaches to leadership, these superintendents in particular have not utilized the opportunities that every leadership perspective might offer to them. Also, it is important to notice that two out of three of the experienced superintendents, who also held a doctorate degree, were those using multiple elements from at least three leadership perspectives. Therefore, the integration of multiple perspectives on leadership might result from both formal education and experience. Given the increasing complexity and challenge facing educational leaders, we need to do more in training and education to expand superintendents' approaches.

Second, the experienced superintendents used more approaches than the novice group did. There appears to be a need to provide professional development to novice

superintendents. The findings of this study suggest that the development and conceptualization of leadership theory and practice could be expanded. In addition, these findings suggest a challenge to the preparation of educational leaders. Although some of the standards for leadership preparation and practice present a common core of knowledge, disposition, and performance (American Association of School Administrators, 1993; Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996; Thomson, 1992), a combination of elements from each leadership perspective can contribute to effective leadership preparation. Also, an emphasis on using the multiple-perspectives approach should be one of the foundations for leadership preparation and development. As Glass, Björk, and Brunner (2000), have suggested, "The common thread that is woven throughout the fabrics or critiques is recognition of the need for content and instruction to align with changes taking place in schools and to produce high quality leaders to improve American education" (p. 137).

According to Holloway (2001), by "using job analysis and a national body of standards for school leaders, we can create both evaluation and professional development opportunities for school leaders" (p. 85). In addition, Kowalski (1998) suggested that the superintendent performance evaluation should be done on an annual basis, and should also be directly related to the institutional goals of school improvement. However, authors such as Berg and Barnett (1998) have pointed out that evaluations of superintendents should go beyond performance evaluation; they should also consider an ongoing professional development program for superintendents.

Any university preparation program that is oriented to the development and training of superintendents should continuously adjust its curriculum and coaching techniques to respond not only to those aspiring superintendents, but also to those that have many years as superintendents. Berg and Barnett (1998) have found that although many universities' preparation programs have updated their curriculums for offering better training to aspiring superintendents, they have done little for satisfying the needs of those who have started their profession as superintendents. One way to address this issue is by developing and implementing a formative program evaluation. As Sanders (2000) indicated, the purpose of formative evaluation is "...to gather feedback on aspects of the program that are undergoing review and possible revision" (p. 7). By continuously evaluating professional development programs – for both aspiring and current superintendents – the perceptions, demands, requirements, and teaching and learning needs of superintendents can be identified and addressed. In addition, Holloway (2001) suggested, "It is now within our reach to train, select, and support school superintendents using a coherent model that is grounded in national standards and a firm understanding of the demands of the complex position" (p. 85). Further he stated, "Our schools demand and deserve that we pay attention to evaluating and developing these educational leaders" (p. 85).

### **Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research**

Several limitations have been identified through the development of this study. The first limitation is related to the original purposive sample, which suggested the participation of six experienced and well regarded superintendents from the state

of Michigan who have received the superintendent of the year award. Although this research has illuminated some difference in perceptions between novice and experienced superintendents, the degree of generalizability to a larger population of superintendents is limited.

The second limitation is related to the homogeneity of the sample used in this study. Although it was possible to count on the participation of twelve superintendents, an equivalent group of male and female participants for future studies would be more appropriate. Also, the criteria for differentiating novice from experienced superintendent should be adjusted, or as was done on this study, the number of years in service for the experienced superintendents should be more pronounced. For example, the novice superintendents should be those who have less than 10 years in the same position, while superintendents that comprise the experienced superintendent group should be those who have at least 15 years in the same position and who have received any regional or national award that can distinguish them from other experienced superintendents. In addition, the educational background – masters and doctorate levels – of the participants should be considered and more importantly, should be closely matched.

The third limitation relates to the data collection method. Although triangulation –based on different *methods* and multiple *instances* for data collection – was employed in this study, other methods such as different *sources* (Miles and Huberman, 1994) should be used for enhancing the validity of further research.

Fourth, the different instruments and scenarios for further studies should be increased and enhanced. Although several case scenarios were used in this study,

others, which can directly address characteristics from the subjective or human resource, ambiguity, and cultural or symbolic leadership perspectives, should be developed and used. Also, further interview protocols should use a larger number of questions that can inquire more directly into those aspects for each leadership perspective.

