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Pursuing an Ethic of Care: A Case Study of One Female Superintendent

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PURSUING AN ETHIC OF CARE:

A CASE STUDY OF

ONE FEMALE SUPERINTENDENT

by

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Abstract

This instrumental case study explores how the Ethic of Care is experienced within one Midwestern school system as an alternative approach to traditional school system hierarchical infrastructures. Through the qualitative tradition of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), this study documents the caring leadership actions, behaviors and styles of a superintendent who has transformed the identity of a Midwest school district. Analysis of triangulated data from multiple in-depth interviews, teacher surveys, field observations, district archival data, superintendent publications, and shadowing days, provide a narrative account using thick description (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) to illuminate how care translates into practice and how that practice is experienced and perceived by district faculty.

While other studies have looked at the decision-making processes of school administrators based on care and /or justice orientations (DeVore, 2006; Hanson, 2000), I deconstruct the essence of caring leadership by documenting the underpinning values, dispositions, thinking and behaviors of one female superintendent chosen as a paradigm case of Ethic of Care leadership based on reputable recommendations (Brunner, 2002). Data collection and analyses focused on two questions: (1) What are the practices that constitute an Ethic of Care approach to leadership? and (2) How does an Ethic of Care shape the culture of a school district?

Five themes emerged from the data: engaged leadership, studious culture, thoughtful presentation, sweat equity, and perpetual evolution. The results of this study indicate that caring leadership requires (1) a conscious decision to consider others in decision-making processes, (2) an appreciation for relationships and community building, (3) respect for

others (regardless of their title), and (4) a dedication to nurturing relationships and culture by establishing strong and consistent patterns of communication. This research contributes to the literature by outlining an emergent set of Ethic of Care principles to guide educational leaders in developing caring leadership.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the people in my life who equipped me with the confidence to think I could do this, who inspired me to set the highest possible goals, who motivated me to keep going when I didn't think I could, who served as sounding boards as I stood on my soapbox, who cheered me on through this marathon, who empathized when I cried, who never let me quit.

To my grandfather, Ignacio Rico, the first man in my life. He used to say that we were the only stars in the sky. He was a great man with a humble heart. His possessions were few but he always had enough to give to those who had less. His light continues to shine on me.

To my mother, who without knowing it, instilled in me the drive to stand up for what I thought was right, regardless of the outcome, and the ability to see discrimination when others could not. Your strength helped me endure.

To my four inspirations - Lauren, Megan, Jacquelyn, and TJ. The only thing I absolutely wanted to be when I grew up was your role model, to pave the way for you to reach your potential and to leave footprints for you to follow on your individual journeys that last a lifetime. (Lauren, thank you for being my study partner.)

And, to my soul mate, Terry, from whom I drew the stamina to work night after night for hours on end. You were my muse. Without you there were no words to write, no books to read, no fire burning. I love you.

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My committee was invaluable. Thank you for giving freely of your knowledge, expertise and thoroughness. Dr. Matthew Davis encouraged me to maintain my feminist convictions; while Dr. Tom Hensley balanced those convictions by consistently reminding me that caring leadership transcends gender. Dr. Kathleen Brown grounded me but also strengthened me with supportive words just when I needed those words the most. My Chair, Dr. Virginia Navarro, continuously challenged me to delve into the depths of reflection. Each time I came up for breath, I was charged to go deeper still. Thank you for recognizing and valuing my qualitative nature and for developing my descriptive writing.

Finally, this would not have been possible without the cooperation of "Dr. Herron" who generously welcomed my presence and hospitably urged her faculty to "be good sports" and participate as needed. Thank you for stepping out of the box and leading with intuition, both heart and mind.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During my first six years of teaching, I observed the effects of authoritarian leadership on staff in the conditioned behaviors of female teachers who had been systematically trained to roll with the punches or to simply go along with business as usual. Fear of being labeled a troublemaker for voicing opinions - or worse, not receiving a contract renewal or recommendations - secured their silence. I recall a story of a teacher who had been reprimanded and verbally humiliated in front of students and adults by her male principal. The story was common knowledge among her peers. The victimized female teacher remained teaching, not only in the district but also at the same school with the very principal who subjected her to degradation. The principal went on to retire years later, following a perceived *successful* career as an elementary principal.

I found it hard to believe that professional women would allow themselves to be disrespected in such a manner and, even further, succumb to the authority by remaining in the system that supported the debasement of women. I am not completely convinced that the abuse was or is necessarily directed at women in particular; however, given the fact that most teachers have historically been female (Biklen & Brannigan, 1980; Chase & Bell, 1994; Keller, 1999; Merrow & Keller, 2004) and most school administrators have historically been male, the gender connection is difficult to sever.

Even as a fledgling teacher, and probably due to my being new in the building, thus entering with new eyes, I sensed an overwhelming culture of submission. Veteran teachers refused to question authority, exuding a *whipped* quality. This environment felt, to me, like a culture of apathy from years of teachers being run down.

Teachers in the building I later entered as a new principal also seemed resigned to hierarchical assignments and functioned as what deCharms (1968) would label "pawns." In his Origin/Pawn theory deCharms (1968) characterizes a Pawn as someone who perceives his/her own behavior to be dictated by others, rendering that behavior meaningless and devalued because of their perceptions of powerlessness. An Origin, on the other hand, determines his/her own behavior resulting in feelings of accomplishment. The Pawn is forced into submission and internalizes an attitude of subservience, while the Origin is free to make his/her own choices.

Years of teaching experience and research molded my concepts of leadership. I did not believe in terms such as *superior*. I felt that no one person was superior to another, regardless of titles or rank. Just as idealistically as I went into teaching, I entered administration seeking to change the status quo, hoping to liberate teachers by creating a cohesive and cooperative environment. I refused to see myself as the boss but rather as a colleague. To my surprise, the teachers in my school were not prepared for such freedoms. They were accustomed to asking for permission, for direction, for answers. They were used to addressing the principal as Mrs. or Mr. They expected me to solve all their problems. I felt resistance to invitations to take ownership of the school. Some either lowered their gaze in the presence of authority or maintained a constant chip on their shoulder in preparation for the inevitable power struggle. In short, my faculty - educated women and one male teacher - with the daily responsibility of preparing young minds to go out into the world as future leaders, exuded characteristics of abused children. They were either pleasers or resistors. They were clingy, seeking continuous

approval or they placed themselves at arms-length refusing to develop any sort of relationship.

Before long, I faced the same discrimination as a building leader that had relegated my teachers to their proper place, and slowly, with disbelief, I began collecting Pawn experiences of my own. To this day, I find myself surprised and confused regarding the prevailing treatment of teachers that I have observed in rural, urban and suburban school districts. My reaction stems from the continued realization that highly educated administrators not only disregard teacher input but that this historically hegemonic style of leadership still exists in a society which holds rights and freedoms in high regard. More to the point, this style of leadership goes unquestioned within the institution entrusted to develop and socialize the democratic citizenry of tomorrow. According to Stimpson (1980), "If schools constrict opportunities for women, permit discrimination, reflect inequities, and parsimoniously preserve public power for men, they will tell children to prepare themselves for a world in which such practices rule" (p. viii).

While taking a research class towards my doctorate, I interviewed an experienced educator for verification of observed patterns of behavior and power structures within the field of education. As a woman and an aspiring superintendent, I was most interested in patterns of marginalization of women that too often result in teacher apathy and burnout. The interview revealed the following obstacles to the vocation of care in teaching (Gilligan, 1982): gender bias, authoritarian leadership, administrative exclusivity, inflexibility, politics, lack of connections between teachers and administrators, and isolation with no time for collaboration (Artis, 2003). Teachers and administrators experienced these morale breakers every time a male educator was automatically

approached for an administrative position rather than a more qualified female, every time

a male superintendent made building-level decisions without conferring with the female

principal, every time a superintendent sided with an angry parent without obtaining

building-level feedback, every time teachers were expected to implement a new top-down

initiative with no input, every time administrators reprimanded teachers and principals for

voicing their opinions, every time there was someone in a position of authority who

continuously caused others to feel powerless. I continued to wonder if it is possible to

nurture democratic citizens in these authoritarian climates.

    My original case study interview verified that I was not alone in seeing these

destructive elements within educational systems. Moreover, the data illuminated the

moral aspects of the day-to-day administrative decisions that shape teacher experiences.

The most poignant extrapolation and analysis of this pilot interview data revealed strong

indications that connections between leadership practices and identity development in

teachers deserved greater exploration.

    Sharing my personal journey at the beginning of this chapter serves to introduce the

construct of *self* to the reader as an important element of this body of writing, and to

frame this study by providing contextual background for this pursuit (Piantanida &

Garman, 1999). Thus, the professional identity and *self* that I currently possess evolved

from the observations and social interactions within my years as teacher and

administrator. It is from these interactions and observations that a sense of urgency has

developed within my *self*. For reasons unknown to me, I thwarted being homogenized

into the organizational culture of education while many female colleagues, if not most,

succumb to the traditional leadership role expectations of educational leadership by co-

opting behaviors of a historically hegemonic and male-dominated leadership paradigm, resulting in unintentional neglect of systemic inequalities and perpetuation of the status quo. I now have a sense of urgency to seek leadership preparation reform that will create empowered *selves* as true Origins within educational systems.

The importance of female leadership in education, specifically in the superintendency, constitutes another primary construct throughout this paper. This is, first and foremost, because I am a woman and I have experienced and observed the roles (and/or lack thereof) of women in education for the better part of two decades. Those experiences, accompanied by the reports of many others (Biklan & Brannigan, 1980; Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Scherr, 1995; Grogan, 1996, 1999; Blount, 1999; Bjork, 1999; Tallerico, 1999; Brunner, 2000; Skrla, 2000a; Reynolds, 2002) establish the value of this study by expanding the collection of female narratives that either illuminate marginalizing practices in education or, more importantly, by directing attention to 21st century leadership values. Leaders, both men and women, espousing an Ethic of Care, practiced through the feminist attributes of relational leadership, exhibit important 21st century leadership values that can dismantle lingering historically hegemonic leadership paradigms (Regan & Brooks, 1995).

More specifically, given that effective teaching embodies the act of caring, it makes sense to this researcher that an equally caring administrator should be the leader of the caretakers, a person practiced in the Ethic of Care. According to Carol Gilligan (1982), an individual exhibits an Ethic of Care when making decisions based on commitments and relationships to others. While school leaders tend to guide decision-making

according to the best interest of the students, the relationships with those expected to implement the decisions are frequently overlooked.

This lack of commitment in regards to relationships with teachers might parallel placing the needs of customers as more important than the needs of production line workers.   After a while, the words of leadership sound hypocritical or rhetorical. How can a leader exude care for students but not for the individuals responsible for day-to-day instruction and discipline? This researcher does not believe that Gilligan (1982) indicated in *An Ethic of Care* that decisions should be made based on one's commitments to one group of constituents (children) while simultaneously neglecting the needs of another group (teachers). A superintendent who consciously executes an Ethic of Care in decision-making would do what was best for all constituents, not just a chosen group who rarely knows or understands the implications of the decisions being made. Although Gilligan (1982, 1988) suggests that boys are socialized toward an autonomous and competitive identity while girls are socialized toward relationships and connectedness, I believe that the qualities of each may, collectively, characterize an effective androgynous educational leader: "The empowering, cooperative approaches most often associated with women are not exclusively female terrain. If we see them as crucial models for the twenty-first century, then we do not want only women to adopt them" (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. xii).

While research contrasting the leadership styles of men and women (Astin & Leland, 1999; Brunner, 2000, 2002; Helgesen, 1990; Regan, 1995; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Rosener, 1990; Shakeshaft, 1989; Tallerico, 1999; Tannen, 1994) abounds in the literature, only in the past decade has the Ethic of Care evolved into a recognizable

leadership quality worthy of study (DeVore, 2006; Barbie, 2004; Beck, 1994; Grogan, 1999; Hanson, 2000; Hipskind, 2000; Kropiewnicki & Shapiro, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1992; Sernak, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1989). Some research (Bruno, 2004; Hanson, 2000; Thompson, 1997) focuses on and indicates that male and female superintendents tend to rely on care and justice orientations equally in decision-making, not preferring one style to the other but rather applying them situationally. Feminist studies (Amedy, 1999; Barbie, 2004; Garn & Brown, 2008; Grogan, 1999; Helgesen, 1990; Hines, 1999; Hipskind, 2000; Ho, 2004; Kropiewnicki & Shapiro, 2001; Pew, 2002; Rosen, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1989; Sherman, 1992; Washington, 2002), however, consistently draw attention to leadership qualities attributed mainly to female leaders, which they endorse as valuable components to leadership reform. Comparisons between the leadership practices of Helgesen's (1990) study of four female executives and those of the case study participant for this research, in Chapter 5, contributes to this research analysis.

   "Feminist writers describe an Ethic of Care as a kind of moral reasoning. It takes on qualities of connection, particularly of responsibility, commitment, and reciprocity" (Sernak, 1998, p. 9). While Regan and Brooks (1995) label *care* as a feminist attribute, they advocate a blended approach to leadership that incorporates and allows for "feminist and masculinist" (p. 3) attributes. Regan and Brooks (1995) distinguish between the terms feminine and feminist by describing the former as those qualities culturally ascribed to women and connected to social roles. Feminist attributes, on the other hand, are those claimed and defined by women. Given the historically "masculinist" (Regan & Brooks, 1995, p. 3) nature of educational leadership, endorsing an Ethic of Care as an alternative paradigm offers a view of leadership that may prove more inviting to women

(Grogan, 1999). The validation of feminist attributes serves to counter the historically

negative perception of qualities ascribed to women primarily as care givers.

Research exposes the experiences of female superintendents (Blount, 1998;

Brunner, 1999; Chapman, 1997; Garn & Brown, 2008; Grogan, 1999), identifies

female leadership styles (Regan & Brooks, 1995; Tallerico, 1999), and supports

feminist convictions (Chase, 1995; Grogan, 2000; Noddings, 1999); yet portraits of

how the Ethic of Care is embodied by women in roles of educational leadership remain

scarce. Carol Gilligan (1982) introduced her theory, "an Ethic of Care," as it pertains to

moral development in women in response to Kohlberg's theory of moral development,

originally based on studies of male participants. "Gilligan did not want to overturn the

Kohlberg theory, but rather to supplement it with a theory of moral concern grounded in

responsiveness to others that dictates providing care, preventing harm, and maintaining

relationships" (Larrabee, 1993, p. 5).

Gilligan contends that women tend to approach decision-making from a relational

perspective, taking into consideration their responsibilities and care for others. Men, she

asserts, more often utilize a rational, objective, justice-oriented position detached from

personal commitments. However, even male researchers are beginning to recognize

worthiness of care in leadership. According to Berkowitiz and Sherblom (2004) "the

Ethic of Care expands the justice perspective on morality by including caring and

compassion, and it complements the justice emphasis on logic with other forms of

knowing such as empathy and . . . relational understanding" (p. 393). Regardless of its

feminine quality, the Ethic of Care complements the justice perspective resulting in a

more balanced concept of moral development.

Leadership Reform

Over the past decade, school leaders have attempted to modify existing power

structures by implementing the philosophies of Professional Learning Communities

(PLCs) (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 1997) and Linda Lambert's Leadership Capacity

(1998a, 1998b, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2005a, 2005b, & 2006) in order to accomplish the

following goals: (1) secure teacher buy-in for district and building improvement

initiatives, (2) maintain awareness of the current movements in education, (3) establish a

school/district climate reflective of effective schools literature, and (4) ultimately to

increase school effectiveness.   Like other reforms in education, many schools and

districts across the United States jumped at the opportunity to implement these "best

practices" which turned other schools around by increasing teacher collaboration,

collective goals, shared decision-making, and ultimately increased student achievement.

Unfortunately, some bandwagon schools have the potential to turn effective programs

into fads when the district or building-level leadership embodies leadership philosophies

contradictory to empowerment and collaboration. Thus, the successful implementation of

any sustainable school reform will depend largely on the existing district-level

perspective. The research from which this study is based confirms that caring leadership

– for which some individuals exhibit natural predispositions – is the exception rather than

the rule. Results of this study indicate that caring leadership requires more than a plug-in

program that may render the implementation of DuFour's and Eaker's (1998)

Professional Learning Communities construct, in some instances, ineffectual. Authentic

caring leadership requires: (1) the conscious decision to consider others (and their needs)

during decision-making processes, (2) a value for cultivating working relationships, (3)

respect for colleagues and parents (regardless of title or status), and (4) continuous nurturance.

"Leadership is a very powerful force that can deeply influence the drive and commitments of teachers and students much more than the use of authority and management controls" (Sergiovanni, 1990, p. 10). Sergiovanni endorses the term *followers* versus *subordinates* when speaking of individuals who report to supervisors. He explains that while those that see themselves as subordinate compliantly attend to expectations, they do so with little passion or effort. Followers, on the other hand, are influenced by the beliefs and ideas of the leader, responding with high levels of commitment and performance. Aside from DuFour and Eaker (1998), there are few reports of dynamic superintendents infecting an entire school system with the passion, commitment and collaboration necessary to move our schools into the next century. It makes sense to believe that if an effective district superintendent practices relational leadership (Regan & Brooks, 1995), building principals will follow suit due to the influence and modeling of their leader. If principals utilize a flattened-hierarchical or web-like decision-making process, teachers will foster a community climate within their classrooms. In such schools, teachers can thrive and students can achieve. In such schools, administrators do not have to manipulate teacher buy-in. (Strahan, Carlone, Horn, Dallas & Ware, 2003).

The research of Strahan et al. (2003) revealed how schools can evolve positively within an authentic learning community (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Like the schools studied, the principals committed themselves to meeting the needs of their teachers by securing resources, accessing current research, and building confidence in the

community. In another study, Piggot-Irvine (2006) described strong professional learning communities as those comprised of:

Members with shared values and expectations linked to teaching, learning and the teacher role; a focus on promoting improvement in student achievement; sharing of expertise through collaboration; sharing of practice through observation and coaching; and reflection that is based on dialogue and examination of assumptions around quality practice. (p. 6)

This level of collaboration and exploration requires continuous support from the principal. Picture this level of support from central office permeating a mid-sized to large school district. Now, picture the opposite of such support at the district level. Which one offers a view of a healthy organization?

The necessary ingredient to creating learning communities in which leadership capacity is fostered and the needs of all constituents are addressed is the Ethic of Care. Doyle and Doyle (2003) contend that:

Inclusion begets equity and models caring for everyone in the school community. Caring communities empower groups by creating structures that allow for shared authority and decision making. Shared decision making means that administrators do not merely ask for advisory input into decisions, but rather that faculty, parents, and community members have authentic decision-making power. (pp. 259-260)

More so than empowerment and ownership, both of which can be utilized independently, inclusion connotes a connection to others, reflecting the very essence of an Ethic of Care.

The Study

Attempts to influence leadership practices in education have been a focus of

educators for much of the last century. This study seeks to deconstruct a largely

untapped resource within educational systems across the country: an Ethic of Care

(Begley, 1999; Gilligan, 1982; Helgesen, 1990; Noddings, 1984; Regan & Brooks, 1995;

Sernak, 1998). More specifically, it explores *how* the Ethic of Care is experienced within

one Midwestern school system as an alternative model to the traditional bureaucratic

institutions of education in many school systems. Evidence of Ethic of Care principles

and practices (Gilligan, 1982; Sernak, 1998) is identified through a case study of a

superintendent who fosters "leadership capacity" (Lambert, 1998a, 1998b, 2002, 2003a,

2003b, 2005a, 2005b & 2006), collective decision-making with teachers (Lezotte, 1997),

and data-driven instructional teams (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). In addition, faculty

questionnaires confirm that the existing Ethic of Care culture reflects positive morale at

each building resulting from overall "Origin identities versus Pawn identities"

(deCharms, 1968), a sense that the school could run itself (Lambert, 2003, 2005a, 2006),

and the perception that every member of the system is important. While decisions are not

made at the expense of any one group, a small number of survey questionnaire

respondents in this study revealed a need to even further expand shared decision-making

opportunities. This type of "relational leadership can create an environment for change in

schools that will benefit each of their constituents" (Regan & Brooks, 1995, p. 2).

This instrumental case study is viewed through several data sets, including the f

following: (1) an interview/observational case study of a female superintendent; (2)

in-depth interviews with three female district faculty members, (3) surveys and personal

narratives of teachers and administrators relating their perspectives of the

superintendent's leadership; and (4) analysis of archival data. These observations of and

interviews with a female superintendent examine her (1) decision-making style and (2) leadership routines. The interviews with three district faculty members provide insight about how the Ethic of Care leadership of the superintendent affects the district culture. Teachers and administrators throughout the district completed questionnaires regarding their perceptions of how the female superintendent facilitates increased student achievement through the lens of leadership capacity (Lambert, 1998a, 1998b, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006), professional learning communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1998), an equal orientation to care and justice in decision-making (Gilligan, 1982), and relational leadership (Regan & Brooks, 1995). Two open-ended questions at the end of the survey invite faculty to articulate what their superintendent's leadership feels like, professionally and personally.

The archival data set provides triangulation of observed interactions and faculty perceptions of leadership practices. This study is divided into two phases: phase one includes the initial in-depth interview with the superintendent followed by a series of observations conducted in the fall of 2004, while phase two presents the bulk of this document and consists of three shadowing days and data from faculty questionnaires and interviews from January to May of 2009. Reflections of the superintendent's behaviors, actions, demeanor and interactions with faculty members during each phase reveal consistent patterns over time.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its grounded nature: a close-up snapshot of the Ethic of Care in action.

If women superintendents' narratives about their experiences add richness,

newness, and complexity to a discourse that is found wanting, then it becomes

important to mine their narratives for different and additional ways of talking

about the role to inform expanded or fresh theories that stress new approaches to

the superintendency. (Brunner, 2000, p. 405)

Gilligan contends "the study of women calls attention to the different way of

constituting the self and morality" (1993, p. 207). Likewise, this study uses

portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) to create an in-depth profile of

leadership based on an Ethic of Care. "In the process of creating portraits, we enter

people's lives, build relationships, engage in discourse, make an imprint . . . and leave.

We engage in acts (implicit and explicit) of social transformation, we create opportunities

for dialogue" . . .. (p. 11).

Studies of female superintendents (Astin & Leland, 1999; Brunner, 2000; Chapman,

1997; Grogan, 1994; Rosener, 1990; Tallerico, 1999) have predominantly focused on

differences in leadership styles of men and women, career paths to the superintendency,

decision-making practices or gender discrimination neglecting the value and strength of

blending the best of both styles (Regan & Brooks, 1995). School districts, likewise, tend

to hone in on single programs to improve student academic performance (Turnbull, 2006;

Tushnet & Harris, 2006). According to Tushnet and Harris (2006), Comprehensive

School Reform emerged as a response to persistent academic failure. Federal and state

mandates added accountability and high standards to the mix. In addition, Congress

appropriated $145M for the cause in 1998. Before long, schools across the nation wrote

grants to implement programs such as Success for All, the Coalition of Essential Schools,

Accelerated Schools, Comer's School Development Program, Modern Red School

House, The Urban Learning Center, Expeditionary Learning Schools, Outward Bound, ATLAS, Roots and Wings, NARE, the Audrey Cohen Model, Co-nect, Micro Society, Direct Instruction, Cornerstone and America's Choice, to name a few. These programs served as options for school reform but came with 11 essential component requirements as defined by the No Child Left Behind Bill (NCLB).

Eventually, the effectiveness of these reform efforts were evaluated offering some insight into the obstacles to change, implementing change (improvement efforts) and sustaining change (improvement). "Administrative mandates, teacher buy-in, instability of leadership and policy, model fit, teacher and student mobility, resources, and developer limitations" (Klugh & Borman, 2006) were cited as seven pervasive challenges to the initiated reforms. Administrative mandates and manipulation for teacher buy-in may no longer serve as challenges to school improvement if leadership reform becomes a priority. Transitioning from a hierarchical, authoritarian decision-making process to a shared decision-making process in which administration and faculty collaborate on school initiatives reduces the need to implement directives in a top-down fashion or to convince a staff of the worthiness of an administrative thrust. Moreover, as participants in the decision-making process, teachers gain a sense of being in control rather than being controlled, a sense of self-efficacy, and a sense of validation (Darling Hammond, 1994).

For this reason, school districts espousing professional learning communities sometimes lack sustainability if not coupled with a genuine desire to develop the leadership capacity of teachers. Likewise, professional learning communities, endorsed as a top-down initiative, can limit effectiveness if teachers are not included in the decision-making process (Bullough, 2007; Hord, 1997; Jordan, 2006; Wells & Feun,

2007). Thus, care is the ingredient most often neglected in school improvement initiatives. It is therefore important for aspiring principals and superintendents to incorporate best practices from a variety of sources rather than limiting themselves to the leadership practices to which they have been exposed. According to Gilligan (1982) the vocation of teaching affords many individuals within the educational arena an identity comparable to their moral development in which empathy, compassion and the care of others, within a socially interactive environment, shapes individual identity. The suppression of voice that women often experience, however, as victims of a historically hegemonic society and school system (Blount, 1998), erects obstacles to this vocation of care.

Analysis of data in the preliminary case study (Artis, 2003), for which a local educator was interviewed, revealed that teachers face frequent moral choices and ethical dilemmas. When experiencing a school culture in which authoritarian leadership determined the teaching and learning environment, teachers in one particular school chose passive resistance as a response. During that interview, I was particularly curious about the apparent ineffectiveness of a comprehensive three-year program called the Missouri Reading Initiative. Following an in-depth 3-year building-level teacher training, longitudinal scores for 3rd grade students on the state assessment showed little improvement. My hypothesis was that, in response to lack of inclusion in the decision-making process and the authoritarian manner in which the program was introduced and implemented, the teachers rebelled. According to my source, the majority of faculty members had half-heartedly implemented the comprehensive literacy program.

Ironically, by choosing rebellion in lieu of student achievement, the female

teachers discussed within my case study pilot behaved uncharacteristically. According to Gilligan's (1982) theory of moral development in women, when faced with a moral dilemma, women tend to weigh the consequences according to their responsibilities to, relationships with and care of others. Theoretically, the teachers mentioned in the case study should have considered the effects of their decision on the students under their care. The pull of responsibility for facilitating increased student achievement should have outweighed the option of rebellion. How could this have been avoided? Relational leadership (Noddings, 1999; Regan & Brooks, 1995), fostering collegiality (Krovetz & Cohick, 1993), collective goals (DuFour & Eaker, 1998), and leadership capacity (Lambert, 2003a) offer more effective alternatives to top-down approaches to school reform.

The obstacles to compliance with intended reforms (e.g. administrative mandates and lack of teacher buy-in), provide worthy rationalizations for the teacher behavior. However, the rationalizations fail to diminish the residual ethical dilemma. Believing that the leader sets the stage for the organization, leadership preparation programs, school systems and school boards must realize that it takes more than financial prowess and decisiveness to effectively lead a school system. Superintendents favoring relational leadership and collaborative decision-making may have the secret to creating successful learning environments for staff *and* students. While some researchers (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984; Regan & Brooks, 1995) endow women with ownership of relational leadership qualities involving collaboration, care, and intuition, I believe these qualities exist in everyone. For some, they are undeveloped characteristics; for others, they are skills that need to be honed. More to the point, care skills must become a priority and

value for aspiring and existing principals and superintendents. Otherwise, established practice will continue to place teachers at odds with their moral inclinations to meet the academic and social development of our children. According to Sernak (1998), "connection serves to balance extreme individualism and autonomy. Relationships are essential to living fully as a human being and to developing viable communities" (p.23). Leadership informed by an Ethic of Care may serve to transform dysfunctional school systems into the thriving learning communities they are meant to be. By infusing school systems with propensities toward connections, commitments, responsibility to others, and collaboration (Regan & Brooks, 1995; Sernak, 1998), teachers may begin to develop a sense of internal accountability increasing individual commitments to student achievement.

The theory of *symbolic interactionism* (Deegan, 1987) implies that women in education develop their role-identity, whether it is as a classroom teacher, principal or superintendent, in direct relation to their interactions with school constituents. "Because people interact with one another based on their positionality and how they perceive the other to be situated by the culture within which they exist, the positioning of identities has significant implications for how the self gets defined" (Rhoads, 1997, p. 54). Therefore, the actions and words exchanged through the course of the day, week, month, or year either empower or negate positive self-perceptions. Bruner (1990) expounds on the "transactional qualities of self-identity" (p. 109) in his discourse on cultural psychology. In essence, the cultural realities in which one dwells, works, and otherwise interacts influence the construct of *self*. Moreover, "the Self can be seen as a product of the situations in which it operates" (Bruner, 1990, p. 109). Sernak (1998)

explains that

> Care for others requires understanding oneself and having the ability to
> distinguish 'self' from 'other.' (While) the focus of caring in schools is usually on
> caring for students, which is as it should be, teachers need to understand
> themselves, their 'scope and boundary,' before they can begin to deal with the
> culture, values, and life-styles the children bring to their classes. (p. 25)

To Sernak, the acts of self- and collective-reflection in terms of goals, organization and interactions within the school are connection-building activities that effective administrators should take the lead in fostering. In short, the act of caring reinforces the self and is a worthy venture for administrators, teachers and students.

Ultimately, the findings within this study may be valuable to school boards seeking leaders, regardless of gender, who are capable of developing the school and community relations necessary for establishing and sustaining effective teaching and learning environments. Finally, "In this search for new leadership forms, it is useful to see cooperative, empowering models not as inherently female but as female-led. As our culture seeks more appropriate styles of leadership in the future, studies of how women have led in varying circumstances will serve us well" (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. xiii).

Definitions

Some concepts encountered in this study are defined below, as they should be understood in this dissertation.

Collective action – "Synergistic behavior is exhibited in the sharing of responsibilities. Tasks are distributed according to each group member's unique talents, knowledge, and expertise to enable collective action. The process by which the team develops and

functions reflects the collective action" (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. 9).

Cultural Psychology – Bruner (1990) explains that self-identity is ever

developing and changing according to the interactions within given environmental

contexts, which constitute individual roles (wife, mother, student, colleague, subordinate).

Emancipatory Praxis – "a commitment to working for social justice, equity, contesting

and resisting injustices" (Strachan, 2002, p. 115).

Empowerment – "a process by which a leader provides a climate where each group

member of the collective participates equally in planning and carrying out the activity.

This may include: giving autonomy to persons and groups, delegating and giving full

responsibility, freeing people to do their thing, expressing one's own ideas and feelings

as one aspect of the group data, offering feedback and receiving it, and finding rewards in

the development and achievement of others" (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. 9).

Ethic of Care – The Ethic of Care comprises moral reasoning that incorporates

considerations of compassion for, caring of, and responsibilities to others with the

objective, logic of justice in decision-making. This *feminist* theory has traditionally been

ascribed to females, introduced by Carol Gilligan (1982) as a reaction to Kohlberg's

identification of six stages of moral reasoning originally based on studies of male

participants (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Ethic of Justice – The ethic of justice maintains strict adherence to an objective and

logical stance from which fairness results as the product of moral judgment (Berkowitz,

& Sherblom, 2004).

Feminist Attributes – Regan and Brooks (1995) consider care, collaboration, courage,

intuition and vision to be feminist attributes.

Feminist Discourse – Hollingsworth, Lock and Schmuck (2002) define "feminist scholarship in educational leadership as that which (1) focuses on the condition of females, (2) articulates embedded assumptions about gender in organizational and interpersonal relationships, and (3) provides theory and suggested action aimed at restructuring power relationships" (p. 93).

Hegemony – for the purposes of this research, hegemony refers to the dominant male model of educational leadership (Blackmore, 2002; Reynolds, 2002; Strachan, 2002).

Leader – "the person as a catalytic force or facilitator. The leader, a catalytic force, is someone who by virtue of her/his position or opportunity empowers others toward the collective action in accomplishing the goal or vision" (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. 8).

21st Century Leadership – communication, empowerment, collective action. "Leadership is a process by which members of a group are empowered to work together synergistically toward a common goal or vision that will create change, transform institutions, and thus improve the quality of life" (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. 8).

Low-performing schools – For the purposes of this study, low-performing schools represent those in which student academic progress appears stagnant and unable to meet the Annual Yearly Progress standards of the NCLB. More specifically, state assessment scores place these schools in danger of losing accreditation. Within such schools, teacher morale is low while teacher burnout is high.

Personal causation – "the knowledge of oneself as a causal and motivated person, (which) forms the basis upon which all men (and women) learn to attribute motives to other people and ultimately to attribute causes in the physical world" (deCharms, 1968, p. 10).

Postmodernism – For the purposes of this study, postmodernism relates to the philosophical theory that helped dismantle gender-based, hierarchical structures imposed on women constructed to serve and maintain those in power. These structures came about during an industrial-era thrust for efficiency and productivity at the expense of the work force and a belief in positivistic epistemologies.

Power – in most instances discussed in this paper, power is synonymous with authoritarian leadership (Hargreaves, 2005). It is this power that has resulted in the oppression of marginalized individuals, usually teachers, within K-12 educational settings.

Relational leadership – leadership that fosters collaboration, leads with care and consideration of others, bases decisions on experience and heart, elicits input from all constituents in working toward a collective vision, and has the courage to take risks (Regan & Brooks, 1995).

SMART Goals – goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic , and Time bound (Conzemius & O'Neil, 2002).

Symbolic Interactionism – The development of personal identity results from engaging with and in the community (Rhoads, 1997). "Symbolic interactionism sees meaning as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact" (Blumer, 1969).

Statement of Intent

The intent of this study is to describe an Ethic of Care in practice as a necessary component of educational leadership by exploring the leadership of a female superintendent whom others perceive as an Ethic of Care exemplar.

Guiding Research Questions

The guiding questions that inform the researchers interpretations include:

1. What are the leadership practices that constitute an Ethic of Care approach to leadership?

2. How has en Ethic of Care leader shaped the culture of a school district?

Lambert (2003a) identifies the following factors as critical to high leadership capacity schools: (1) democratization and equity serve as core values; (2) as teacher leadership grows, the principal increasingly shares authority and responsibility; (3) teachers and principals identify themselves as learners, teachers and leaders; (4) principals engage teachers in problem-solving, releasing natural capacities for reciprocity; (5) participation and teamwork is standard; and (6) succession practices are built in to the political landscape. Fullan, Bertani and Quinn (2004) add that "the main mark of successful leaders is not their impact on student learning at the end of their tenure, but rather the number of good leaders they leave behind who can go even further" (p. 44). Hargreaves (2005) extends the concept of sustainable leadership to mean

> Not simply whether something can last, but how particular initiatives can be
>
> developed without compromising the development of others in the surrounding
>
> environment, now and in the future. Sustainable leadership means how your
>
> leadership affects other people around you . . .(it) is therefore fundamentally
>
> not just about keeping things going, but also about social justice, about your
>
> impact on other people, whom your actions affect over time. (p.18)

Professional Learning Communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) provide a structure for developing leadership capacity at the building level by structuring opportunities for

administration and faculty to engage in problem-solving teams by envisioning the

school as it can be, determining how to get there, identifying beliefs about teaching and

learning, making collective commitments toward increasing student achievement,

establishing a mindset of continual improvement, engaging in meaningful data analysis,

setting SMART goals, and supporting a "whatever it takes" attitude. Caution should be

taken, however, in how a professional learning community is introduced and established.

While some proponents of professional learning communities assert that, "PLC's are key

to meeting our goal of leaving no child behind" (Wilhelm, 2006, p. 28), others caution

that implementation is not as easy as it sounds (Bullough, 2007; Hord, 1997; Jordan,

2006; Wells & Feun, 2007). Jordan's (2006) case study revealed the necessity of

ongoing communication and feedback between administration and faculty while

Bullough (2007) listed five hurdles to reform: (1) teacher education and capacity

building, (2) inquiry/reflection/problem-solving, (3) sustained reform based trust and

relationships, (4) networking with other schools and universities, and (5) action research.

Other studies (Wells & Feun, 2007) validate the importance of approach and the

importance of cultivating a collaborative culture (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 1997).

Collaboration and participative decision-making must guide all program

implementations. Otherwise, teachers lack emotional investment and/or a clear

understanding of the goals (Wells & Feun, 2007).

While educational leaders tend to agree that "the principal continues to be the

most crucial factor in school improvement" (Lambert, 2006), this researcher endorses the

opinion that superintendents have the responsibility of establishing the climate of the

district. In remaining true to an instrumental case study, my interview questions serve to

draw on genuine discourse related to observed patterns of practice by a female

superintendent, as seen through her own eyes and those of immediate colleagues. I chose

questions to guide, but not lead. Analysis of audiotapes and transcribed interviews

follow a natural flow of idea, theme and theory development in the traditions of grounded

theory (Shank, 2002). Additionally, the use of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983)

serves to vividly capture the culture, values, styles, rituals, and connections through the

analyses and triangulation of data sets.

The initial queries posed to the participant take the form of exegesis

questions (Shank, 2002), which draw on generalized understandings of the educational

arena and are later verified in questions regarding specific practices. In other words, the

preliminary questions serve as instruments for drawing out the superintendent's

conceptions of what it means to lead, how it feels to be led, and the decision-making

processes observed under the current leadership (Appendix D). "Exegesis in social

science research centers on the idea that words, deeds, and settings can be understood as

if they were texts . . . It is the task and challenge of exegetical research questions to help

set up . . . more complex in-depth cultural and psychological readings" (Shank, 2002, p.

101).

Delimitations

This explorative study is delimited by the following factors:

1. This study is limited to observations and interviews of one female

    Superintendent, along with faculty interviews, surveys, and archival data.

2. Due to the intrusive nature of recorded interviews, faculty members may have

    addressed questions cautiously restricting full exposure of their perceptions and

evaluations of the superintendent's leadership.

3. The research goal relies on narrative traditions such as portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) to illuminate leadership in action.

4. Interpretations are necessarily filtered through personal experiences of the researcher as a female educator and administrative building leader of Latino descent.

5. Although a case study was intentionally chosen for the purpose of documenting leadership, which represents an Ethic of Care, the limited number of participants restrict generalizing results.

6. The application of an Ethic of Care to educational leadership and the resulting Ethic of Care principles are the sole interpretation of the researcher.

Summary

In the first chapter, the researcher describes personal experiences which led to an interest in exploring the Ethic of Care and educational leadership. While some studies focus on more obvious moral decision-making situations at central office regarding student suspensions and/or personnel matters, this study focuses on the less obvious, everyday decisions that superintendents and other administrators make affecting classroom teachers and, therefore, school climate. This study is based on the premise that an Ethic of Care is the overlooked ingredient for effective schools. Moreover, by leading with an Ethic of Care, district superintendents and school administrators may be able to most effectively enact the standards of leadership determined by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996). According to ISSLC officials, "The field of school leadership in the United States is

coalescing around the ISLLC Standards," (par. 2) as thirty-five states across the country have adopted them to date. The Ethic of Care speaks to each of the six standards by supplanting top-down management of schools with relational leadership.

Chapter 2 reviews literature related to the following topics: (1) a historical view of female superintendents, (2) the importance of incorporating an Ethic of Care into school leadership practice, and (3) feminist perspectives regarding feminist leadership characteristics.

Chapter 3 documents research design, data collection processes and analytical methods as well as protection of human subjects. In addition, the use of portraiture for presenting data is discussed.

Chapter 4 reports the research findings from triangulated data sets (district documents, observations, interviews and surveys), offering critical feedback for ensuring the sustainability of the Ethic of Care culture fostered throughout the school district.