Although this study represents an initial effort to investigate a multiple-perspectives approach to educational leadership, it has also fostered questions regarding future studies involved in these efforts. The following questions should be addressed in further research.

1. Do the leadership perspectives' elements or premises – leader, follower, organization, and task – represent a composite picture of those of educational leaders or are there other elements that have not surfaced?
2. Is there a unique procedure or scheme to follow that novice and experienced superintendents, attempting to implement the multiple-perspectives approach on leadership, have or should seek to pursue based on particular situations?
3. Does having a professional development curriculum based on the use of a multiple-perspectives approach of leadership enhance the performance of educational leaders?
4. What is the impact on the school districts of those educational leaders who have gone through professional development sessions based on the use of a multiple-perspectives approach on leadership?

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate a multiple-perspectives approach to educational leadership, by inquiring into (a) how twelve school district superintendents perceived the concept of leadership, and (b) whether or not they took

a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership. The findings of this investigation led to three major conclusions. First, this study provided an opportunity for exploring and understanding those leadership elements considered and used by several school district superintendents. Second, the most common leadership perspective used among all twelve superintendents was the collegial or democratic perspective. This indicates a common willingness of the superintendents to characterize their institutions as ones with a participatory decision-making process, with a continuous acknowledgment of their co-workers' efforts and contributions. Also, the second most common used leadership perspective – particularly among the experienced group – was the formal or structural perspective, which suggests that the experienced superintendents tended to enforce the positional authority reflected by the superintendency. Third, results from this study revealed that the experienced superintendents used more approaches than the novice group did. In addition, among those experienced superintendents who also held doctorate degrees, two of them used multiple elements from at least three leadership perspectives. What these findings suggest is that the integration of multiple perspectives on leadership might result from both formal education and experience.

Further research attempting to address any of the foregoing issues, as well as the questions that have emerged from this study, will enhance our understanding of what types of superintendents can lead the country's school systems, as well as provide information on whether or not these characteristics can be acquired through training and practice. Also, the empirical findings on the use of a multiple-perspectives approach by educational leaders will have implications for explaining

the leadership phenomenon and educating future educational leaders (Hsieh & Shen, 1998).

As Glass, Björk, and Brunner (2000) have suggested, “While it is clear that change is inevitable, it is not yet clear what direction that change will take. The superintendents of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have the opportunity to play a pivotal role in shaping the structure and content of education for the next generation” (p. i). Promoting a multiple-perspectives approach to leadership will enlarge the repertoire of leadership approaches for our superintendents; therefore it will increase their possibilities of being successful. There is much to be learned in this area.

**APPENDIX A**  
**First Leadership Case Study**



### **First Case Study**

Meet Mr. Dale Johnson, a young superintendent in his mid forties, living in a suburban/rural area in the State of Michigan. He currently lives with his wife and their three children.

Mr. Johnson has recently accomplished his third year as a superintendent in a school district with approximately 2000 students. He started his superintendency career three years ago in the same school district in which he has been working. Since then, two of the most important aspects that have called his attention were (a) the deteriorating school buildings, and (b) the out-of-date technology resources and equipment in general.

Based on this situation, Mr. Johnson has tried three times in a row, to pass a bond issue for renovating the buildings and updating the technology resources and equipment in his school district. The board members have failed to approve his requests, arguing that expending such amount of money, wouldn't necessarily improve student's academic performance, which has been in its lowest level in the last two years. Also, the board has added that there is an increasing parents' general dissatisfaction with the schools.

The school district in which Mr. Johnson currently works as a superintendent has been characterized for many years as having a very poor school-community relationship. Although Mr. Johnson, has been able to accomplish much more than previous superintendents have, it is still not enough as the ideal school-community relationship situation.

These last 3 years have been very hard for Mr. Johnson as a superintendent. Not only because the low students' performance and parents' general dissatisfaction, but also because the low teachers' morale shared among the majority of them in the school district.

Once, one school teacher said "...I wish I could ask for a re-assignment in another school in this school district –I already have discussed this issue with my husband and he has agreed that if I get it, we will move—the only thing is that, all these schools have exactly the same problems and in some cases, worst."

Dr. \_\_\_\_\_, based on this scenario:

From a leadership perspective, what would you do if your were Mrs. Johnson, to improve the school district? Please spell out your plan.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Video Script**

## **Video Script**

**Presenter:** Meet Dr. George Wilson, a superintendent for more than 15 years. Dr. Wilson became superintendent of the Citadel Community School District approximately 15 months ago. With 214 schools enrolling about 20,000 students, it is one of the largest school systems in the southeast part of the country.

In seeking a new superintendent, the school board in Citadel emphasized its commitment to change. All seven board members agreed that the district had not moved forward sufficiently to address community needs and wants. Hence, they sought a leader with a proven track record in the area of reform; they wanted a person of vision, someone who lead the district into the next century.

Dr. Wilson appeared to meet all their expectations. At the age of 53, he had been superintendent in two other school districts where he spearheaded substantial change. In his previous position, Superintendent Wilson received a national award for implementing technology in his school district.

Shortly after becoming superintendent in Citadel, Dr. Wilson revealed a plan he labeled "Citadel Davis School in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." It emphasized three broad goals.

**Dr. Wilson:** The main goals of my plan are:

1. A massive investment in information technology in the schools. It will include a couple of computers in each classroom and some computer laboratories for each schools with distance learning capabilities (e.g., a satellite dish or cable access), and an information systems integrating voice, video, and data in each classroom. Additionally, the entire district will be networked.
2. A transition to site-based management, which will require that each school has to create a governance council consisting of teachers and parents.
3. A major investment in staff development to prepare employees to use technology and to master the new teaching strategies they will select for their schools.

**Presenter:** The school board cheered the plan publicity and encouraged its implementation as soon as possible. However, the administrators and teachers were apprehensive. Many of the employees in the district were not accustomed to change. They still were uncertain about Dr. Wilson's leadership style, and they knew the board had quickly given the superintendent its stamp of approval.

Having lived through change processes in other districts, Dr. Wilson expected most principals and teachers to be apprehensive. He decided to move forward because he considered that there was a window of opportunity during his first year in the district.

**Dr. Wilson:** To help alleviate staff fears I propose to establish another type of council, a coordinating council, consisting of the principal and one teacher from every school in the district. Each council will setup their own time schedules and over each meeting they will decide when they will meet again, I know how busy you are!

**Presenter:** Additionally, he visited each school and spoke to the employees about the plan and its goals. His message was the following:

**Dr. Wilson:** This plan for change will benefit you in many ways. For those of you who have never used computers or integrated information systems, you are going to learn a great deal. For those of you who always wanted to be true professionals, your school councils will provide a vehicle for a greater autonomy. Put simply, you will become better teachers. And while we will all grow as professionals, our schools will become more responsive to the real needs of our students. After all, that's the reason we are here.

I will focus the change process on your beliefs and perceptions of how things have to be done. You individual members are the most important resource in my school district.

From now on, the decision-making process will be simply the product of the interaction of the staff members of this school district.

I will stress the goals of each of you over any previous goal made by any previous autocratic resolution. I believe that the kind of organization we live in derives not from its structure (which I consider to be very problematic) but from attitudes and experiences we bring to our organization from the wider society in which we live.

**Presenter:** Dr. Wilson is a fair believer that the decision-making process represents an opportunity for discovering goals rather than promoting policies based on existing objectives.

Dear superintendent, after watching Dr. Wilson's case, could you please answer the following questions, and remember the more explicit you are, the better we can learn from your experience:

1. Which aspects of Dr. Wilson's leadership strike you the most,
2. With what would you agree or disagree, and

**3. What would you do differently? And why?**



## **APPENDIX C**

### **Second Leadership Case Study**

## Second Case Study

Last year, a local newspaper of a middle-size city in the state of Michigan published an article entitle: **“MEAP Results Increased again”**.

The Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), a mandatory, state-wide, high-stakes test administered by the state for accountability purposes, has shown an increment in its latest results for a third year in a row for the schools in Mrs. Galvin's school district.

Mrs. Joan Galvin, a women superintendent, happily married and with 2 children, has been a superintendent for the last ten years. A woman known for believing in children, for being committed to improving opportunities for students to learn, Mr. Galvin regarded empowerment as central to achieving lasting results.

Mrs. Galvin has proudly demonstrated in the last three years, how wonderful it is to be able to count on excellent principals and good instructional leaders who are committed to improving student learning and supportive of teacher empowerment initiative.