Finally, Chapter 5 offers conclusions based on interpretation of data and recommendations for further research. Drawing from this study, the researcher outlines a set of Ethic of Care Principles to guide school superintendents, school boards, institutions of higher education, and building principals in developing caring leadership.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Now, more than ever, when No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) demands school leaders increase student achievement, when teachers face threats of termination, and when charter schools increasingly compete for students, the responsibilities of public school principals and superintendents continue to expand. Developing leadership at the classroom level becomes imperative to school success. The reaction by many schools to increased pressures is to embrace comprehensive school reforms that often impede as much as support the goal of increasing student achievement. Ineffective implementation, due to lack of teacher buy-in to new school curricula, stems from top-down mandates that then continue a cyclical pattern of failure. In addition, high-stakes tests determine whether Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) has taken place. The stress associated with annual reviews perpetuates the leadership by crisis cycle all over again. Perhaps a new approach to leadership is worth exploring.

Feminist scholars emphasize reconceptualizing organizational theory and give impetus to the creation and realization of a climate supporting an ethic of caring as a means of perceiving school reform as more than tinkering. It is to think differently about the structure of society and about the distribution of power. Feminist scholars advocate the creation of structural models that would support and sustain community, connection, interdependence, and commitment among all persons within an institution. An Ethic of Care would alter significantly the power structure of

schooling, which, in turn, would affect that of society in general. (Sernak, 1998, p. 15)

Historically, the rhetorical goal of education has been to develop leaders for tomorrow (students), while simultaneously restraining the individuals charged with that very task (teachers). Some researchers (Begley, 1999; Biklen & Brannigan, 1980; Helgesen, 1990; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Sernak, 1998) see the feminist attributes practiced through an Ethic of Care as missing ingredients to school success. The following discussion explores research addressing: (1) a historical view of female superintendents, (2) the importance of incorporating an Ethic of Care into school leadership practice, and (3) feminist perspectives regarding feminist leadership characteristics.

<center>Women in Leadership: Historical Narratives</center>

According to some, the realm of educational leadership, specifically the superintendency, comprises a powerful station that while traditionally considered a man's place, is more closely aligned to feminine prowess.

Women are destined to rule the schools of every city. I look for a large majority of the big cities to follow the lead of Chicago in choosing a woman for superintendent. In the near future we will have more women than men in executive charge of the vast educational system. It is women's natural field, and she is no longer satisfied to do the greatest part of the work and yet be denied leadership. As the first woman to be placed in control of the schools of a big city, it will be my aim to prove that no mistake has been made and to show cities and friends alike that a woman is better qualified for this work

than a man. (Flagg as cited in Blount, 1998, p. 1)

These words are from Ella Flagg Young, the first woman superintendent of the Chicago schools, from 1909-1915; she claimed the superintendency for women while simultaneously and unintentionally rallying opponents. Although the percentage of female superintendents rose from 1910 to 1930, reaching approximately 10 percent, a dramatic decrease occurred over the next 40 years, rising again only slightly between 1970-1990 (Blount, 1998; Tallerico & Blount, 2004).

Gendered Politics

In Blount's (1998) enquiry into historical data documenting the number of female superintendents following the Civil War, she not only discovered gender to be an often purposefully absent descriptor in related demographics, but that it was used as a pattern of deception as well. One annual report detailed the number of reindeer in Alaska according to sex, while negating a parallel compilation of data on superintendents. According to Blount (1998), President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women catalyzed more determined efforts for accurate accounting of women in educational leadership positions. Thus, the traditional perspective of the superintendency resulted from the manipulation and omission of gender-related statistics, a hegemonic reproduction of male dominance in educational leadership: "Historically, the exclusion of women from the public sphere has meant that men alone had access to the resources that allowed them to become socially respected and acknowledged intellectuals" (Weiler, 2001, p. 1). The 10 percent of women who have ascended to the superintendency faced and continue to face challenges reserved for those determined enough to break through the glass ceiling. Occurrences of obstacles faced by women seeking and/or serving in the

superintendency fill the covers of numerous books and scholarly papers written by educational and social researchers (Blount, 1998; Chapman, 1997; Chase, 1995; Hall, 1995; Hollingsworth, Lock, & Schmuck, 2002; Reynolds, 2002; Skrla, 2000b; Strachan, 2002; Tallerico, 2000).

Historical accounts of women seeking and serving in the superintendency reveal the gender-political straits at play in the educational arena (Grogan, 1999). In the 19th century, Sarah Stevens assumed the coveted position of Superintendent of Schools in one Minnesota county (Blount, 1998). Like many women entering a male domain, she discovered that expectations for her differed from those required for men. While male superintendents found it an arduous task to visit every school within their jurisdiction and seldom did, her re-election was challenged because she had failed to do so. Her appeal to the state was denied in spite of school improvement under her leadership. Moreover, up until the 1930's, superintendents were elected to office. Following Women's Suffrage, however, male-dominated superintendent organizations decided that superintendents should be appointed rather than elected (Blount, 1998). Thus, as soon as women were allowed to play the game of educational politics, the rules changed.

Decades later the Kinsey studies of male and female sexuality initiated a sense of gender polarization in the workplace, securing the placement of women in the classrooms as the nurturers and, simultaneously, as subordinate to male supervisors: "Women who desired to move into school administration found that their ambitions could be viewed as masculine, aggressive, ambitious, and inappropriate" (Blount, 1998, p. 107). Throughout the 60's, feminism drove the women's movement, culminating in the 1972 Title IX

Educational Amendment to the Civil Rights Act of 1964; this legislation offers citizens rights against gender discrimination in organizations receiving federal funding. The passing of this amendment initiated scores of lawsuits regarding sexual harassment, mandatory leave for pregnant women, male-only groups denying access to women, veteran's benefits for women, among others. Recent reports indicate that women pay as much as a third more than men for the same medical coverage (Pear, 2008). "Some insurance executives expressed surprise at the size and prevalence of the disparities, which can make a woman's insurance cost hundreds of dollars a year more than a man's. Women's advocacy groups have raised concerns about the differences, and members of Congress have begun to question the justification for them" (Pear, 2008). Inequities between men and women continue to exist in all areas of society.

Aspiring Female Superintendents: 21st Century Obstacles

According to Blount (1998), "Women still have not come close to attaining equitable representation in school administration the way it is now structured" (p. 145). More specifically, as of 1990, only five percent of superintendent positions were held by women (Blount, 1998). Between 2001 and 2008, the number of female superintendents in the state of Missouri increased by 6 percent, with a comparable decrease in the number of male superintendents. For example, in the 2001 school year, only 66 (14%) women served in the 479 superintendent positions across the state. Four years later, women held 17 percent (82) of the 484 superintendencies. By 2008, the number of female superintendents had increased to 99, with men serving in the remaining 397 (80%) superintendent seats (Missouri School Directory, 2001-2002, 2004-2005, 2008-2009).

Now, almost twenty years after Blount's count, the ratio of female to male

superintendents has not equalized. If history tells us anything, it is that change takes time

and typically materializes from revolt against social systems embedded with modernistic

constraints. Some research (Chapman, 1997; Grogan, 1999; Tallerico, 1999; Tallerico,

2000) on the coveted office of superintendent suggests that responsibilities and strategic

positioning associated with the position appeal to few women. Typically, moving up the

ladder in education means moving away from the children, the creative synergy within

the classroom, the instructional processes, and frequently from an interdependent circle

of educators. Thus, the top of the ladder resembles a political seat to which the occupant

is chained and from which the occupant prioritizes and balances the needs of every

constituent.

In Chapman's (1997) study of 18 first-year superintendents, the following topics

were explored: methods of successful entry, the development of the superintendent

identity, time management, job related stressors and critical events. Superintendents in

Chapman's study revealed that prior experience in central office, time spent listening to

constituents, and collaborative culture-building afforded them successful entry.

Community and district-wide visibility, collaborative decision-making and research-

based practice served to establish professional identities. The first year leaders found

prioritizing and focusing on goals, scheduling their day, and delegating responsibilities

helpful in meeting the on-going demands of the job. Some strategies for handling the

stressors of the superintendency included the following: exercise, improved

communications with school constituents, fostering district-wide commitment and

journaling experiences. Finally, critical challenges such as fiscal matters and accusations

of sexual abuse of children by teachers, were typical across the districts of the superintendents in the study (Chapman, 1997).

In spite of the political responsibilities that limit the most well-intentioned leader, the self-efficacy of some women in education drives them to seek the superintendency. Their determination to make a difference on a large scale looks beyond the politics and seeks to transform the system, paving the way for post-modern practice. Such change can only be led by those who have experienced the status quo and know it to be limiting for teachers and students. Chase (1995), an associate professor of sociology and co-founder of the women's studies program at the University of Tulsa, examined the experiences of female superintendents as shared in personal narratives in order to expose the conditions under which they strove for success. Her studies uncovered familiar characteristics of power and discrimination experienced by these educational leaders. She further explored how they made sense of their contradictory experiences of power and subjection – their ambiguous empowerment. Reflecting the philosophies of symbolic interactionists, Chase believes that individual identity develops through the social interactions in which one participates and encounters on a daily basis (Deegan, 1987; Bruner, 1990).

According to Blumer (1969), "symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact" (p. 5). Historically speaking, those with power have defined societal roles for women (Blount, 1998). Blumer (1969) goes on to say that, "Social interaction is a process that forms human conduct . . ." (p. 8). This is a "dual process of indicating to others how to act and of interpreting the indications made by others" (p. 10). Women

seeking the superintendency bypass the historically established concepts of a

superintendent and the gender associated with the role only to face the gatekeepers

(recruiters and school board members) who judge them accordingly (Chase & Bell, 1994;

Tallerico, 2000). If symbolic interactionism is correct in theorizing that, "We see

ourselves through the way in which others see or define us," (Blumer, p.13) women are

beginning to redefine their roles by determining how they want to be seen by others

(Regan & Brooks, 1995).

Due to the historically, male-dominated, political nature of the superintendency,

however, women often feel the need to acclimate to the traditional form of leadership in

order to be seen as credible, competent and qualified for the position of the

superintendent (Chase, 1995).   Moreover, female superintendents (and principals) often

experience dualities on more than one front (Grogan, 2000). In addition to wrestling with

external, profession-related politics for equal respect in a role predominantly held by

men, women superintendents face internal conflicts in regards to how they respond or fail

to respond to female principals and teachers for whom they have the potential to serve as

a role model. These female leaders are often accused of *co-optation* ---"women acting

like men, of caring only for their own success, of denying subjection shared by others----

securing upward mobility by denying connection to one's gender or racial group,

espousing the values of success and individualism" (Chase, 1995, p. 183).

The very characteristics co-opted by female leaders are typically associated with the

moral development of white males (Gilligan, 1982) and quite the opposite of the

relational tendencies of women. Grogan (2000) describes this as a departure from the

nurturing, relational role of teacher to a role traditionally requiring one to distance

themselves from others. This new role equally fosters a distance between the superintendent and his / her own family as the demands of being an astute politician, skilled in forming coalitions, garnering resources and problem-solving often takes precedence over personal matters (Grogan, 2000). I would go farther in saying that many women seeking the superintendency face the moral dilemma of choosing between being themselves (connected to others) and becoming the traditional superintendent prototype (disconnected from others), a dilemma that results in few female applicants. While some women in the superintendency strive to improve school success by establishing educational democracy that honors all voices, by exhibiting commitments to emancipatory praxis, and by seeking to be change facilitators (Hall, 1995), most conform to traditional hierarchical models.

Forced to choose between their professional commitments to district policies/interests and their desire to fight inequality, female superintendents find themselves reproducing the hegemonic culture of the past. Garn and Brown's (2008) study exploring how 15 female superintendents experienced issues of gender bias found they "became adept at utilizing both stereotypical male and female characteristics and reactions to combat difficult situations. They were tough or compassionate, collaborative or dictatorial, depending on what the situation required" (pp. 65-66).

Linda Skrla (2000a), conducted an analytic exploration of the aftermath of broken silence by female, public school superintendents regarding gender bias and discrimination. She cited Bjork (1999) in describing the superintendency as "the most gender stratified executive position in the country" (p. 1). Washington, Miller, and Fiene (2007) state, "The superintendency has been and remains one of the bastions of male

dominance" (p. 263). Literature regarding female principals and superintendents is replete with issues of gender, race, power, disillusionment, and leadership practices (Alston, 1999; Blackmore, 2002; Hollingsworth, Lock & Schmuck, 2002; Ortiz, 1999; Short & Scribner, 2000).

Women aspiring to the top-most executive position within school districts face embedded challenges to their ideals of leadership and visions of transforming leadership in the eyes of others (Grogan, 1999). On one hand, one might ponder why any woman would want to put herself in that position. On the other hand, however, many believe that only a woman can liberate the position of the superintendent for other women. According to Chase (1995), "Women superintendents devote themselves primarily to their professional commitments and manage to deal with the persistent inequalities they face in ways that do not distract them from their work" (p. 5). Her inquiry into the personal narratives of female superintendents revealed "how professional women (superintendents) shape their self-understandings and how they make sense of their contradictory experiences of power and subjection" (p.5). Chase cited Friedson's (1986) observations of administrative work that requires women to honor professional commitments to the organization while balancing the needs of the rank and file. The pressures of public opinion were additionally recognized. Public reviews may add to gender-bias by judging female superintendents according to socially determined gender norms. One female superintendent in Chase's study asserted, "Understanding the fact of men's greater power and accepting men's support are crucial to women's success in the field" (p. 124).

Comparable to the societal restraints, limitations, and boundaries perpetually

placed before people of color, the bureaucracy and hierarchy of the educational system determines the privileges afforded to female educators.   In her book, *Destined to Rule the Schools: Women and the Superintendency, 1873-1995*, Blount (1998) concludes with a powerful thought regarding the hidden curriculum in schools:

> And so we must be mindful of how schools are structured. Students observe who has power in schools, who makes the rules, who enforces the rules and how those with less power must respond. They understand that administrators are usually men and teachers are usually women; thus they absorb profound lessons about the roles men and women are expected to fill in our larger society. If we continue to support schools that systematically distribute power unequally by sex and gender, we send a forceful message to students about women's worth, their potential and their place in society. (p. 196)

Given the reality of many school cultures and the encumbrances faced by women seeking to make a difference through leadership, Tallerico (2000) researched recruitment and selection practices of school boards in their quest for district leaders. Her study validates the disparate experiences of women and offers insight for superintendent aspirants as well as suggestions for paving the way for others. Once in office, women can foster change by reviewing past hiring data to inform future practice, grooming leadership talent within their districts and state, provide a multi-year induction process for new superintendents, and contribute to positive belief systems regarding applicant pools. By embracing these practices, female superintendents mentor the leadership capacity of others.

If one female characteristic could be identified as the quality most often absent in

male leadership that would be one noted in the Washington et al. (2007) study of

Kentucky's female superintendents. Upon examining the data, "all participants of the

study saw the (female) superintendents as instructional leaders who were teachers at

heart" (p. 272). It is this very quality that speaks to the worthiness of female leadership

at the superintendent level. Feminist literature (Amedy, 1999; Barbie, 2004; Garn &

Brown, 2008; Grogan, 1999; Helgesen, 1990; Hines, 1999; Hipskind, 2000; Ho, 2004;

Kropiewnicki & Shapiro, 2001; Pew, 2002; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Rosen, 1993;

Shakeshaft, 1989; Sherman, 1992; Tannen, 1994; Washington, 2002), in fact, identifies

several qualities of leadership associated specifically to female leaders.

By affording more qualified women access to the superintendency in lieu of their

white male counterparts who exhibit a charismatic fire-in-the-belly speech with all the

right words, 21st century school boards promote equitable hiring practices and send the

message that they are skilled enough to see through fire and smoke interviews.

Moreover, by validating an ethic of care as a valuable leadership approach for

educational leaders, women and men receive the message that caring leadership is a

viable alternative to the traditional authoritarian paradigm.

<div align="center">The Ethic of Care</div>

In 1982, Gilligan published a study exploring moral decision-making by women

using real-life moral dilemmas. This study came as a reaction to Kohlberg's (1975)

cognitive-development theory, using hypothetical moral dilemmas, delineating widely

accepted stages of moral development; the scoring protocols of Kohlberg's study,

according to Gilligan (1982), favored a justice-orientation to decision making over care-

oriented reasoning. Thus began "the so-called justice-care debate between Lawrence

Kohlberg and his colleagues on one hand and care-theorists on the other" (Sherblom, 2008). Brabeck (1993) contrasted each side of the debate by saying

> Gilligan has described a morality of responsibility based on a concept of harmony and nonviolence and a recognition of the need for compassion and care for self and others. This is in contrast to Kohlberg's morality of justice, which is based on a concept of reciprocity and fairness and a recognition that one must respect the rights of others as well as one's own. For Gilligan an Ethic of Care is achieved through perceptions of one's self as connected to others; for Kohlberg an ethic of rights is achieved through a process of separation and individuation of self from others. For Gilligan moral dilemmas are contextual and are resolved through inductive thinking; for Kohlberg moral principles are universal and are applied to moral dilemmas through formal and abstract thinking. (p. 36)

In Sherblom's (2008) assessment of Gilligan's work, he offers that "Gilligan actually made no explicit statements claiming that all women are alike in their experiences, their perceptions of the world or in their moral reasoning; or that men and women are entirely unalike" (p. 84). Sherblom (2008) did, however, cite numerous quotes from Gilligan's work in which these generalizations were implied. Brabeck (1993) confirms that

> Women, it is frequently assumed, are more intuitive, empathetic, selfless, kind-(and weak) hearted, while men are more deliberate, judicial, and rational in moral choices. Such stereotypes assume dualistic categorization maintained on gender specific lines (pp. 33-34).

Brabeck (1993) further suggests that

> When Gilligan's and Kohlberg's theories are taken together, the moral person is

seen as one whose moral choices reflect reasoned and deliberate judgments that

ensure justice be accorded to each person while maintaining a passionate concern

for the well-being and care of each individual. Justice and care are then joined;

the demands of universal principles and specific moral choices are bridged, and

the need for autonomy and for interconnection are united by an enlarged and more

adequate conception of morality. (p. 48)

Critics of the Care Theory

Critics of the care theory argue that "(Gilligan's) work trumpets aspects of

women's experience found defective, deficient, or undervalued by the broader culture"

(Larrabee, 1993, p. 5). Stack (1993) adds that "Gilligan's theory is a powerful and

persuasive theory that derives a female model of moral development from the moral

reasoning of primarily white, middle-class women in the United States" (p. 110).

Moreover, Sherblom (2008) argues that "feminist critics focused on Gilligan's

interpretation of care as a feminine ethic, her far-reaching conclusion based on small-

scale qualitative studies and the feared regressive effects of promoting the Ethic of Care

among women as a moral norm" (p. 83). Gilligan (1993) offered this reply to her critics:

I am saying that the study of women calls attention to the different ways of

constituting the self and morality. I call concepts of self and morality (typically

defined in the patriarchal or male-dominated tradition) in question by giving

examples of women who constitute these ideas differently and hence tell a

different story about human experience. My critics equate care with feelings,

which they oppose to thought, and imagine caring as passive or confined to some

separate sphere. I describe care and justice as two moral perspectives that

organize both thinking and feelings and empower the self to take different kinds

of action in public as well as private life. (pp. 207-209)

Rhoads (1997) examined the experiences of female and male college students

engaged in service learning projects over a six year period. The data collected informed

his argument that "caring is an ethic that can be fostered" and that "by fostering an ethic

of care, higher learning encourages the sense of otherness necessary for group actions

across difference to occur" (p. 2).

What better venue to model and develop the Ethic of Care than in a school or school

system in which social interaction is a constant? His studies verified the insight of

Gilligan (1982) that the feminist perspective on male and female roles shapes individual

approaches to others. In their different journeys toward self-conception, particularly in

U. S. modern culture, women get acculturated to seek connectedness, while men often are

taught to quest for autonomy (Gilligan, 1982). A woman's sense of identity is strongly

aligned with establishing intimacy, whereas for men, identity seems to precede intimacy

(Baier, 1993). In regards to moral reasoning, some writers claim that women tend to view

moral decisions on the basis of personal connections, while men weigh the scales of

justice (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan incorporates the work of Chodorow (1974, 1978) who

studied socialization differences between boys and girls, as well as Lever's studies of

boys and girls at play (Nicholson, 1993). Chodorow (1974) proposed that,

> In any given society, feminine personality comes to define itself in relation and
>
> connection to other people more than masculine personality does. In psychoanalytic
>
> terms, women are less individuated than men; they have more flexible ego
>
> boundaries. (p. 44)

From her studies, Chodorow (1974) interpreted "a quality of embeddedness in social interaction and personal relationships" (p. 57) as characteristic to women's lives due to their inter-generational interactions. Men, she suggested, interact "in a single-generation world of age mates" (p. 57). Although, "no claim is made that all women reason thus (care-oriented only), nor that all men reason otherwise (justice-oriented only)" Grogan, 1999, p. 275), Flanagan and Jackson (1993) assert that, "recent research shows that while most people introduce both care and justice considerations when discussing moral problems, over two-thirds present three-quarters or more considerations in one mode or the other" (Flanagan & Jackson, 1993).