This year, the same local newspaper which has showed the good news about Mrs. Galvin's middle-school now has publishes: **“MEAP scores suddenly drops.”** The middle school which had been improving its MEAP scores in the last three consecutive years is now facing a really hard and crude situation, not only because of the publicity made by the local newspaper, but also because other newspapers helping to spread out the information on the MEAP results.

Some parents, alarmed with the situation, started demanding that their children should be transferred to other schools in the district. Many of those parents even conformed coalitions, taking the issue to the board meetings.

It was evident that not only Mrs. Galvin was under attack, but also the middle school and its principal.

Dr. \_\_\_\_\_, based on this scenario:

From a leadership perspective, what would you do if your were Mrs. Galvin, to deal with the situation and lead the school district? Please spell out your plan.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Validity and Reliability Checklist**

### Checklist to guide the accomplishment of Validity and Reliability Issues\*

#### 1. Objectivity, Confirmability or External Reliability

Question	Not Addressed	Partially Addressed	Addressed	Not Applicable	Justification, Comments or Suggestions for Improvement
Are the study's general methods and procedures described explicitly and in detail?					
Are the conclusions explicitly linked with exhibits of condensed/displayed data?					
Were competing hypotheses or rival conclusions really considered?, if so					
At what point in the study?					

#### 2. Reliability/Dependability/Auditability

Question	Not Addressed	Partially Addressed	Addressed	Not Applicable	Justification, Comments or Suggestions for Improvement
Are the research questions clear, and are the features of the study design congruent with them?					
Are basic paradigms and analytic constructs clearly specified? (Reliability depends, in part, on its connectedness to theory), and					
Were coding checks made, and did they show adequate agreement?					

\* This checklist has been adapted from Miles & Huberman's (1994) standards for the quality of conclusions.

### Checklist to guide the accomplishment of Validity and Reliability Issues

#### 3. Internal Validity/Credibility/Authenticity

Question	Not Addressed	Partially Addressed	Addressed	Not Applicable	Justification, Comments or Suggestions for Improvement
Are the presented data well linked to the categories or prior or emerging theory?, Do the measures reflect the constructs in play?		/			
Were the conclusions considered to be accurate by original informants? If not, is there a coherent explanation for it?, and					
Were any predictions made in the study, and how accurate were they?					

#### 4. External Validity/Transferability/Fittingness

Question	Not Addressed	Partially Addressed	Addressed	Not Applicable	Justification, Comments or Suggestions for Improvement
Do the findings include "thick descriptions" for readers to assess the potential transferability, appropriateness for their own settings?					
Are the findings congruent with, connected to, or confirmatory of prior theory?, and					
Does the report suggest settings where the findings could fruitfully be tested further?					

## Checklist to guide the accomplishment of Validity and Reliability Issues

### 5. Utilization/Application/Action Orientation

Question	Not Addressed	Partially Addressed	Addressed	Not Applicable	Justification, Comments or Suggestions for Improvement
Are the findings intellectually and physically accessible to potential users?					
Do the actions taken actually help solve the local problem?, and					
Have users of findings learned, or develop new capacities?					

**APPENDIX E**  
**Specific Coding Schemes**



Perspective	Common Premise	Code	Description
Formal or Structural	Leader	FPL	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent takes the role of establishing any major official objective. Also, whenever he/she thinks that the overall power of the institution resides at the apex of the pyramid, this means, in his/her position.
	Follower	FPF	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent when taking decisions with his/her administrative staff and/or teachers, shows aptitudes of rationalism*. Also, where aptitudes reflecting actions of direct support from followers take place, while communicating with any staff member or any teacher from the institution.
	Organization	FPO	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent plays a role of continuous interaction between the board and/or community members, associated to the internal decision-making process of his/her institution. Also, when an open system communicational-frame exists with these external entities, and everybody seems to be listened.
	Task	FPT	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent or any particular groups of individuals, inside the institution, define their objectives in terms of their roles within the formal structure. Also, when any task performed, is the result of objectives based on their professional roles within the institution.

\*Rationalism or rational process could be synthesized as a procedure in which any analysis of a problem follows a particular procedure (e.g., perception of the problem, analysis of the problem, formulation of alternatives, choice of solution, implementation of solution, and evaluation of effectiveness).

Perspective	Common Premise	Code	Description
Democratic or Collegial	Leader	DPL	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent encourages participation of staff and teachers, for a balanced involvement, in the institutional decision-making process. Also, where he/she while in the decision-making process, plays a role of acknowledgement of the experiences and skills of staff members and teachers. The superintendent then becomes a facilitator.
	Follower	DPF	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent promotes the creation of systems of committees, with his/her staff members and teachers, supporting the notion of equal opportunities and agreement by consensus. Also, when the institutional structure is seems as horizontal, allowing followers to have the same right to determine policy and influence decisions. Then, the superintendent becomes a mentor.
	Organization	DPO	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent overlooks the possibility of conflict, between his/her institution and the board and/or community members, due to decisions already taken. Also, whenever a superintendent gets involved in explaining decisions to external entities, in which he/she does not agree with completely.
	Task	DPT	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent believes that exists a common and shared organizational agreement on its goals. Also, when the superintendent promotes creation of systems of committees, in order to define any new needed task, by supporting the notion of expertise/experience over the official position within the institution.

Perspective	Common Premise	Code	Description
Political	Leader	PPL	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent acts as both participant and mediator but seeking to accomplish his/her own values and interests. Also, where he/she while in the decision-making process, plays a role of control over any decision that has could be made.
	Follower	PPF	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent with his/her administrative staff and/or teachers shows disagreement or any conflictive behaviors or aptitudes. Also, where aptitudes reflecting actions of negotiation and his/her power influences take place, while conversing with any staff member or any teacher from the institution.
	Organization	PPO	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent plays a role of mediator between the board and/or community members, associated with the internal decision-making process of his/her institution. Also, where some particular preferences from these external entities have been introduced and kept (by the superintendent) as significant elements in the decision-making process.
	Task	PPT	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent or any particular group of individuals inside the institution decide and promote their own objectives as the official purposes of the institution. Also, when any task has been reached as the result of bargaining, negotiation, alliances, and/or multiple coalitions activities.

Perspective	Common Premise	Code	Description
Subjective or Human Resources	Leader	SPL	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent describes his/her institutional position, as one being the result of personal qualities and skills rather than an official authority. Also, whenever he/she represents a source of concerns, emphasizing his/her interpretations over the ones from staff members and teachers.
	Follower	SPF	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent emphasizes activities of task definitions, based on personal aims and needs, instead of institutional task or goals. Also, when any particular staff member or teacher relates the descriptions of any action to personal career development or job satisfaction.
	Organization	SPO	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent overlooks the recognition of direct external forces; instead, he/she emphasizes individual links between staff members or teachers, and board and/or community members.
	Task	SPT	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent shows that task-definition and development activities are based on individual wishes and beliefs. Also, when the superintendent shows a small-scale concern for staff members and teachers professional actions, instead of a macro-level institutional performance.

Perspective	Common Premise	Code	Description
Ambiguity	Leader	APL	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent interacts with staff members and teachers, based on tactical maneuvers and unobtrusive management. Also, whenever he/she describes ambiguity situations to be common in his/her institution. In addition, they may manifest the existence of ambiguity of power, as the result of a hard-to-measure situation, due to an unclear situation of leader's power.
	Follower	APF	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent considers that the leader-follower relationship is based on unpredictable settings and anarchic situations. Also, whenever any decisions reached are the results of a complex process of interactions.
	Organization	APO	Situations and/or comments made by the superintendent where exist a continuous climate of uncertainty with an increased sensitiveness of external demands. Also, whenever any major official activity could be directly affected by the actions of external entities such as board and community members.
	Task	APT	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent shows that the tasks defined are the results of unpredictable decisions, totally unrelated to organizational goals. Also, whenever institutional goals seem to be unclear, which will result in a difficulty for assessing future institutional actions.

Perspective	Common Premise	Code	Description
Cultural or Symbolic	Leader	SPL	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent seems to be representing an institutional symbol, with the role of defining the institutional culture. Also, where he/she plays a role of successful professional, who also communicates the institutional values and beliefs, inside and outside the institution.
	Follower	SPF	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent reflects that the leader-follower relationship is based on rationalism, considering values and belief as a vital element of their culture manifestation.
	Organization	SPO	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent emphasizes the importance of the external entities, with whom shares values and believes. Also, whenever a superintendent recognizes that board members as well as community members, become the source of values and beliefs which shape the institutional culture.
	Task	SPT	Situations and/or comments where the superintendent considers that the development of goals and tasks are consistent with the values and beliefs of the institution. Also, when the superintendent agrees that many official goals are interpreted through particular aspirations of individuals inside the institution.