Chase (1995) illustrated an example of a moral dilemma in her book. One female superintendent described a situation in which she had been overlooked for a district position for which she possessed qualifications and experience. The man hired was not certified in education and had to apply for provisional certification. He had no previous experience in the responsibilities outlined for the position. Not only had the position she sought been given to a man less qualified, she had the task of training him for the job. When faced with this precarious situation, she chose to teach him everything she knew. She sought to equip him to do the best possible job he could for the sake of the students. When put to the scales, the existence of personal connections to the needs of the students outweighed the strength of the unjust hiring practices within that community. Her commitment to the children overshadowed the questions of right and wrong, fair or unfair, as exemplifying an Ethic of Care.

Care must be taken to view Gilligan's (1982) Ethic of Care theory, first, within the context of its origin as "a female model of moral development from the moral reasoning

of primarily white, middle-class women in the United States" (Stack, 1993, p. 110).

Stack (1993), a notable ethnographer of African-American women living in poverty in

urban America, points out that "as Black and third-world feminist researchers have

emphasized, gender is a construct shaped by the experiences of race, class, culture, caste,

and consciousness" (pp. 110-111). For that reason, it is important to note that this study

does not intend to propose that school leaders endorse the Ethic of Care theory of

morality, but rather that they recognize the principles of relationship, caring and voice, as

they pertain to an Ethic of Care and to basic human needs, as valuable components of

leadership. Moreover, by leading with Ethic of Care principles, recognizing and

addressing the needs of all constituents, cultural responsiveness (Valenzuela, 1999)

becomes a district-wide emphasis rather than a classroom issue.

Caring in Schools

A special *Phi Delta Kappan* issue (1995) promoted the infusion of *care* into

schools in a series of articles. Authors suggested incorporating themes of caring into the

curricula (Noddings, 1995) and creating clusters for instruction rather than grade-levels

(Newberg, 1995). Epstein (1995) wrote about the importance of schools partnering with

parents in facilitating the academic success of students, while Noblit, Rogers and

McCadden (1995) insisted that care should be the what, how and whom of instruction.

So issues such as discipline, student groupings, daily schedule, hiring, professional

development, assessment, reward and so on fall under an Ethic of Care. Even Lipsitz

(1995) ends her prologue by saying that care evidenced through mutuality and reciprocity

is necessary for humanity and democracy.

Responding to these appeals, school systems embraced character education, sending groups of teachers and principals to seminars, conferences and academies for the sole purpose of making character (not just caring) a topic of discussion and practice in classrooms across the country. As discussed in Chapter 1, in many cases, the infusion of Character Education began as a top-down decision, leaving teachers in some schools less than enthusiastic about a much needed program (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

This is not to imply that developing student character is not a worthy charge for education. In fact, character education has become a mainstay in schools across the country, thanks to the care perspective (Noddings, 1984; Sherblom, 2008). The underlying issue lies in the approach and delivery of the reform to teachers. Beck (1994) suggests that:

A caring ethic --- with its enduring commitment to persons, its concern with the continued ecological health of schools and their related communities, and its view that human needs must not be ignored --- has the potential to ground and focus administrative thought and to protect educators from being swayed by quick-fix, short-term solutions to complex problems. (p. 71)

I would argue that best practice in character education requires leaders to explore the intricacies of the character education initiative with the individuals who will be held accountable for the implementation, prior to institutionalizing related policies. Perhaps establishing a character culture between administration and teachers in order to model and facilitate integrity, honesty, care, trustworthiness, and so on among students would be a first quality step (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). If teachers are not given opportunities to participate in instructional decision-making, how can they effectively mold responsible

students? If principals exhibit an air of detachment in lieu of empathy toward their

teachers, what would motivate teachers to exhibit and develop empathy and care in the

classroom? While teachers are capable of teaching these traits without having

experienced them from their leaders, my experiences involving teachers who are denied

personal experiences of nurturing character traits (i.e. respect, integrity, honesty and care)

confirm that teachers reveal a sense of bitter resentment when asked by administration to

implement programs contradictory to the school culture.

Until schools dismantle hierarchical systems for more flattened structures of

shared decision-making, care (and by care I mean an Ethic of Care) will reach only as far

as the status of the practitioner, limited to isolated classrooms rather than permeating

entire schools and school systems. According to Beck (1994),

> Care offers a perspective necessary to and capable of guiding day-to-day
>
> activities and interactions within schools. Caring assumes that individuals are
>
> interrelated and interdependent and so life is, fundamentally, a process of mutual
>
> growth. In so far as day-to-day activities are aimed at enhancing this
>
> development, an Ethic of Care holds promise for enhancing the lives of principals,
>
> teachers and students. (pp. 76-77)

Leadership stemming from an Ethic of Care molds "Origins" instead of "Pawns"

(deCharms, 1968); facilitates empowerment instead of powerlessness; infiltrates schools

with commitment and investment instead of forced compliance and lack of motivation;

and liberates voice instead of fostering marginalization.   An Ethic of Care culture

(fostered by a caring superintendent) filters into each school (experienced by and in turn

fostered by each principal) saturating classrooms. Teachers then develop a sense of being

an "Origin" (deCharms, 1968) with an increased level of self-efficacy and self-direction equipping students to be the leaders and autonomous, critical thinkers of tomorrow. "What seems . . . to be most important in advocating an Ethic of Care is that it provides a foundation of respect upon which to build relationships, thus promoting a sense of interdependence" (Grogan, 1999, p. 275). In schools in which the orientation speech from leaders includes statements such as, "I'm not here to make friends", the value of an Ethic of Care in central office cannot be discounted.

Beck (1994) agrees "that students, teachers and administrators deserve a supporting, nurturing, educational environment --- simply because they are persons" (p. 64). It is imperative that alternatives to the traditional male-dominated hierarchy that still influences the experiences of many educators in the U.S. be modeled for those seeking the superintendency. The role of the superintendent is crucial in creating thriving, learning cultures for both students and staff. Sernak (1998) concluded that "attempts to create an ethic of caring within bureaucratic organizations become a politics of caring, an integration of caring and power" (p. 18). This is due primarily because of the power relationships at play. Sernak (1998) further asserts that:

> As a politics of caring, it challenges males to integrate caring into their public as well as private lives; it necessitates a collective effort to implement and support caring; and it posits a balance of community with individualism, connection with autonomy, and interdependence with independence. An ethic of caring contests the notion of bureaucratic hierarchy as the best model on which to base organizational and leadership theory and practice. (p. 30)

This study seeks to document the vision and practical effects on a district lead by an

experienced superintendent who is perceived to lead through an Ethic of Care.

Feminist Perspectives

Grogan (2000) validates the utilization of feminist thought for the purpose of reconceptualizing educational leadership. Specifically, the feminist lens offers (1) gender driven research, (2) the use of historically-marginalized perspectives, and (3) a "paradigm of social criticism" (p. 126). Grogan adds that "feminist scholarship advocates action that results in a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities for those who have been marginalized" (p. 126). Rhoads (1997) further asserts that feminism not only maintains that the self is developed relationally but that connections to others and an Ethic of Care should be the goal of humanity. Given that the majority of the teaching force, particularly at formative elementary years of schooling, continues to be women, I believe the Ethic of Care exuded by a relational leader would not only serve to emancipate the voices of teachers, but also to foster the leadership capacity necessary for them to see themselves as the leaders.

Patriarchal educational systems have historically developed, implemented and enforced top-down decisions which teachers followed under fear of retribution. Historically patriarchic patterns of leadership create pockets of rebellion; teachers close their doors and teach how and what they feel is best for students. In spite of the existing power structures, such teachers desire to make a difference and are still driven by personal determination or personal causation: "Personal causation is the initiation by an individual of behavior intended to produce a change in his environment" (deCharms, 1968, p. 6). This drive, according to deCharms, is "the desire to be the master of one's fate" (pp. 269-70).

Symbolic interactionists (Deegan & Hill, 1987) define gender as a socially learned construct. Women learn, according to socially acceptable mores, how to behave in gender-specific ways, as do men. Social interactions with family, friends, community, media and textbooks assist individuals in developing masculine or feminine identities. Within school systems, socially constructed definitions for gender traditionally placed women in the classroom and men in the office (Blount, 1998, 1999). This reflected the familial expectations of the woman in the kitchen with a child on her hip while the man earned the money at the office (Kimmel, 2004). The placement of women in such dependent postures to men is no longer palatable in the 21st century although the paradigm shift is occurring slower in the market place than in private homes (Grogan, 1996).

Conflicting realities related to these socially-defined gender expectations result in social disorganization. Two income families have replaced yesterday's Ozzie and Harriet families, as women often bring home comparable pay-checks to their husbands. In some instances, role reversals allow the man to stay home while the wife earns the household wage. School systems, however, continue to foster gender-bias and marginalization by minimizing (teacher) voice in instructional decisions. Within an ever-thriving hierarchy the one leader identified to lead is usually a district man. "The fact that male perspectives tend to dominate our social and educational structures highlights how certain identities – in this case the identities of men – get situated in our culture as superior" (Rhoads, 1997, p. 54). Grogan (1999) writes that "A feminist approach motivates us to seek ways to disrupt the social structures that have reproduced the patterns of domination and subordination in our everyday lives" (p. 274). This is not to say that all school

districts espouse the philosophy that women and children are to remain silent and obey. What it does mean is that our gender identities "are a fluid assemblage of the meanings and behaviors that we construct from the values, images and prescriptions we find in the world around us" (Kimmel, 2004).

In fact, the most affluent and thriving school systems seem to function on a moral plane of care. One such system that nurtures decision-making on the part of teachers is Adlai Stephenson High School in Illinois. This school adheres to the collaborative philosophy of former superintendent Rick DuFour (1998). Embedded into their culture of community is a disposition toward critical inquiry as continual improvement influences day-to-day team decision-making in regards to student achievement and instruction. Lambert (2003a) described a similar occurrence within an affluent school district in St. Louis where teachers experimented with "self-organization" (p. 76) in professional development. Teachers worked in teams to develop professional learning agendas aligned to district standards. Both districts, interestingly, enjoy the benefits of being embedded in a high socio-economic status (SES) geographic area.

On the other end of the SES continuum schools exist in which at least 90% of the students are culturally and ethically diverse, eligible for free and reduced lunch, and meet high academic standards (Reeves, 2000). What makes schools and systems from both sides of the tracks work effectively? The organizational structure of these systems are more reflective of the flattened hierarchies in which teachers and administrators collaborate as colleagues, engage in data-driven decision making and capitalize on the strengths of the teaching staff, developing the capacity of the school to run effectively, independent of an administrator. The educational leaders of these schools are also more

likely to manifest Taft's (1987) "consciousness of self and consciousness of meaning" (p. 33). These educational leaders intellectually and emotionally anticipate the reactions of others (teachers) in accordance with interactions between them. Individuals and groups are approached in a sensitive yet respectful and professional manner leaving all parties on equal standing: *Sensitive* in that the leader envisions the communicative behaviors necessary in a given situation; *respectful* and *professional* in that the leader establishes an environment of collectivism in lieu of mental subordination. It is not only the leadership style that makes the difference in leadership but the coupling of an effective style with an awareness of and willingness to engage with those being led.

Sergiovanni (1990) further suggests that effective school leaders practice transformative rather than transactional leadership: "In transactional leadership (or leadership by bartering), leaders and followers exchange needs and services in order to accomplish independent activities" (p. 31). Such leadership requires little interaction between administration and faculty and can be seen in schools where teachers only see the principal during evaluations. Hargreaves (2005) describes this leadership practice as "rational, linear, hierarchical, secretive, and controlling", and argues that it exhibits as "power over" rather than "power with" (p. 16). Transformative leadership (leadership by building), in contrast, unites leaders and followers in the pursuit of common goals: "Ultimately, transformative leadership becomes moral (leadership by bonding) because it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led" (p. 32). Transformative leadership at its highest level (banking) coincides with Lamberts' (2003) concept of sustaining leadership capacity: "Banking seeks to routinize school improvements, conserving human energy and effort" (p. 32).

This study began with my own stories and the stories of others (Artis, 2003). As such, a feminist standpoint (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002) emerged that invites the reader to explore the constructs of knowledge and power as they are situated in the experiences of women in the field of education.

A feminist standpoint is possible if women generally experience life differently from men because they live in different social relationships to men's experience of power, and if they experience material differences in gendered conditions of life. Women can understand the social world from a feminist standpoint insofar as they share a common material situation (gender subordination) and develop a common political consciousness (feminism). (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 68)

According to Rhoads (1997), "Postmodernism is characterized by an unabashed questioning of all that we have come to know . . ." (Rhoads, 1997, p.1). Unfortunately, much of what we have come to know about educational leadership, learning communities and student achievement is rendered meaningless if not authentically approached and implemented. "Feminist postmodern perspectives provide the tools needed to disrupt or deconstruct the language / discourse about communication as it is constructed within the traditional social structures of educational administration" (Brunner, 2002, p. 403).

Grogan (2000) explains that "our understanding of the ways we should behave and what we should think in the various discourses within which we are positioned are dependent on our relative power in each discourse" (p. 127). The following scenario is a case in point. In the summer of 2002, a new female principal joined a rural school district comprised of a primary (K-2) building, an intermediate (3-5) building, a middle school (6-8), and a high school (9-12) which collectively accommodated 1,400 students.

By October, it was necessary for students to exit the intermediate building for the remainder of the school year due to suspected black mold and plumbing issues. Since the primary building possessed the capacity to stretch its space by making music and art mobile, and by placing both reading specialists in the same large classroom, and combining two Special Education classrooms, the five third grade classrooms could then be accommodated in the building.

The female principal of the primary building toured the halls with a board member and her school counselor to determine the best placement for the incoming classes. Given the fact that school had been in session for approximately one quarter, during which time the students had settled into their routines and their classroom environments, the principal and her advisors agreed that while the move was necessary for the intermediate students, care was to be taken to prevent unnecessary transitions for the younger students. At the next administrative meeting, the superintendent handed out a map of the primary building indicating that five of the existing classrooms in the primary building were to move to the empty classrooms in the building so that the third grade students could be together at the end of the hall. The male superintendent had consulted the male principal of the intermediate school and the male transportation director in developing the plan; he had not consulted with the K-2 principal who was taking in the five third grade classrooms. This single situation provides a paradigm case of the underlying discourse within this rural school setting, illuminating the powerful and the powerless, the decision-makers and the voiceless.

"The discourses in which we participate teach us what to do and how to do things approved by the discourse and how to avoid what is proscribed" (Grogan, 2000, p. 127).

Through the course of induction, a new superintendent acclimates to the expectations of the position, becoming subject to the pre-established rules, accommodating and internalizing discursive underpinnings. In the scenario above, the female principal finds herself in a subjective position to the established discursive practices within the rural school district. She will adopt the assigned subject position (becoming a Pawn) or question the discursive practices facing her (demonstrating an Origin identity) (deCharms, 1968). In this particular case, the K-2 principal stood her ground and with the support of a female school board member worked with the superintendent to compromise on classroom arrangements. "The awareness that knowledge is contested and that what counts as knowledge depends on the relative power of those who claim it urges a critical analysis of the power relations that contribute to a local context" (Grogan, 2000, pp. 128-29).

Educational leadership, historically entrenched in male dominance, espouses a universal discourse. If gone unquestioned or unchallenged, the discursive knowledge and power within the superintendency remains intact. By contesting the decision of the power players in the rural school district, the female principal redirects the male perspective from efficiency to the dynamics of classroom culture and the effects of building-wide disequilibrium on an entire grade level of second graders. A feminist stance questions and counters the discourses, subjectivities, knowledge and power associated within educational leadership.

Redefining Educational Leadership

Relational leadership, based in an Ethic of Care, redefines the traditional "power, control and authority" constructs of leadership into what Sergiovanni (1990) describes as:

Value-added leadership . . . authority (that) takes on moral characteristics. In this

sense, leadership is not a right but a responsibility. Its purpose is not to enhance the

leader but the school. Leaders administer to the needs of the school by being of

service and providing help. (p. 28)

Hargreaves (2005) asserts that part of that leadership responsibility involves developing

sustainable leadership. While Lambert (2003) speaks of sustainability in terms of

maintaining initiatives beyond the current leadership, Hargreaves (2005) sees

sustainability as possessing social justice implications: "Sustainable leadership is not just

about keeping things going but also about your impact on other people, whom your

efforts affect over time" (p. 18). To that argument, Hargreaves and Fink (2004) add the

necessity of planning for succession "from the first day of a leader's appointment" (p.

10). Sustainability is necessary to reduce or eliminate the recurrent cycle of

disequilibrium that accompanies the entrance of new principals and superintendents.

With each new leader comes a new agenda while leadership practices remain constant.

In volatile urban districts, this "revolving door leadership syndrome" (Navarro, Ingram &

Tefari, 2007) makes change the problem, not the solution.

Such discourse in the area of school leadership reinforces the part an Ethic of Care

must play in the 21st-century school system. "Responsibilities and relationships, rather

than rights and rules, are at its center" (Sernak, 1998, p. 11). During the past decade and

beyond, feminist researchers (Amedy, 1999; Barbie, 2004; Beck, 1994; DeVore, 2006;

Garn & Brown, 2008; Grogan, 1999; Hanson, 2000; Hines, 1999; Hipskind, 2000; Ho,

2004; Pew, 2002; Kropiewnicki & Shapiro, 2001; Rosen, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1992;

Sernak, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1989; Sherman, 1992; Washington, 2002) have pointed

educational leaders toward paradigm reconstruction in which superintendents and

"principals lead from the center rather than the top" (Lezotte, 1997, p. 20), where

superintendents and principals embrace "less command and control and more learning

and leading, less dictating and more orchestrating" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 184),

where superintendents and principals "act as partners with teachers, involved in a

collaborative quest to examine practices and improve schools . . . not to control teachers

but to create opportunities for them to grow and develop" (Lieberman, 1995, p. 9).

    While Superintendents frequently perform duties away from schools and teachers,

their influence is constant. For this reason, superintendents must take the initiative to

model effective leadership practices for and with the principals who, in turn, provide day-

to-day leadership for staff and students.   A trickle down effect is experienced, is

amplified, in school districts within each state. From my experience, if the

superintendent presents a stoic, indifferent, uncommunicative, anti-social persona,

principals reflect a sense of neglect and solitude which is shared by their closest

colleagues - teachers. If, on the other hand, a superintendent exhibits a nurturing, caring,

collaborative, participatory demeanor, principals receive positive and critical feedback

for improvement and are able to provide the same for their teachers.   According to

Rhoads (1997), "Women, through the development of a sense of connectedness, may be

more adept in taking the role of the other . . . and hence better suited for understanding

one's self through the reflections of the other" (p. 47).

An Ethic of Care, practiced in schools through the feminist attributes of relational

leadership, dismantles historic power structures within educational leadership,

empowering teachers to embrace proactive practices (Joyce & Showers, 1988); engage in

critical reflection (Schon, 1987); and address human conflict (Hargreaves, 1995).

Hargreaves (1995) attributes typical teacher resistance to professional development

and/or the implementation of new programs to the following factors: (1) school

improvement initiatives are imposed and mandated; (2) there are too many professional

development initiatives; (3) implementations are contradictory and overwhelming in

demands (p. 13). Additionally, most teachers have not been included in the decision-

making process and are left to implement new behaviors in isolation. Other reasons

professional development fails involves off-site courses and one-shot workshops that are

not applicable to the classroom. These are often implemented in isolation (Guskey,

1995).

Of twelve schools participating in the comprehensive school improvement (CSI)

programs discussed in chapter one, nine were required to obtain 80 percent teacher

approval to be accepted. In most cases, teachers felt resigned to the fact that the reform

would take place regardless of their approval rating, felt pressured to approve the model,

or were angry at having the reform thrust upon them (Vernez & Goldhaber, 2006).

Kilgore (2006) explicates the change process in which teachers realize the need for

change, contribute to the possibilities, understand the disorientation and lack of

proficiency that comes with change, and receive administrative support and

encouragement throughout the process: "Anything less leads to compliance-driven

behavior, where teachers exhibit the desired signals of change but shift few of their

instructional practices" (Kilgore, 2006, p. 29). Hord (1997) also stresses the important role the change process plays in school reform by asserting that, "educators must come to an intimate understanding of the process of change in order for implementation to be successful and for the promises of new practices to be realized" (Preface, para. 1).

More often than not, teacher buy-in is consistent with teacher manipulation on the part of school administration. In other words, teacher buy-in is an inevitable, often required, component of any given district mandate, to be obtained willfully or under pressure. Teachers seeking placement for summer assignments may ignore frustrations toward a district initiative; voicing opposition could mean forfeiting an upcoming opportunity. Transforming leadership from the traditional hierarchical hegemonic paradigm into one based on an Ethic of Care may remove the concern for and pursuit of teacher buy-in by replacing manipulative strategies with an embedded "collegial culture that allows for data-driven reflection upon teaching and learning" (Kilgore, 2006, pp 26-27). According to Sernak (1998), "To create schools in which caring is the norm, requires purposefully disturbing the web of power relations with the interweaving and intersecting of caring. That requires reconceptualizing power to include a caring dimension" (p.132).

Entrenched social, political and moral issues in education pose dilemmas for school and district leaders interested in transforming leadership practices. "Schools are trapped by a leadership dilemma: they require skilled, effective principals in order to outgrow their utter dependence on those principals" (Donahoe, 1993, p. 300). Research on results-oriented schools (Schmoker, 1996, 2001) and educational leadership encourage and validate this necessary and long awaited transition that could open the proverbial

floodgates to reform.

The reforms, which are currently in force in many schools and districts across the nation (Schmoker, 2001), coupled with the standards of performance expectations for school administrators (ISLLC Standards), requires school leaders to ensure that their schools are organized and aligned for success. A school that is organized and aligned for success will remain effectively and efficiently functional regardless of administrative attrition. This can only be done by liberating the individuals charged with shaping the citizens of tomorrow. Before educators can 'think outside the box,' they have to be *allowed* out of the box and afforded the privileges of independent thinkers and leaders.

Lambert (2003a) defines leadership "as the reciprocal learning processes that enable participants in a community to construct meaning toward a shared purpose" (p. 2). This frame of mind is based upon the following assumptions: (1) leadership may be understood as reciprocal, purposeful learning in community; (2) everyone has the right, responsibility and capability to be a leader; (3) the adult learning environment in the school and district is the most critical factor in evoking leadership identities and actions; (4) within that environment, opportunities for skillful participation top the list of priorities; (5) how we define leadership frames how people will participate; and (6) educators are purposeful – leading realizes purpose (Lambert, 2003b, p. 425). Lambert's philosophy of leadership embodies the Ethic of Care mindset needed within educational systems across the country. Leadership capacity builds upon liberating components of feminist theory, namely connection and collaboration.

It has been said that the leader sets the atmosphere of an organization. If that is true, school superintendents (female or male) must be willing to collaboratively model

democratic norms that engage teachers in decision-making and foster independent

thinking and consensus-building. Only then, will schools not only retain top talent, they

will mold it into a positive organizational identity. Hargreaves (1994) suggests:

The kinds of organizations most likely to prosper in the postindustrial,

postmodern world . . . are ones characterized by flexibility, adaptability,

creativity, opportunism, collaboration, continuous improvement, a positive

orientation towards problem-solving and commitment to maximizing their

capacity to learn about their environment and themselves. In this respect, inbuilt

innovativeness and routine unpredictability are the organizational oxymorons of

postmodernity. (p. 63)

Hargreaves (1994) further asserts that "in this view, the post-modern organization is

characterized by networks, alliances, tasks and projects, rather than by relatively stable

roles and responsibilities which are assigned by function and department, and regulated

through hierarchical supervision" (p. 64). If this is the future of organizations, school

districts must adapt by incorporating shared decision-making (DuFour & Eaker, 1998),

learning organizations (Fullan, 1991; Lieberman, 1995; Senge, 1990), reduced

specialization and the blurring of roles and boundaries exemplified in the postmodern

position (Hargreaves, 1995); the superintendent empowers others towards such goals and

leads through the practice of an Ethic of Care (Grogan, 2000; Grogan & Smith, 1999).

According to Bowden (1997):

The substantive concerns of the ethic of care with relationships, sensitivity to

others, and responsibility for taking care, coupled with engaged attentiveness to

the context and concrete particulars of situations, coincide with many postmodern

themes. Postmodern disenchantment with the universalizations and exclusions of 'master discourses' has produced a focus on the particular and the local – on the narrative and contextual accounts – that encourage respect for the differences between persons and sensitivity to the complexity of our interconnections. (pp. 9-10)

Standpoint feminists (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002) find elements of postmodern analysis useful in exploring and transforming hegemonic paradigms. According to Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002), Derrida's concept of deconstruction, which exposes binary thinking, suits feminist practice particularly well as a tool to question "unsettling existing assumptions, meanings and methods" (p. 88). Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002), further assert that:

Deconstruction serves to wrench meanings from their taken-for-granted contexts and identify their effects. This can transform assumptions about natural or necessary binary oppositions of class, gender, race, and bodies, into new and fluid possibilities for multiplicity, difference and resistance. (p. 89)

Listening to conversations among teachers in low-performing schools reveals numerous examples of unsettling assumptions of power and knowledge. Decisions regarding field trips, instructional strategies and curriculum, for example, must pass administrative approval before implementation. Teachers often appear powerless when it comes to professional development, as well, often attending assigned sessions and sometimes unaware of professional development agendas until that day. These are examples of what some may consider minor inconsiderations but taken collectively and

repeatedly day-to-day, month-to-month, year-to-year, and often throughout a career

results in Pawn identities most often but not exclusively for women.

> While standpoint feminists shake the foundations of male-centered western
>
> knowledge, postmodern thought takes these foundations apart to show what is taken
>
> for granted in their constituent elements and processes (rationality, the knowing
>
> subject, scientific method, truth, reality) and how knowledge is produced and made
>
> powerful. (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 86)

For this study, the feminist perspective empowers educators toward emancipatory praxis

(Strachan, 2002) by bringing the overt and underlying discourses of power and

knowledge (Grogan, 2000) within schools and school districts across the country to the

forefront and by offering an alternative paradigm, namely the Ethic of Care.

Summary

In this chapter, I attempt to paint a picture depicting the historical structure of school

leadership, the players affected by school leadership styles, and the possibilities that arise

from the dismantling of such leadership patterns and discourses. The following chapter

details the research design for this study, including design, participants, data collection,

validity / reliability issues, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 reports the research interpretation and themes resulting from observations,

interviews and surveys, reveals critical feedback regarding decision-making and teacher

workload, and offers suggestions for the application of caring leadership. Chapter 5

presents reflections of the study, a summary of results, and recommendations for future

research. Finally, the researcher offers an outline of guiding principles for educational

leaders also interested in pursuing leadership as an Ethic of Care.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study deconstructs a largely untapped resource within educational systems across the country: an Ethic of Care. More specifically, it explores *how* the Ethic of Care is experienced within one Midwestern school system as an alternative model to the traditional bureaucratic institutions of education in many school systems. Evidence of Ethic of Care principles and practices (Gilligan, 1982; Sernak, 1998) were identified through a case study of a superintendent who is perceived to foster (a) leadership capacity (Lambert, 1998a, 1998b, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2005a, 2005b & 2006), (b) collective decision-making with teachers (Lezotte, 1997), (c) data-driven instructional teams (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) and (d) relational leadership (Regan & Brooks, 1995). In addition, as theorized, an Ethic of Care culture was reflected through the positive morale at each building resulting from overall *Origin* identities versus *Pawn* identities (deCharms, 1968), a sense that the school could run itself (Lambert, 2003a, 2005a, 2006), and the perception that every member of the system is important, as indicated by faculty questionnaires.

The research questions guiding this study included the following:

1. What are the leadership practices that constitute an Ethic of Care approach to leadership?

2. How has an Ethic of Care leader shaped the culture of a district?

Research Design

The methodology chapter was divided into the following eight sections: (1) the qualitative genre, overall strategy, and rationale, (2) participants / selection process, (3)

the researcher's role, (4) data collection methods, (5) data management, (6) data analysis strategy, (7) trustworthiness features, and (8) a timeline (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). These components organize the proceeding discussion on methods.

Qualitative Genre/Strategy/Rationale

This study is an instrumental case study, a qualitative approach to data gathering drawing upon the tradition of "portraiture" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). "Case studies are in-depth and detailed explorations of single examples (an event, process, organization, group or individual). Case studies are descriptive, holistic, heuristic, and inductive" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 104). Rossman and Rallis (2003) contend that the details, complexities and use of multiple sources included in case studies provide a thick description that allows the reader to interpret meanings and decide the applicability of case learning to other settings. In portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), those details, complexities and sources include context, voice, relationship and emergent themes. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) describes the final product as an "aesthetic whole" (p. 243) formed from the independent and overlapping elements mentioned above. Ethnographers, according to Rossman and Rallis (2003), "Are interested in how interactions shape meaning in particular organizational settings" (p. 95); the observations and shadowing days in this study incorporate some ethnographic strategies.

By concentrating this study on the experiences of a female superintendent whom I and others in educational leadership perceive as a paradigm case and role model of an Ethic of Care leadership style, I theoretically frame this study within a feminist agenda:

Feminist scholarship in educational leadership (has been defined) as that which:

(1) focuses on the condition of females; (2) articulates embedded assumptions about

gender in organizational and interpersonal relationships; and (3) provides theory and

suggested action aimed at restructuring power relationships. (Hollingsworth et al.

2002, p. 93)

"Feminist theories put women at the center and identify patriarchy as central to

understanding experience" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, pp. 6-7). Paramount to the

investigative format utilized in this study are the theoretical underpinnings of an ethic of

care (Gilligan, 1982) and relational leadership (Regan & Brooks, 1995). This case study

intended to explore the realm of a female superintendent for the purpose of establishing

the worthiness of women's practice within the superintendency by documenting the

impact of one leader's care paradigm (Regan, 1995).

Participants / Selection Process

Eighty-two out of a pool of 524 school districts (16.4%) in one Mid-West state

employed female Superintendents during the 2005-2006 school year. One female

superintendent was the focus of this case study based on reputable recommendations

indicating that her leadership style reflects an Ethic of Care. The criteria required for

participation within this purposive sampling (Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994)

include the following: (1) female superintendents suggested for participation by

professors in the educational leadership department of a local university and by an expert

educator, (2) female superintendents indicating the willingness and interest to participate,

(3) female superintendents serving districts within a 120-mile radius from the researcher,

(4) female superintendents possessing three to seven years of service as a superintendent,

and (5) teachers across the related school district who would likely complete and return

the survey. Proximity to the superintendent studied afforded the researcher access to observation opportunities both during and after school hours, as well as shadowing days. Institutional Review Board approval was obtained prior to interviews and observations.

The voices of three district faculty members framed the effects of the superintendent's leadership on district culture from various perspectives. Participants for this process included three anonymous faculty members. The criteria required for participation within this purposive sampling (Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994) included the following: (1) one female central office administrator; (2) one female building level administrator; (3) one additional female faculty member; and (4) each interview participant had to have experience working within at least two other school systems.

The Researcher's Role

As an educator with teaching and administrative experience, the interwoven perspectives I brought to this study offered an intricate lens for framing the data collected throughout this study. From a female perspective, my observations of leadership behaviors over the years have documented gender-bias and authoritarian practices by male superintendents neglectful of the basic human needs of teachers charged with developing young citizens. My own journey as a Mexican American from small town White America to a city known for its racial polarity (with teaching and administrative experiences within predominantly African American schools, predominantly White schools, as well as urban, suburban and rural schools) strengthens my critical analyses regarding the superintendent's efforts to support children of color within this particular district. Moreover, I view leadership through a lens of diversity, mindful of how leaders

apply the power that accompanies titles of stature and who benefits from that power. As a researcher, it was important to maintain objectivity during data analysis while recognizing my own biases and responses to the data.

As a women of color, Lawrence-Lightfoot influenced qualitative research by pioneering a writing style and presentation that is said to have "bridged the realms of aesthetics and empiricism" (Faculty Profile, para. 1). This approach is particularly well suited for this study in my effort to tell a powerful but detailed and critical story about a superintendent's leadership style.

In portraiture, the context of the study plays a vital role in interpreting the roles and interactions of the participants: "In developing portraits, we must observe and record the ways in which people compose their own settings – the way they shape, disturb, and transform the environments in which they live and work" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 58). According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, "The dimensions of the context that appear in the portrait are carefully chosen, using only those elements that provide a physical framework, a feeling of embeddedness in the setting, and a forecasting of values and themes that will shape the narrative" (p. 45). The dimensions of context, specific to portraiture include the internal context, the personal context, the historical context and aesthetic features (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Context welcomes the researcher, inviting initial sketches that will later inform the final product.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) stress the importance of considering issues of entry, reciprocity and ethics involved in qualitative studies:

In qualitative case studies, the researcher is the instrument: Her presence in the lives of the participants invited to be part of the study is fundamental to the paradigm.

Whether that presence is sustained and intensive, or relatively brief but personal, the

researcher enters into the lives of the participants. (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 79)

In order to obtain entry into the school setting, I initially contacted the selected

superintendent by phone to introduce myself, the study and my interest in her

participation. During our first meeting I provided questions for our initial interview and

negotiated opportunities for observations and for shadowing days.   Following the initial

interview, I provided an observation schedule based on our previous discussion and

determined if a tape recorder would be allowed in the context of observations.   During

my initial observations of the superintendent in various contexts, I asked for permission

to introduce myself and explain my role, likely activities, research interests, use of

collected information, and time-line for observations: "When people adjust their priorities

and routines to help the researcher, or even just tolerate the researcher's presence, they

are giving of themselves" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 90). Having initially

introduced myself as a former teacher and principal, I made myself available to

contribute to group efforts and discussion or through feedback in any way possible in

appreciation of the hospitality extended.

"Relationship building is at the center of portraiture" according to Lawrence-

Lightfoot and Davis (1997, p. 158). The building of this relationship is a means for

developing the portraiture. Each dimension of relationship (the search for goodness,

empathetic regard and the negotiation of symmetry/reciprocity/boundaries) demands in-

depth interaction, interpretation and reflection on the part of the researcher (Lawrence-

Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

The qualities that make a successful qualitative researcher are revealed through

an exquisite sensitivity to the ethical issues present when we engage in any moral act.

Ethical considerations are generic – informed consent and protecting participants'

anonymity – as well as situation specific. (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 90)

Every possible avenue for protecting the anonymity of the school district, particular

settings, and participant identities were taken. "It is the portraitist's responsibility to

define the boundaries and protect the vulnerability and the exposure of the actor"

(Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 152). I specifically obtained informed consent

from the female superintendent and the three faculty members interviewed (Appendices

A & B). All data was maintained in pass-protected computer files and/or secure files.

Data Collection Methods

"Qualitative researchers typically rely on four methods for gathering information:

(a) participation in the setting, (b) direct observation, (c) in-depth interviewing, and (d)

analyzing documents and material culture. These methods form the core qualitative

inquiry – the staples of the diet" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 105). In addition to the

primary data-gathering methods detailed above, this study incorporated secondary

methods as well: Surveys / questionnaires with a prompt for narrative inquiry (Marshall

& Rossman, 1999). As an addition to the setting, it was important for me to engage in

the everyday life of the organization. Immersion as a participant as well as an observer

served to reduce the tension of having an outsider invade a previously established

educational comfort zone. The act of participation in daily routines further added to the

"thick descriptive data – narrative developed about the context so that judgments about

the degree of fit or similarity may be made by others who may wish to apply all or part of

the findings elsewhere" (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 19). Marshall and Rossman (1999)

assert that "immersion in the setting allows the researcher to hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do. This immersion offers the researcher the opportunity to learn directly from his own experience of the setting" (p. 106).

Orchestrating connections between the reader and the story is a primary pursuit of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Thick description of actions, behaviors and words initiate the portrait but the full picture comes into focus with the addition of supporting actors. "The behavior may serve as an important cue, but the portraitist is especially concerned about the meanings people attach to those behaviors" (p. 15). According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), a written portrait is composed by weaving together context, voice, relationship, and emergent themes into an aesthetic whole. "The portraitist constructs the aesthetic whole --- weaves the tapestry --- while attending to four dimensions: concept (the overarching story), structure (layering of emergent themes), form (spinning of the tale), and cohesion (unity and integrity)" (p. 247).

Observations of the female superintendent took place in organizational settings and involved interactions with administrators, teachers, and other staff members. A set of individual personal interviews with the superintendent and faculty members (Appendices C & D), coupled with observations, facilitated personal understandings of the leadership decisions and practices observed. Field notes consisted of holistic descriptions of those events and interactions, as well as three full days of shadowing. These observations were instrumental during data analysis in triangulating data gathered from interviews with the superintendent and faculty members, questionnaires completed by district teachers and administrators and the in-depth review of archival data.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) describe in-depth interviews as purposeful conversations. "The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's views but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses" (p. 108). This allows for the unfolding of the participant's perspectives, a primary pursuit in qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The initial interview served this purpose. For this study, the initial interview with the female superintendent was supplemented with member checks throughout the course of data analyses (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The member checks enhance the reliability of the data by engaging the case study participant in confirmation and review of collected data, reaction notes, emerging themes and conclusions. This also affords the researcher and the case study participant opportunities for reflection and interpretation of documented experiences (Schon, 1987). On-going informal member checks took place through e-mail correspondence during analysis for clarification purposes and additional information gathering. A more structured member check took place between events on a shadowing day. For this, a tape-recorded discussion focused on observed behavior patterns, routines, interactions with individuals and groups, and archival data. Approximately sixty hours of observations and three full-day shadowing events made up the field data. Member checks were also conducted following interviews with the three district faculty members through e-mail, as schedules limited available time.

As in similar research projects (Amedy, 1999; Hipskind, 2000; Kropiewnicki & Shapiro, 2001), the researcher analyzed documents such as faculty bulletins, newspaper articles, policy implementation memorandums, minutes of administrative

meetings, media interviews, speeches, etc. to triangulate the analysis and/or verify

emerging themes.

> Researchers supplement participant observation, interviewing, and observation
>
> with gathering and analyzing documents produced in the course of everyday
>
> events or constructed specifically for the research at hand. As such, the review of
>
> documents is an unobtrusive method, rich in portraying the values and beliefs of
>
> participants in the setting. (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 116)

Surveys and questionnaires were introduced to district teachers and principals, during

faculty meetings for additional feedback regarding the leadership of the superintendent.

In addition to 19 Likert-scale questions, the surveys provided two constructed-response

questions requesting faculty to interpret the professional and personal messages implied

by the superintendents leadership practices (Appendix E). Life histories and narrative

inquiry are methods that gather, analyze, and interpret the stories people tell about their

lives. They assume that people live 'storied lives' and that telling and retelling one's

story helps one understand and create a sense of self" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.

120). While this strand of the study does not adhere to the typical protocol (interviews)

for collecting narratives, the lived stories shared at the end of the questionnaire provided

an unobtrusive venue for data collection. More traditional narratives were obtained

during the three faculty interviews.

Data gathering through the course of this study furnished the researcher with a

venue for reflecting on and re-applying meaning to her own realities within educational

systems and provided personal insight on fusing an Ethic of Care into school leadership

practices. My feminist and care theoretical orientations inform both my research questions and analyses, but I tried to stay open to challenges and critiques to my world view.