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Human Subject Institutional Review Board Permission**

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
H. S. I. R. B.  
Approved for use for one year from this date:

SEP 11 2001

x *May Laggay*  
HSIRB Chair

Western Michigan University  
Department of Educational Studies  
Principal Investigator: Dr. Jianping Shen  
Research Associate: Rigoberto J. Rincones-Gómez

I have been invited to participate in a research project entitled "Integration of Multiple-Perspectives on Leadership: A Comparative Study of Experienced and Novice Leaders." I understand that this research is intended to help superintendents reflect upon their leadership, using the framework of multiple approaches to leadership, by a select group of 10-12 Superintendents. I further understand that this project is Rigoberto J. Rincones-Gomez's doctoral dissertation project.

My consent to participate in this project indicates that I will be asked to provide three to four possible tape recorded interviews with Mr. Rincones. Also, I will be asked to keep a journal for two weeks, in which each week I will record one leadership case from my job. In this journal I will describe the nature of the leadership issue, my own analysis of the leadership issue, the approach that I decided to take, and my reflections on the leadership approach. In addition, I will be asked to meet Mr. Rincones for the three interviews in my environment or at any other location in which I agree upon.

As in all research there may be unforeseen risks to the informant. If any accidental injury occurs, appropriate emergency measures will be taken; however, no compensation or treatment will be made available to me except as otherwise stated in this consent form.

One way in which I may benefit from this activity is having the chance to talk about my experiences. Another way is to perhaps see commonalities among the select group of informants. I also understand that others may benefit from the knowledge that is gained from this research.

Confidentiality will be maintained in this study. That means that my name will not appear with my individual interviews. Information collected from me will be kept confidential. That means that my name will not appear on any papers on which this information is recorded. The forms will all be coded, and Mr. Rincones will keep a separate master list with the names of informants and the corresponding code numbers. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. All others forms will be retained for three years in a locked file in the principals investigators' files.

I understand that I may refuse to participate or quit at any time during the study without prejudice or penalty. If I have any questions or concerns about this study, I may contact either Mr. Rigoberto Rincones at (616) 344-6091 or Dr. Jianping Shen at (616) 387-3887. I may also contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institution Review Board at (616) 387-8293 or the Vice President for Research (616) 387- 8298 with any concerns that I have. My signature below indicates that I understand the purpose and requirements of the study and that I agree to participate.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Consent obtained by \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## **APPENDIX G**

### **Interview Protocol**

### **Interview Protocol**

**Time of Interview:**

**Date:**

**Place:**

**Interviewer:**

**Interviewee:**

1. Self-introduction and explanation of the purpose of the study.
2. Explanation of the Informed Concern Form
3. Explanation of recording and transcription procedures.

**Questions:**

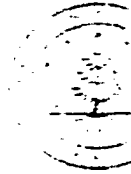
1. Could you please tell my a little bit about your life history?
2. For how long have you been a superintendent? Has this been in the same district?
3. How big (# of students) is this school district? (i.e. student enrollment)
4. Could you please describe a typical day in your actual work?
5. With your own words, how do you define leadership?
6. In your judgment, what are the main elements in this concept call "leadership"?
7. Could you please tell me three significant leadership episodes in your life as a superintendent? (Probe for what he/she did)
8. Do you have any particular pattern or procedure to follow when dealing with leadership issues?

**(Thank individual for participating in this interview. Assure him/her confidentiality of responses and potential future interviews.)**

## **APPENDIX H**

### **Invitation Letter**

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008-5456  
616 387-8293

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**WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**

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Date: September 11, 2001

To: Jianping Shen, Principal Investigator  
Rigoberto Rincones-Gomez, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Mary Lagerwey, Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mary Lagerwey".

Re: HSIRB Project Number 01-06-19

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Integration of Multiple Perspectives on Leadership: A Comparative Study of Experienced and Novice Leaders" has been **approved** under the **exempt** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may **only** conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: September 11, 2002

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