Time Line

This study took place in two phases. Phase 1 took place during the 2004-2005 school year. In 2004, the case study superintendent invited me to attend her Annual Administrative Retreat at her home where I was able to introduce myself and the study to district administrators and board members, preparing them for my frequent attendance at upcoming meetings. For the next several months, I attended district administrator meetings, principals meetings, professional development days and curriculum committee meetings (Appendix H). By December of that year, I had achieved a saturation level regarding the superintendent's leadership style and communication patterns.

The study remained dormant for a period of five years following those months of contextual immersion, during an unforeseeable leave of absence on the part of the researcher. Upon return, I contacted the case study participant, who graciously agreed to continue participation, immediately scheduling three shadowing days and announcing (to her administrative team) her support of the faculty questionnaires and interviews, and encouraging everyone "to be good sports" (Personal communication, 2009). Phase 2 of the research was initiated once again and completed during the 2008-2009 school year. I found the superintendent's leadership consistent with the observations conducted five years earlier.

The three shadowing days consisted of a professional development day, a work-day with the middle school and high school social studies teachers and a day-long curriculum

committee meeting. During the professional development day, the superintendent

facilitated a technology training on the use of SMARTNotebook, a software application

used with electronic interaction white boards to engage students in learning activities.

The superintendent also facilitated the unit development workday with secondary social

studies teachers on the second shadowing day. Following her work with the teachers, she

tutored high school students for the upcoming ACT exam. The final shadowing day

consisted of an in-depth discussion of action research efforts at the early childhood and

elementary schools involving reading interventions. For each session, the superintendent

provided and facilitated a thorough and lengthy agenda.

A detailed protocol for each phase of data collection is located in Appendix H. This

includes: the initial in-depth interview of the superintendent, numerous observation days,

three shadowing days, administration of a faculty questionnaire for district teachers and

administrators, the collection of archival data and interviews of three faculty members.

Data Management

Notes from field observations were recorded on a laptop computer. The

researcher used data-recording strategies (audio tape-recordings of interviews and

meetings) that "fit the setting and the participants' sensitivities" and were used

with "participants' consent" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 148). Audiotapes were

labeled prior to use. Extra batteries and audiotapes were carried during fieldwork. All

collected documents and written observation notes were filed and maintained in a

secure location "keeping data intact, complete, organized and accessible" (p. 148).

Data Analysis Strategies

"Grounded theory provides researchers with guidelines for analyzing data at

several points in the research process, not simply at the 'analysis' stage" (Charmaz, 2001, p. 683). "Typical analytic procedures fall into six phases: (a) organizing the data; (b) generating categories, themes, and patterns; (c) coding the data; (d) testing the emergent understandings; (e) searching for alternative explanations; and (f) writing the report" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 152).

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), qualitative researchers incorporate categories drawn from preliminary interview questions as guidelines for observations. Themes, then, develop during intensive analysis of data. Inductive and deductive analysis of interview transcriptions and observation notes were used to identify categories expressed by the participants, as well as those determined by the researcher (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Data collected from interviews and the narratives from the district faculty drawn from the survey prompt were coded using Regan and Brooks (1995) feminist attributes (Appendix G).

The relevant dimensions identified by the portraitist provide a structure for reflecting on themes. Noting the distinction, themes reside in and emerge from the site; relevant dimensions (or at least a working slate of them) are brought into the site. Relevant dimensions are embodied in the expertise and lens of the portraitist; emergent themes are embodied in the language and culture of the subject or site. (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 219)

While the relevant dimensions provided lenses for viewing practices, behaviors, actions and interactions, care was taken to allow themes to emerge, themes that are directly related to and produced from within the context, the participant and the

secondary actors of the study. This involved drawing "out the refrains and patterns (to create) a thematic framework for the construction of the narrative" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 185). According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) the portraitist draws out and constructs emergent themes using five modes of synthesis, convergence and contrast, including: (1) listening for repetitive refrains, (2) listening for resonant metaphors and symbolic expressions, (3) identifying cultural and organizational rituals, (4) triangulating convergent data, and (5) revealing patterns from contrasting and dissonant data. "The emergent themes grow out of data gathering and synthesis, accompanied by generative reflection and interpretative insights" (p. 189).

Line-by-line, action-coding, selective and focused coding was instrumental in the development of categories, as well (Charmaz, 2001). "Initial coding helps the grounded theory researcher to discover participants' views rather than assume that the researcher and participants share views and words" (Charmaz, 2001, p. 684). Data analysis occurred through a process of data reduction, data display and conclusions/ verification (Berg, 2001) using constant comparative analysis. As described in Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), constant comparative analysis constitutes a dialectal process in which the researcher listens for emerging themes during data collection, which in turn guides subsequent data gathering. Transcribed interview data was open-coded using new features of Office Word software.

Another qualitative strategy said to "explicitly link data gathering, data analysis, and report writing" (Charmaz, 2001, p. 687) is memo writing. Memos consist of researcher notes occurring during or after data gathering episodes. They may document reactions to data or events, questions to investigate, fresh ideas, connections discovered

or clarification of categories (Charmaz, 2001). "Writing memos during each phase of the analysis prompts the researcher to make the analysis progressively stronger, clearer, and more theoretical" (p. 690).

Finally, a critical approach was used for the content analysis of collected documents (i.e., administrative meeting agendas and handouts, curriculum committee agendas and handouts, professional development agendas and handouts, speeches, published documents, and communications to district parents and the broader community as presented on the superintendents webpage) to evaluate "critically what is portrayed and symbolized . . . and what is absent or silenced. Material culture can offer data that contradict words and sights" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 198-199).

Delimitations

Literature regarding gender related leadership concepts predominantly serve to confirm or discount the claims of feminist researchers claiming differences in style and decision-making practices between male and female leaders. This study recognizes those differences, highlights the traditional hierarchical leadership practices in education and the marginalizing effects from those historical practices, and then presents an Ethic of Care as a framework for an alternative approach to leadership, a caring leadership applicable to both men and women. Current research on the Ethic of Care in practice is limited. For this reason, the scope of this study is confined to a single, instrumental case study for the purpose of capturing Ethic of Care leadership in action and analyzing the effects of that leadership on district faculty. Results of this study do not offer a model of leadership for others to follow; instead, the researcher outlines guiding principles,

emerging from the data and literature so others may incorporate and apply this template for developing caring leadership.

This study is further delimited by the portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) design, a descriptive writing style and presentation utilized to vividly illustrate cultural elements of the school district. Through the use of portraiture, overarching themes and metaphors are enhanced by the shared values, rituals, styles and connections revealed through observations and data analysis.

Limitations

A focused case study with only one subject restricts the opportunity to generalize the results to large groups. In spite of this limitation, the narrative of the female superintendent contributes to the literature by presenting a refreshing and novel interpretation of the superintendency. Moreover, the collective data offers useful guidelines for developing caring leadership.

Due to the intrusive nature of recorded interviews, faculty members may have cautiously responded to inquiries regarding the superintendent's leadership. Likewise, the number of responses to the constructed-response questions (39 out of 68) may indicate cautious measures to remain anonymous or fear of retribution.

The discontinuity may serve as a limitation as perceptions of district leadership may have changed over time or due to changes in leadership across the school district. From a research standpoint, however, the time lapse simulated a longitudinal effect confirming a consistency in the superintendent's leadership style, practices and interactions with others. Finally, researcher bias must be considered, particularly within a qualitative study

design. On-going reflections, discussion and dialogue with members of my dissertation committee assisted in reducing researcher bias.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers tend to rely on the strength of the methodology used in measuring the trustworthiness of research.

> Standards for judging the value of research projects used to be clear and uncontested: reliability, validity, generalizability, and objectivity were the historic criteria and are still used in quantitative research. However, with the development of qualitative research and critical and postmodern perspectives, ideas about what precisely constitutes good research have become blurred.
>
> (Rossman & Rallis, 2003)

Strauss and Corbin (1994) value data-theory interplay, constant comparative analysis, posing theoretically oriented questions and theory development. Silverman (2001) advocates for analytic induction, the constant comparative method, deviant-case analysis, comprehensive data treatment, and the use of appropriate tabulations. Dey (1999) defines validity "in terms of being 'well-grounded conceptually and empirically' " (p. 268). For this study, triangulation (Shank, 2002), peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) , member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1986), and data-theory interplay (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) constituted the validation procedures.

Another concept familiar to researchers of social settings is positionality, referring to the "position of the knower" (Rhoads, 1997) . . . the researcher and the one posing questions and exploring realties. Krieger (1991) posits that "research findings reflect highly interactive processes between the observer and the observed" (p. 39).   Reflective

of feminist theorists, Krieger believes that the blending of subjectivity, on the part of the observer, and objective data gathered during observations constructs knowledge that is unique "because it is relational knowledge tied to the researcher's sense of self, which necessarily is different from all others" (p. 39).

Although this researcher, through her own leadership experiences, maintains a direct proclivity towards the feminist theories utilized within this study, care was taken to maintain as objective a demeanor as possible during interviews and observations in order to minimize researcher bias and influence. I also believe that because of my own administrative experiences, I was able to develop trust with the superintendent and to understand her thinking and actions professionally at a deeper level than a researcher without the bonds of gender and experience.

Ethical Considerations

As required by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Missouri, through which this study is conducted, the case study participant, as well as the additional three interview participants, signed Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities forms (Appendix C & D). By doing so, each of the four female participants indicated the exercise of free will and choice in participation. The identity of the participants remained confidential throughout the study and dissertation development by providing pseudonyms for individuals, schools, school districts and geographic locations. Initial interviews began with a description of the study, my reasoning for the selected participant, the purpose of the project, procedures, risks and benefits, expectations of privacy and confidentiality, costs, participant rights and the prerogative to withdraw at any time. In

addition, the data provided in this study did not include any names and will be kept in a

secure place known only to the researcher.

Summary

This chapter detailed the research design and methodology utilized throughout the

study. Chapter 4 presents results and interpretations of data, revealing important

considerations for Ethic of Care leadership. The final chapter offers conclusions and

guidelines for developing and maintaining caring leadership.

CHAPTER 4

NARRARIVE DECONSTRUCTION OF AN ETHIC OF CARE IN ACTION

In *The Good High School*, (1983) Lawrence-Lightfoot articulated her mission in the

following way:

In these portraits I seek to capture the culture of the school(s), the values that define

their curricular goals and institutional structures, and their individual styles and

rituals. I also try to trace the connections between individual and institution --- how

the inhabitants create the school's culture and how they are shaped by it; how

individual personality and style influence the collective character of the school. (p. 6)

These very elements (culture, values, styles, rituals and connections) are the byproducts

of existing leadership and/or routinized practice within any educational system. The

following portraiture attempts to reveal the culture, values, styles, rituals and connections

established by a female superintendent whom others perceive as leading through an Ethic

of Care. Moreover, this portraiture seeks to reveal how teachers and administrators

within the school system experience the words, actions and behaviors of the

superintendent.

Shedding Mediocrity

The drive to Middleton School District (pseudonym) offers a deceiving impression of

the community. While I was willing to travel hours for the opportunity to observe a

superintendent with the specified qualifications, the actual journey was just under nine

miles from my home. That meant I had the choice of using a convenient highway or

opting for a more scenic drive through residential neighborhoods and at least three

municipalities. I chose the scenic route, or so I thought.

My numerous trips to the school district led me through familiar places until I crossed the overpass of a highway I had seldom driven. Once across, the visual surroundings transformed from affluent homes accented by an Ivy League type university setting into an historically blue collar community. Individual businesses (many in houses purchased for commercial use) line the right side of the boulevard, while left turns allow immediate entry into neighborhoods where the streets may curve and join others in a maze-like fashion. Locating the elementary school (grades 2-6) is a challenge, requiring GPS capabilities or a Map Quest visit.

I guess I have come a long way from my small town upbringing in Oklahoma when the sight of a 7-11 convenience store lowers my expectations of the community. That landmark was my cue to turn right before taking an immediate left within 200 feet into what could be considered more of an alley-way than a street. I passed the back entrances to a handful of businesses that continued to line the main boulevard until turning right at the next corner. My destination was no more impressive on the outside than the route I took to get there. If first impressions are the most important, I wondered what impression an applicant would have upon arriving for an interview or a parent attending a discipline hearing. I struggled to find a parking spot. There were few spots in front of the building and no parking allowed on the opposite side of the street. A tall, chain-link fence ran from the corner of the building, along street-side parking slots that were taken. Teachers' parking, a small covered garage area under part of the building, was accessed from inside the fence. No spots were available. Cars continued down the left side of the street where the City Library offered two-hour parking. I finally found a spot located, seemingly, a

mile from the building itself. On warmer days, the walk did not matter; but on a cold wintry day, the bite of the air was a challenge.

The district offices attach to the back of the high school/middle school building, a school that faces a major thoroughfare on the opposite side. If I had taken that road, I would have seen the layout of a traditional-looking, if not historic, high school building separated from traffic by the football field, and encircled by a bright blue running track. The entrance from that side would have been hectic, with rush hour traffic speeding along in two lanes going both ways. This entry road also provides access to the early childhood center, located on a street a couple of blocks to the west. Parking is clearly a scarce commodity; school visitors must park in front of local residential homes. Historic buildings follow to the east with their cramped ambiance.

The Community Story

Interestingly, although I lived within ten miles, I had rarely heard about or visited this school system or the community. I later learned that it was the oldest district in the county, established in 1876, with numerous community buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Middleton community was founded in the mid-1800s and over the years, commercial and residential buildings have grown in historical significance. In fact, a lawyer who defended slave owners in two different cases built the oldest house in the small municipality in 1850. Forty homes were even constructed from materials scrapped from the 1904 World's Fair. Between 1898 and 1911, the first city hall and fire departments were built in what are now historic buildings. Renovators recently restored an historic apartment complex, reviving the 1900-1920 period structures. In 1938, an avant-garde architect built a doctors' office in what architect

enthusiasts now consider art deco style, boasting rounded corners and coke-bottle windows giving it a nautical appearance. Another recent addition to the National Register of Historic Places is a neighborhood developed between 1950-1960 specifically for middle-class African Americans in a predominantly White city and county.

After years of neglect, the community's luster began to fade. According to Mitchell (2005),[1] a collaborative of small-business owners, the local Chamber of Commerce, the mayor and the city manager initiated plans to restore and rejuvenate their community in the mid-1980's. Their goal was to maintain the quaint quality of Middleton's historic district while adding modern luxuries as well. Today, patrons from across the metropolitan area seek out the micro beers at the local brewery, and enjoy French, Asian and Southwest American cuisine. Financially, the city now is thriving with close to 400 businesses, a large mall, a seven-screen movie theater, a Wal-Mart Store, and condo developments. The addition of a 73,000 square foot Community Center in December 2000 offers numerous activities for families while the city library hosts free computer classes for those seeking to explore PowerPoint, Excel, PC and Word and a weekly adult book study. In addition to a healthy tax base, this community hosts a variety of cultural events for residents and visitors, such as Christmas Tree Walks, Summer Concert Series, an Autumn Green Festival, a Middleton Dog Park Swim, a Fall History Tour, Bastille Day celebrations, and a Taste of Middleton.

As of 2007, the average home value was $178,000 compared to average home values for a 2-bedroom home in the surrounding municipalities ranging from $138,500 to $339,500.[2] After years of existing in the shadows of neighboring upper-middle class

communities revered for their income levels and material possessions, Middleton has emerged a winner by capitalizing on its rich history and modern amenities.

The School District Story

The Middleton School District currently comprises four schools within three buildings, with a 2008 enrollment of 1,049 students.[3] From 2004 to 2008, the average expenditure per pupil, in average daily attendance (ADA), for the Middleton School District increased from $11,470 to $13,524. Like the community, the history and reinvention of the school system provides an interesting read. Not only is it considered one of the oldest school systems in the county, the Middleton School District hired a female superintendent three years before Ella Flagg became Superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools in 1909. Middleton also developed one of the first high school programs in the area. Unfortunately, the initial leadership shine began to dull and by 1978 economic stress resulted in the elimination of 21 teaching positions. For the next twenty years, the financial outlook, instructional programs, organizational infrastructure, administrative management and self-esteem of the district diminished drastically, along with economic decline of the city. Forty-seven teachers received pink slips in 1986 and the district was labeled "financially stressed" by the State Department of Education ten years later.

Since that time, however, the Middleton School District has experienced renovations similar to those of many historic sites within the community, attributed by some (Mitchell, 2005) to Dr. Ruth Herron (pseudonym) who became Superintendent in 1999. During her ten years with the district, Dr. Herron has procured $18.6 million in bond issues for construction and renovation projects within the districts' buildings. The construction of a new elementary school has allowed the blending of students from two

older buildings. Renovation projects have included classrooms, science labs, the

gymnasium and a new library/media center for the high school, the installation of air-

conditioning and a refurbished art room at the early childhood center. A 52-cent tax levy

increase has funded increases in teacher salaries, technology, curriculum development

and professional development.

In addition to a healthy financial shift and improved structural conditions, the school

system has experienced several boosts to its self-concept. "The first year we were here,

we had an Annual Performance Report (APR) score of 57, which is one point away from

being unaccredited" (Initial Superintendent Interview, 2004). The reality of what she had

inherited was evident from the onset. As part of her negotiations for the position, Dr.

Herron was afforded the opportunity to bring an Assistant Superintendent on board. Both

had worked together in a neighboring, affluent school district with an assessed valuation

of $831,973,760 in 2004 compared to Middleton's' $191,123,730 (Retrieved from

http://dese.mo.gov/-%20planning/profile). Since they were hired in January as a team,

with July 1 as their official entry date on the payroll, Dr. Herron and her handpicked

associate took advantage of the time.

> We approached the district for six months as an ethnographic study. During several
>
> evenings and on Saturdays we 'opened shop' in a nearby coffee house and invited any
>
> staff member who wished to talk to us about Middleton School District to join us.
>
> We promised a free cup of coffee, a listening ear, and complete confidentiality.
>
> (Archival Data, 2009)

Conversations with teachers, school board members, students, community leaders and

community members revealed a negative school image across the board. In her words,

"The place has been a magnet for mediocrity for a really long time" (Initial

Superintendent Interview, 2004). The words of others reflected that observation: "We do

the best we can with the students we have" (Archival Data, 2009). She recalls, "Others

commented that resources weren't available to meet the intense needs of many of their

students—over half of whom lived in poverty. The city manager described the district as

an albatross that hung around the city's neck" (Archival Data, 2009). Moreover, Dr.

Herron entered the district as the fourth superintendent within five years.

According to Dr. Herron, many factors contributed to the toxic culture of the school

system when she arrived, including personnel, materials, structure, and culture. Dr.

Herron described several of those issues during our interview.

This district was in such total disarray. People, who couldn't get jobs anywhere else,

got jobs here. Also, they had no materials. I was just *stunned* as I walked through the

classrooms. There were no books. There were old textbooks, no trade books for kids

to read. And, there wasn't even articulation. They didn't even have a single basal

series. They had a bunch of basal books that teachers chose from but didn't know

why. There was no teacher evaluation system in place. Professional development

was: if you want to go to a conference, apply to the superintendent and, if there's

money in this little pool, they'll send you. But there was no *plan* for professional

development to actually improve achievement. The calendar itself was problematic.

There was no time for teachers to study together as teams, no professional

development days, no release days. (Initial Superintendent Interview, 2004)

While some incoming Superintendents would have considered the lack of infrastructure

and general atmosphere as obstacles to overcome, Dr. Herron saw challenge and the

opportunity to make a difference.

Dr. Herron's knowledge of curriculum and instruction and her experience as an assistant superintendent in a neighboring school district equipped her with the necessary expertise to breathe life into this wilting district. During her ten-year tenure, the district has received noteworthy recognition for showing significant academic improvement, for establishing a reputable character education program, for excellence in staff development and for earning a perfect score of 100 points on the Annual Performance Report. Programs from early childhood to the senior level have been addressed. Grants and cooperatives with philanthropic organizations have secured laptops for student use and implemented a home-visit program to meet student needs.

> Over the past eight years, teachers have become much more satisfied and no longer see the district as a short career stop—teacher turnover has dropped from 21% to around 12%. We have attracted back full fifty percent of the parents who had fled the district earlier. Tests scores are up (overall) and so is college attendance. While we know we still have much to learn and to improve, our students are now applying their skills and building their understandings in rich environments that celebrate their voices and their contributions to our learning community. (Archival Data, 2009)

The community and the school system simultaneously reinvented themselves, thus strengthening their independent and interdependent identities and cultures.

Student performance on the state assessment offers evidence of increased student achievement particularly in Math and Communication Arts. As seen in Figure 4.1 (Appendix H), the percentage of students, elementary through high school, scoring in the proficient and advanced levels has risen during Dr. Herron's tenure.

While the percentages indicate that over 50 percent of Middleton students continue to perform below proficiency in communication arts and math, as measured by the state assessment, noteworthy gains in academic achievement have been realized, particularly at the middle school and high schools levels. In 2001, 19.8 percent of Middleton's 7th grade students performed at the proficient and advanced levels in communication arts. That percentage increased to 45 by 2008. In math, 8th grade percentages rose from 1.4 in 2001 to 28.6 in 2008. The most dramatic increase, however, occurred at the high school level as proficient / advance percentages in math escalated from 2.7 (2001) to 41.4 (2008) (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Statistical Data).

Comparatively, Middleton's overall status in regards to the 2008 Adequate Yearly Progress report is comparable to surrounding districts (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Comparative District Data, 2008

	Attendance Percentages	District Enrollment	Graduation Rate	Drop Out Rate	Per Pupil Expenditure	Number of Suspensions
Middleton	93.2	1,049	88.6	3.4	$13,524	4
Neighbor 1	95	792	95.7	0.4	$15,492	5
Neighbor 2	95.2	2,479	97.4	0.1	$16,647	8
Neighbor 3	94.7	3,580	97.3	0.5	$13,063	22
Neighbor 4	92..9	3,286	80.9	7.5	$12,174	147
Neighbor 5	94.8	4,127	97.9	0.9	$10,603	61

In viewing data of six districts for the 2008 school year, including Middleton, none of the districts met the state proficiency target in communication arts, and only one district

met state targets in math; while all six districts met proficiency targets for attendance and graduation rate (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Statistical Data).

Between 2004-2008, Middleton experienced minor to substantial changes in the following areas: attendance rate (92.3/93.2), enrollment numbers (1,013/1,049), the drop out rate (2.9/3.4), and per pupil expenditures ($11,470/$13,524). During those years, the graduation rate peaked at 95.5 in 2005, followed by a low of 83.1 percent the following year. According to the data in Table 4.1, three neighboring districts, two to three times the size of Middleton, maintain higher attendance rates and graduation rates, in addition to lower drop out rates. While not the smallest of school districts, Middleton had the fewest number of students suspended in 2008. This may be due, in part, to Dr. Herron's efforts in promoting character education and in meeting the needs of struggling students by establishing an alternative school and a shelter for students in need of stable housing.

<div align="center">Passion and Unique Perspectives</div>

When I first met Dr. Herron, she welcomed me into her office as she would an old friend, easing my discomfort for imposing on her time. Although I knew little about her at the time of that first meeting, her office reflected qualities that made an instant impression. The oceanic blue walls accompanied by a black desk made for a serene, aquarium ambiance. Dim lighting softened the setting. Rather than sitting behind her desk, she joined me in the two chairs arranged next to a standing lamp and small round table. I would later learn that due to a chronic illness, the necessity of dim lights and a soothing environment allowed her to regenerate when needed. I also learned that she was very aware of the importance of ambiance, from my initial visit to the administrative restrooms (painted in soft colors and decorated with a wooden stand one might find in

Pier 1 Imports for paper towels and scented lotion) to the renovations made to the central office, the high school gym, the high school and middle school hallways and the unique characteristics of the newly built elementary school (which includes a meditation room with a reclining dentist-type chair, soft lighting, and a CD player). It did not take long to recognize decorative patterns in various locations across the district. Each spoke of Dr. Herron's appreciation of environmental ambiance.

From a young age, this individual exhibited leadership characteristics and a passion for teaching others. In her words,

I always knew I wanted to be a teacher and saved my babysitting money to buy workbooks for my sisters and brother. When I was in fifth grade, I convinced my parents that my siblings needed summer school and that I would take charge of it. I even arranged for field trips to the pasture and to the local butcher shop. I thought it would be important for my students to learn a foreign language, and since I didn't know any myself, I invented one to teach them that summer. (Archival Data, 2009)

Having grown up on a farm, she knew the value of hard work, which is a quality reflected in her day-to-day commitment to improving the quality of education for students within her school district. While the term "rigor" has become a new byword in education and is a word frequently heard in meetings with administrators and teachers, Dr. Herron has practiced this throughout her career. Her educational career began as an English teacher. She later served as a curriculum coordinator, a director of curriculum, a college instructor and as an assistant superintendent in a nearby affluent school district.

During the initial interview, I asked Dr. Herron about her dissertation. Her study investigated the implications of a literacy curriculum, which she had set in place. She

stated that, "The more I studied, the more I began to think that curriculum was above all a cultural phenomenon and is built on relationship and shared understandings, and if you don't treat it as a cultural phenomenon, you're never going to get there" (Initial Superintendent Interview, 2004).

This perspective captured my attention. Hearing a superintendent link culture to curriculum was, to me, a positive indication that she cared about the faculty of the school district. Moreover, by emphasizing the components of relationship and shared understanding, Dr. Herron seemed to be speaking the language of relational leadership (Regan & Brooks, 1995), leadership capacity (Lambert, 1998a, 1998b, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2005a, 2005b, & 2006), professional learning communities (Hord, 1997; DuFour & Eaker, 1998) and an Ethic of Care (Gilligan, 1982; Sernak, 1998). Her statements inspired me to learn more about this Superintendent who visualized a connection between culture and curriculum. This was my first experience with a superintendent who exhibited an appreciation for culture and/or perceived culture as a relevant component of an administrative agenda.

The way she spoke about the dissertation process itself was additionally intriguing. She referred to it as "a luxury," stating

> It really influenced the way I thought about curriculum and organizational culture. It really was kind of life changing. And, so I think I do know how to work differently now because of that dissertation. And, I always feel sad when I see people saying that 'I just need to get my dissertation done.' Because, I know how strongly that time spent studying something complicated influenced my whole professional life. (Initial Superintendent Interview, 2004)

I recalled these words for strength on numerous occasions while writing my own dissertation, particularly when the writing did not feel like a luxury. At other times, I concurred with her insight.

Dr. Herron's combination of passion and a unique skill set in the area of curriculum and instruction secured her position as Superintendent for the Middleton School District. She humorously recalled,

You know they came to me and said, 'We need someone who' – and this is the funny thing – they said, 'we need someone who understands curriculum and instruction.' And I laughed and I said, 'I never heard anyone say that they wanted a superintendent who knew curriculum and instruction.' (still laughing) You know, my old superintendent in XYZ (school district) always said, 'You know, nobody ever gets fired for curriculum and instruction.' (Laughing) He said, 'Superintendents didn't need to know that at all.' (Initial Superintendent Interview, 2004)

Observations of her interactions with administrators, teachers and students at various locations and times substantiated her stated perspective: for Dr. Herron curriculum equals culture equals relationship.

A most memorable example of that curricular theory occurred on one snowy, curriculum-writing day in January. Although it did not actually snow on this day, snowfall from previous days lay piled in corners of parking areas and gathering at the curbs, preventing cars from using spaces typically available or from even pulling all the way into the parking spots. I arrived early, knowing the parking challenges. I felt fortunate to be able to squeeze my car into the spot second to the end, sharing much of it with the overflow of snow piled in the corner. Stepping into snow to get out of my car

was a small price to pay to have a spot. I had come to view parking within the Middleton School District as an obstacle; one that I gratefully did not have to face on a daily basis. I later considered the parking situation to be an oddity within a school system that continued to present the most positive images to parents and other community members. The parking at each school building seemed to represent the past more so than the present or the future of what had become a reinvented, innovative school district. I had to admit, however, there seemed to be little or no room for expansion at any of the locations. Perhaps the district was a victim of antiquated zoning. After all, physical improvements had been and continued to be made wherever possible.

On this day, Dr. Herron was facilitating a professional development session for high school Social Studies teachers provided with a released day to write curriculum. After walking through a maze of hallways and stairs, I entered the professional development library through the double doors. The room with wooden panels and cabinets half way up to the ceiling appears to belong more in a university administration building, perhaps a dean's study. The walls above are a deep steel blue. To my left was a wooden standing lamp, a roll top desk, and a wooden coat hanger. The next wall is lined with built in wooden cabinets on either side of a large fireplace with dark green marble outlining the fire pit. A gold screen covers the fire pit with gold fixtures in front. Also in front of the fireplace are two oversized burgundy leather chairs with an ornamental rug beneath. Set in a movie, you would observe a dignified host offering brandy to his/her visitor. The wall facing the doors has five windows that reach from a wall-length wooden seat to the ceiling. Chintz-print pillows has paisley patterns of burgundy, burnt orange and beige line the seat. The last wall also has a filled bookshelf with a screen above for

presentations. 'Regal' is a word that could describe the character of this room that I visited on several occasions to observe monthly meetings with administrators.

According to the Professional Development agenda, this social studies group which has been writing curricular units will provide an update on the status of their units, critique two units on The Revolution (8th and 11th grade), discuss the provided resources for integrating writing in social studies, and spend the remainder of the day writing their units. The meeting, however, begins with food and chat. Today's spread includes scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, muffins, juice, V-8, coffee, biscuits. The eggs are particularly tasty and regardless of the occasion, Dr. Herron always engages in casual conversation, often relaying personal stories to segue into the meeting. This morning, I observe her empathizing with a teacher suffering with back pain. She makes a quick call to Gary (pseudonym), her "sig" (significant other) as she calls him, to see if he has left home. (He will be joining the group later and would be able to bring something for the teacher's back pain if she catches him before he leaves. As a former superintendent himself, he has become part of the landscape . . . offering assistance where ever needed.) Dr. Herron's response to the hurting teacher is typical for her. Although continuously on the move, juggling numerous tasks, she always seems to be present for others . . . listening, hearing, responding, problem-solving in thoughtful ways. Conversations continue about a positive hire: "He was so cute when he applied for the job. Everyone kept saying you should interview him. He said, 'If you hire me, I will not get pregnant.'" Everyone joins her in laughing. Dr. Herron's inveterate tendency to begin meetings with casual conversation and humor reflects not only her social personality but a strategy educational leaders can consciously incorporate for establishing congenial atmospheres

where faculty members can thrive while engaging in the demanding work of teaching and learning and /or curriculum design.

As consistent as Dr. Herron is about initiating meetings with smiles, stories and laughs, she is equally predictable when plowing through an agenda. "Okay, so let's review the day. We're going to rock through this so you have time for writing. I need to know what units are going to be submitted" (Social Studies Curriculum Writing, 2009). Going around the boardroom table formation, each teacher identifies units that will be submitted for January and February. The assignments are not the sole responsibility of the teachers. Dr. Herron's level of engagement surpasses that of most Superintendents. "Megan (pseudonym) and I are going to work on the war one together. Then I'll work with you and Gary on yours" (Social Studies Curriculum Writing, 2009).

Second on the agenda is the critique of two units. (Peer critique of curriculum and instruction was discussed during an Administrators' Council meeting in December. Administrators offered warm (positive) and cold (instructive) critique of a videotaped lesson from the Early Childhood Center. Teachers are encouraged to engage in critique as a tool for improvement.) Today's critique will focus on determining if the unit develops a strong chronological narrative, provides students with a conceptual framework for organizing and understanding history, and if the unit scaffolds effective reading, writing and thinking strategies for accessing historical material and building knowledge. Each unit has been developed using *Understanding by Design's* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2000) backward design components, including: 1) Unit Name and Description, 2) list of Content and Process standards, 3) handful of student-friendly Enduring Understandings, 4) list of Essential Questions, 5) related knowledge and skills to be developed as

determined by the Grade Level Expectations, 6) Performance Events that provide a valid assessment of understandings, and 7) learning plan (W.H.E.R.E.) that identifies *w*here the unit is headed, *h*ooks the students, engages students in learning *e*xperiences that uncover important ideas, engages students in *r*eflection, and includes adequate *e*valuation.

Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2000) is a framework for teachers in planning meaningful instruction and learning experiences by using a backward model. In stage one, teachers identify the desired results of learning: what students should know and be able to do at the end of the unit for assessment purposes. Stage two requires teachers to determine the evidence through which students will exhibit their newly obtained knowledge and skills. Finally, in the third stage, teachers outline the instructional plans and learning activities that will develop the knowledge and skills on which students will be assessed. Instructionally, *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2000) challenges teachers to take students beyond basic recall of concepts to in-depth understanding by incorporating six facets of understanding: explanation, interpretation, application, perspective-taking, empathy, and self-knowledge. Wiggins and McTighe (2000) also stress the importance of filtering ideas and topics in order to select "the enduring understandings . . . the big ideas, the important understandings that we want students to 'get inside of' and retain after they've forgotten many of the details" (p. 10). Dr. Herron has been guiding this process for the past several years. This particular team of teachers includes two individuals new to the Middleton School District with little or no experience with the Understanding by Design framework. The superintendent has and will continue to work closely with these individuals, scaffolding their understanding of this planning tool.

Throughout the critique, Dr. Herron offers pointers, guides reflection and challenges presenters with probing questions.

Another thing is to really put it in kid words. With enduring understandings, you can really tie them to the concepts so they can be more specific. I would make sure they tie to the topics. As you're thinking about that, the sophisticating, (social studies teachers) take your EU (Enduring Understanding) and ask what are the implications of these in the revolutionary war. Okay, so other than making them more topical? Any more tweaks? You want to use the vocabulary of what you're studying but have it listed as a vocabulary word and directly teach that. One of the things I have been noticing is that people will list vocabulary, but there are never any activities that involve work with that. (Social Studies Curriculum Writing, 2009)

Her knowledge and skill with *Understanding by Design* is undeniable, as is her familiarity with everything in the curriculum within her district. She knows who is working on what and has discussed the nuances of the units with them personally. This becomes even more evident when she guides the group to the district tech-share, a location on the district website where faculty share and store curricular units and learning activities.

Now if you guys will go to D2L, go down to your workspace. Go to social studies 6-12 framework. My list is long because I have every curriculum, so I can sit at home at night and critique units. Units of study are right there. The critical area is on other information. You should find two things: reading strategies for content area teachers and writing for social studies. Do look at www.classtools.net. They're very fun. There's a funny game on the Active History site called Fling the Teachers. You have

to get 15 in a row. You can make the teacher look like your teacher. (Social Studies

Curriculum Writing, 2009)

Clearly, humor is never far way.   When Gary arrives, Dr. Herron asks, "Everybody know

Gary, right? He's the delicious dude."

In addition to the agenda, unit review points, and a 21-page hand-out on writing in

social studies which includes rubrics, and graphic organizers, Dr. Herron's preparation

for this day also included hours searching the Internet for additional resources, which are

also listed in the packet. In it she lists eleven online websites for teaching Cause and

Effect, fifteen for Comparison and Contrast, twelve for Document-Based Analysis,

fourteen for Writing about Art and Artifact, and a document explaining RAFT: role,

audience, format and topic. It does not take long to genuinely believe what she says

about curriculum: "*I know curriculum and instruction. I love it.* I continue to study it.

And, um, *it's exciting to me"* (Initial Superintendent Interview, 2004, *italics added*).

As a facilitator and a leader, Dr. Herron balances a casual atmosphere with a

streamlined focus, humor with thoughtfulness, empathy with collective determination,

caring with firmness, levity with rigor, delegation with engagement. It is the engagement

that blends culture with curriculum. For the better part of the next two hours, Dr. Herron

initiates work on a unit with a high school teacher. "So here are things I've found. We

could develop an outline on WWI. I was thinking about doing something on a soldier's

perspective. There are tons of stuff on life in the trenches and tanks for WWI . . .

marching off to war . . ." (Social Studies Curriculum Writing, 2009).

They then discuss the best approach to take and the topics to include.

I'm likin' this. I can work on that. Someone who was in the tanks and the impact on

them . . . Someone in the sea and the impact on them . . . let me play with that. I

think I can pull that off. Okay, then do you want to start with looking at the

resources? (Social Studies Curriculum Writing, 2009)

In that setting, at that moment, Dr. Herron was not the superintendent, she was a fellow

colleague engaged in curriculum, engaged with teachers, engaged in teaching culture. I

found correlations between Dr. Herron's leadership and that delineated in feminist

literature: "Authority comes from connection to the people around rather than distance

from those below; this in itself helps to foster a team approach" (Helgesen, 1990, p. 55).

Dr. Herron's interactions with administrators and teachers, observed during the course of

this study, reflected this pattern of leadership.

In fact, after spending even a short amount of time observing her conversations and

interactions with faculty, staff and/or students, it does not take long to recognize Dr.

Herron as a unique role model. She acknowledges she does not even fit her *own*

stereotype of a superintendent.

As a superintendent, you were supposed to pay attention to politics; you were

supposed to walk the straight and narrow; you were supposed to keep conflict at a

minimum and always keep distant. Always keep distant from people; you should

never allow anyone to get too close. That's the kind of advice that I got. (Initial

Superintendent Interview, 2004)

This, I agreed, was common advice, even for principals. But, what was uncommon? I

shared that, as a new principal, I was really pumped the first week of school, acting as

cheerleader to the teachers, the welcome wagon for parents and students. By the end of

the first week, however, I was completely drained of enthusiasm. My desire to meet the

needs of all of my teachers meant facing daily, almost hourly, complaints about supplies,

restrooms, students, and routines. I suddenly realized no one had prepared me for that. I

wondered what she would say to an aspiring female superintendent about the role of the

superintendency that no one ever told *her*. So, I asked and immediately reached a turning

point. Dr. Herron introduced me to a new paradigm for viewing this powerful role and

leadership station.

> What people didn't tell me was that *it could be fun*. Because if you talk to
>
> superintendents, I mean all they could do is complain about how hard this is and it is
>
> so hard and nobody wants to do it. You know, it *is*. It is true. It is definitely a hard
>
> job. But, I can't tell you if I have ever heard another superintendent say, 'This is such
>
> a cool job. I love doing this.' *I had no idea that I was gonna have this much fun*. I
>
> mean it is, um, it's a chance to be very creative. And, no one ever told me you could
>
> be creative as a superintendent. But I would say that the superintendency is a grand
>
> job. And, it is about serving the school community but also the broader community.
>
> It's a job you can fall in love with. And nobody ever talks about that. (Initial
>
> Superintendent Interview, 2004, *italics added*)

What an unexpected treasure. Whenever I had spoken to others about the superintendent

position, the topic of conversation would turn to finances, the school board, teacher

unions and accountability. As a matter of fact, did I ever hear the word "creative"

mentioned? I recall confiding to one of my daughters at one point in my career that I had

traded the creative opportunities of the classroom for the principal's office and often

missed them. I also realize that as a principal, working under administrators who used

Rico, Rachelle, 2009, UMSL, p.103

terms like "superior" and "chain of command," others sometimes curbed creativity. I could only imagine serving with a superintendent who encouraged and fostered creativity at the building level.

Regarding the warning by others to maintain a distance from faculty and staff, Dr. Herron asserts, "I just say that was pure trash because it's the closeness of the relationship with people that is going to sustain them and you in hard times." When asked why fewer women than men see themselves in the role of superintendent of a district, she explained that the superintendency tends to get a bad rap:

> I think some women are scared off by that negative talk about what the superintendency is. That it has nothing to do with curriculum and instruction. It's not fun and it's really scary, and that you have to be real political. I think women feel like 'that doesn't sound like a job for me.' But in my mind, the superintendency is about building powerful relationships, having an impact on kids' lives and being up close and personal with teaching and learning. You know, if you describe the superintendency like that I think more women would go, 'Oh, well, that sounds like a job that fits me.' Yeah, so I think the way the job is being marketed or not marketed is part of that. You wouldn't want a job where it was so easy you weren't being challenged. You know? I wouldn't. So sometimes the challenges get a little overwhelming. I just think it's a really sad thing the way the superintendency is being framed. (Initial Superintendent Interview, 2004)

In recalling the female superintendents with whom I had previous interactions, the overarching impression received was of a female leading her school system from the district throne. In other words, the leadership of those female superintendents was not

drastically different than impressions of male superintendents. In most instances,

distance and hierarchy played an important role in the administrations of male and female

superintendents. This coincides with Chase's (1995) studies of women school

superintendents: "The more commonly heard story is about successful women's

co-optation by the white- and male-dominated systems in which they work" (p. 178). Dr.

Herron, on the other hand, endorses a completely new image of the superintendency by

embracing opportunities to build relationships (not just for political purposes), to practice

proximity and visibility, and to contribute to instruction and learning. Chase (1995)

explains that stories of women co-opting male practice are more frequently articulated

than are narratives, like Dr. Herron's, that "tell about their (female superintendents)

professional commitments and individual solutions to inequality" (p. 183). Thus, more

voices validating feminine leadership that resist the co-optation by female leaders of

traditional, hierarchical, male-influenced practices are necessary for reframing the

superintendency for women.

Dr. Herron's perspective on the role of her school board differs from the average

superintendent as well. In her words:

I was really hyper about that (working with the school board) because superintendents

talk about that (working with the school board) in such, sort of, painful terms. And I

have been very blessed because I do have a real good board but I have approached

them as another part of this learning community. And I like them to just really be

woven into the work. I think to say to a board, 'All you should do is policy,' is naïve,

because *the mission of the school needs to be pumping through their veins*. (Initial

Superintendent Interview, 2004, *italics added*)

Not only does she invite and welcome the school board into the learning environment, she has erased chain-of-command communications. By practicing transparent leadership, all administrators share a common knowledge of expectations and procedures. It is not uncommon to see building principals or central office administrators conversing with and answering questions from board members. Like other superintendents, Dr. Herron orchestrates district-wide relationships by bringing groups together for that purpose; she comments, "I try to put us in situations so they can relax and have fun together. I had a bar-be-que at my house for the administrators and the board this fall" (Initial Superintendent Interview, 2004).

As welcoming as she is, Dr. Herron knows where to draw the line when working with board members. She does so, however, with consideration and respect.

> I try to pay attention to individual board members and be able to talk about things that are really important to them, really listen to what they need. And I learn not to over-react when someone tells me I should do this or we need to do this because you take directions from the board; you don't take directions from *a* board member. So when someone says I think you should do this, I say well that is a really interesting idea, why don't you bring that up at the next board meeting and we can really have at that? But I am respectful of the time and energy they bring to this because . . .they're a good group of people. (Initial Superintendent Interview, 2004)

Dr. Herron never shies away from an opportunity to showcase the efforts of her school board. This tendency contrasts with the impression that school administrators often give about interactions with school boards and school board members. She embraces them as partners rather than viewing them as a group of people to be tolerated.

Next to working with school boards, the process of passing bond issues in the school community rates even lower on the popularity scale for most superintendents. For Dr. Herron, though, bond issues literally afford the school and the community an occasion to bond.

> I see bond issues very much in that way. Bond issues are an ideal opportunity to bring the broader community in to help create something that is enormously important to students, and to have fun and to get to know one another. And you know if you do that you see . . . at the last party when the bond issue passed, I know there were people who came up to me and said, 'You know, I had no idea there were this many nice people in this community.' They were working together for something important and a lot of that trivial stuff just fell away. (Initial Superintendent Interview, 2004)

> As I reflected on Dr. Herron's unique perspectives (curriculum as culture, dissertation as a luxury, the superintendency as fun and creative, the school board as learners, and a bond issue as community building), I could understand her determination to be omnipresent within her school system. By doing so, by involving herself in all areas of her school community, she captured openings to reframe what others might see as obstacles and frustrations into personal challenges and opportunities. Her leadership values are modeled throughout the system. On the other hand, her intense engagement could as be viewed as micro-management. Although few, a small number of questionnaire responses express a need for increased faculty input in regards to the number of initiatives and projects that teachers are required to develop and implement.

In spite of occasional grumbling, Dr. Herron insists that the administrative team works to serve district teachers.

> We work really hard on supporting teachers in the classroom and doing whatever it takes to get that done. And if you talk with our central office staff members, that's what they talk about. Their job is to take care . . . you know, the best job of buildings and grounds is to make sure the teachers have the facilities they need. And (Tom's) job in finance is to serve teachers, getting them the materials they need. And our (the superintendent and assistant superintendent) job is to do that (serve teachers) with curriculum and instruction. (Initial Superintendent Interview, 2004)

With hints of discontentment from faculty members, I needed confirmation that these were not merely political slogans but real convictions. I sought evidence of what I considered to be non-traditional perspectives and practices in day-to-day interactions with others. I also wanted to know how her faculty perceived Dr. Herron's words and actions. I would learn that while she truly sets the highest expectations for herself as the instructional leader of a school district and exhibits strong commitments to her constituents, this sometimes results in overwhelming expectations for others.

<div align="center">Commitments to Others</div>

While this research was not meant to be another study contrasting gendered leadership practices, Helgesen's (1990) study of four female CEO's, paralleling Mintzberg's study of five successful business men in 1968, drew me to notable comparisons with my pursuit of an Ethic of Care. I was unsure of what I would be looking for in an Ethic of Care leader but Helgesen's work offered confirming data that the female superintendent I had been led to and ultimately chose to study exhibited

qualities more indigenous to women than men. Her words inspired me to embrace my feminist inclinations:

> Discrepancies (between male and female leadership practices) are so striking and so reflective of differences in male and female psychology that they do seem to indicate a basic dissimilarity of approach. Thus comparing elements . . . can help us draw a concrete, empirically based picture of the different ways in which men and women approach the diverse tasks that constitute management. (p. 19)

My study attempts to identify the Ethic of Care leadership practices of one female superintendent who exhibits an Ethic of Care leadership in action, in order to inform aspiring and practicing superintendents regardless of gender.

As I reflected on the data, I utilized Helgesen's (1990) findings as a resource for determining what Dr. Herron had in common with the leadership practices of those successful women from different locations, in various careers. One of the eight leadership patterns Helgesen (1990) highlighted in her first chapter entitled, "Women's Ways of Leading," illuminated that while both genders view their role in big-picture terms, women consider how their decisions will impact society more globally: "They feel they must make a difference, not just to their companies, but to the world" (p. 25). This sense of purpose mirrored Dr. Herron's mission to ensure academic success for the African American students within her school district and her desire to help them and their teachers create visions for their futures, beyond high school, as successful members of society.

One of the first questions I asked Dr. Herron had to do with moral dilemmas. Research indicates that women frame moral dilemmas in terms of connections and

commitments to others while men tend to view them dichotomously (right/wrong, fair/just) (Gilligan, 1982; Sherblom, 2008). The moral dilemma that was prominent in her mind was that of suspending students, but not just any students: African American boys. She had had to suspend two students for the remainder of the school year and struggled with the decision:

> The reality is, if you're dealing with an African American boy which in this case both of them were, if he's kicked out of school for the year, the likelihood of him graduating from high school is pretty low and he has about a 70% chance of ending up in prison if he doesn't have a high school diploma. So every time I look at this issue, I'm thinking, this isn't really just about high school. (Initial Interview, 2004)

When faced with pressures from parents and teachers to suspend students, she explains the importance of taking care of the student's behavior now rather than later when he may have a gun to someone's head. Her desire to afford students alternatives to suspensions led her to establish the Success Center, an off-site learning environment in a renovated house where students can attend school on a half-day basis. This setting serves "to give these kids some sense of hope and some sense of their own futures" (Initial Interview, 2004).

Over the years, her commitment to the future of the African American students within her school system has remained constant. During a meeting with the reading curriculum team in December of 2008, teams around the table shared experiences with reading interventions they were implementing at the early childhood and elementary levels. Dr. Herron inquired about a reader's theater intervention involving eight boys. The teacher indicated that the students were highly engaged when she incorporated rhythm with

reading and announced an upcoming performance. "That was really the purpose of this . . . to look for various forms of engagement especially for African American boys. How to get them actively engaged. So this is very exciting. Let me know when you have your performance" (Dr. Herron, Reading Curriculum Meeting, 2008).

Her genuine dedication to the African American students within her school system prompted the implementation of a Social Justice Cohort, a venue for parents, teachers and administrators to engage in dialogue about race. Her opening comments for the 2008 sessions poignantly and dramatically addressed the issue by revealing her own struggles with the reality of the district and her personal realization that she had the power to make a difference.

> I want to begin by thanking you for committing yourself to this work, this critical
> work—the work of saving our school's soul. Quite frankly we have been failing our
> African American students. And while it has not been intentional…we are all well
> intentioned —it has nonetheless been immoral. *We have allowed ourselves the luxury
> of believing that good intentions are sufficient*. They are not. Our deeply rooted
> mental models, our curriculum and pedagogy, our sense of entitlement have destined
> the vast majority of our children of color to low achievement. We have tried.
> Goodness knows we have tried. But *we have tried the way the majority always
> tries—by working to change the other*. We have longed to "fix them" in order to
> erase the achievement gap, to erase our sense of guilt. We are ending that now . . .
> today . . . with you. We have been focusing on the wrong people. (Archival Data,
> 2009, *italics added*)

I cannot recall a time when I have ever heard administrators, superintendents in

particular, point a finger to themselves when talking about student failure. Dr. Herron, however, went further claiming this reality as a moral issue. By framing the failure of the Middleton African American students in this way, she establishes ownership and responsibility for rectifying the existing circumstances and for preventing failure in the future. By claiming personal responsibility, she invites others to evaluate themselves and join her against the immorality associated with the academic failure of Black students.

Longitudinal achievement data (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Statistical Data) for Middleton's African American students drives Dr. Herron's convictions and subsequent call to action (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Longitudinal Achievement Gap Data for the Middleton School District

	3rd 1998	3rd 2008	7th 1998	7th 2008	11th 1998	11th 2008
CA – AA	15.6	18.8	**10**	**27.8**	ND	15.8
CA – W	39.2	60	23.6	58.1	21.2	61.9
	4th 1998	4th 2008	8th 1998	8th 2008	10th 1998	10th 2008
Math – AA	10.3	12.9	ND	2.9	ND	26.3
Math – W	35.8	54.3	5.1	51.4	5.9	60
	3rd 1998	5th 2008	7th 1998	8th 2008	10th 1998	11th 2008
Science – AA	27.9	ND	**0**	**20.5**	ND	13.2
Science – W	44.2	57.7	5.1	77.2	0	73.8

(* ND on the table indicates that no data was found on the state website for those particular years. "AA represents African American students" while "W" represents white

students. Data represents the percentages of students performing in the proficient /

advanced levels in Communication Arts, Math, and Science for the 1998 and 2008 school

years.)

In spite of her long time focus on African American achievement, Black students in

the district continue to score significantly lower than their white counterparts, according

to Table 4.2. Moreover, demographic shifts from 2004 to 2008 indicate a 4.7 percent

increase in the number of African American students, coupled by a 4.5 percent decrease

in the number of White students (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education,

Statistical Data).

While the longitudinal achievement data indicates that the Middleton School District

experienced an increased percentage of African American students performing in the

proficient and advanced levels on the state assessment from 1998 to 2008 at the middle

school level in communication arts (10 to 27.8 percent) and science (0 to 20.5 percent),

the data also presents the harsh reality of an expanding achievement gap between black

and white students. For example, in 1998 15.6 percent of Middleton's African American

students scored in the proficient / advanced levels on the state exam in math, compared to

39.2 percent of Middleton's white student population in 4th grade. That 23.2 percent

difference increased to a 41.4 difference in 2008. Aside from 2005, when 33.3 and 56.7

percent of the district's African American students scored proficient or better in 4th grade

math and social studies, or in 2007 with 42 percent performing similarly in

communication arts, significant academic gains have not been made or maintained

(Retrieved from http://dese.mo.gov/-%20planning/profile). This may very well be the

impetus for Dr. Herron's unrelenting focus on curriculum design and innovative

instruction.

As with most of Dr. Herron's endeavors in school improvement, she seeks out, discovers or takes advantage of suggested readings on topics and strategies relevant to the needs of her district. More often than not, those readings will find their way into the hands of teachers and administrators engaged in their next book study.

The evidence is here—and for years it has made me weep with a sense of *impotence and failure*. Our MAP scores lay it out for all of us to see—our African American students do not thrive in our schools. But why should they? Last year I began to look at our curriculum with new eyes. I wondered at the fact that we had so few books featuring children of color at our ECC and elementary school. I saw that our ethnocentric views of the world still haunt the way we teach. What about those explorers? Those brave white men who fought the savages? They are still there. I read the book *Lies My Teacher Told Me…* and I realized that the curriculum we teach still perpetuates many of those lies. *Why is it that the most prominent image of black men and women in our schools is of them enslaved? Why is it that our sixth and ninth grade world history courses skip over the amazingly rich history of Africa? Why does our pedagogy still serve best the white girls who can best attend to us, can best emulate us? Why are we not holding ourselves accountable for ensuring that the literature we teach rings with African American voices?* (Archival Data, 2009, *italics added*)

With these words, Dr. Herron initiated an exploration and a discussion on a delicate topic frequently avoided in social settings.

Dr. Herron created a safe environment in which parents, teachers, administrators and

community members could engage in healthy and honest dialogue about race, inequalities, and necessary change in instruction and expectations. The act of facilitating such a forum reflected not only Dr. Herron's willingness to take risks where needed and the fearlessness to see them through, but draws our attention once more to the qualities that set her apart from other leaders: her passion, the investment of personal engagement and a higher level of commitment as evidenced through those engagements.

Dr. Herron's studious nature fuels professional development, as she voraciously researches and digests instructive literature related to the district mission. By doing this, she models characteristics of a life-long learner and a professional seeker of knowledge. When faced with challenges beyond her expertise, such as meeting the academic needs of African American students, she does not wallow in ignorance, but rather recognizes such challenges for what they are – opportunities for improvement. From there she immerses herself and her staff in inquiry and study of the issue or problem.

In addition to focusing her instructional team leaders on closing the achievement gap, Dr. Herron rolls up her sleeves to make a difference as well. (The average ACT composite score for Middleton [19.1] is 3.6 to 6.8 points lower than four of the neighboring school districts with scores ranging from 22.7 to 25.9.) On Thursday and Friday afternoons, she teaches an ACT prep class called *Bootcamp for the ACT* for high school students who have taken the ACT and scored below college entrance requirements on the English portion. She has two students in her boardroom on this Friday afternoon in January, 2009: one Hispanic female and one African American male. The young man has been offered a basketball scholarship from at least two universities. Dr. Herron will tutor them for six weeks until they take the exam again in March. This part of her day

takes place following several hours of curriculum work with her high school social studies team. She engages these two students on her interactive SMARTBoard, giving high-fives and "You rock!" frequently. Materials for this course include *English the Easy Way* (Diamond & Dutwin, 2003), *Painless Grammar* (Elliott, 2006) and *The Curious Case of the Misplaced Modifier* (Trenga, 2008). Dr. Herron is well prepared with online lessons and interactive activities.

Dr. Herron also serves as mentor to young women in grades 9-12 in a program called Women Who Look Ahead, currently in its seventh year of existence. Secretaries in Central Office join her by participating in whole group monthly meetings and mentoring individuals.

Our monthly sessions include all sorts of things–we bake Christmas cookies each year; sometimes we will have a movie and discussion; sometimes speakers–last month it was on choosing a career. We have done sessions on conflict management, sexual health, etc. (E-mail correspondence, 2009)

Participants are chosen according to their need for adult guidance and remain in the group through graduation. Grant monies fund attendance to cultural activities throughout the year.

Joe's Place serves as another opportunity whereby Dr. Herron touches the lives of her neediest students. In 2006, community members, churches and the Middleton School District collaborated on a project aimed at providing basic needs to struggling high school students lost in abusive homes or traveling among family members. Community organizations formed a non-profit organization; the Middleton School District purchased a local house; and house parents were hired to offer a welcoming shelter, provide food

and counsel to youth lacking a stable home environment. Approximately two-dozen students have benefited from this collaborative effort in the past few years. For the students under her leadership, Dr. Herron's commitment goes beyond mere words.

These snapshots are merely a few examples of her commitment to student success. In contrasting experiences in the Middleton School District to experiences in other districts, one faculty member explained, "Central office was not a major part of my life *at all*. I mean I could count on one hand how many times I saw (the superintendent) in my building, which was not even close to five. Here, it's totally different. It's like a mom and pop shop." She laughs, adding, "It's like a family farm" (Faculty Interview, 2009).

As with any family farm, one would expect to see every member of the family working on the chores, on the land, and with the animals from sun up to sun down. During intense times of flooding and freezing, farmers work late into the nights to salvage their crops. Sometimes they pack and stack sand bags to stave off high waters. Other times, they cover crops with mulch, use moisture or small heaters to prevent frost. At times like that, surrounding farmers will join forces in order to save even one farm. Regardless of the strategies used, the family farm requires community effort driven by ethics of hard work and dedication. The same can be said of a school system, and Dr. Herron models her Ethic of Care in this way. Having been raised on a farm, this comes naturally for her. Clearly, this is not a natural phenomenon for school districts as evidenced by the need to list school climate / culture as a standard for school administrators and the often neglected research stressing the important role it plays in effective schools. Within this school district, it is clear from the evidence that Dr. Herron teaches and participates in the practices she values most.

We spend a lot of time on community and talking about community and how do you

build community, how do you sustain it, how do community members take care of

one another. We try to do that on a big level here. We try to do it in the small groups

that we work with and I think that the concept of community is pretty deeply

embedded here now. You hear people talking about that. That's part of our language

and it is, I think, it has a deeper meaning than some of the superficial community talk

that's in professional literature right now. (Initial Superintendent Interview, 2004)

This cultural aspect captures another of Helgesen's (1995) findings that, unlike men who

tended to "hoard information," the women in her study "structured their days to include

as much sharing as possible; it was a deliberate process, a major goal of everyday" (p.

27). She goes on to explain that

This impulse to share information seemed to derive from the women's concern with

relationships. Lots of give-and-take kept the network in good repair. Sharing was

also facilitated by their view of themselves as being in the center of things rather than

at the top; it's more natural to reach out than to reach down. They tended to structure

their companies as networks or grids instead of hierarchies, which meant that

information flowed along many circuits rather than up and down in prescribed

channels. (pp. 27-28)

From my vantage point, Dr. Herron *is* in the middle of everything - curriculum designing

with teachers, tutoring students, mentoring young women, instituting racial awareness

with parents and faculty, and community projects that meet the needs of potentially

transient students, to name a few. As a researcher and experienced educator, I interpret

this as the superintendent's way of being connected, her way of being a working part of the whole.

Dr. Herron's process for community building involves engaging teachers in the hard work of curriculum design.

If one of the basic tenets is if curriculum is cultural then you have to pay attention to the people. So, it's about building teacher theory and teacher pedagogical expertise and creating that shared sense that we know how to teach reading, and math and everything else. (Initial Interview, 2004)

Her commitment to the district, learning environment means developing the expertise of all constituent groups for the benefit of the students. Developing meaningful communication strengthens individual and group performance. Reflective practice, dialogue and critique serve as rituals for professional growth and student learning.

I believe very deeply in the power of conversation to uncover ideas, discover new ideas and to resolve problems. I think conversation is really rooted in this whole district now. People talk about that a lot. The Kiva (explained under Learning on Display) at the elementary school is used to have important conversations and people talk about that. We have a speech class now where a big component (includes the question): How do you use dialogue to solve problems and discover new ideas? (Initial Interview, 2004)

For Dr. Herron, her community includes constituents on both sides of the school walls. Her inclusive nature influences others to participate in the learning community she has worked with others to create.

We do that in a lot of ways by studying together in lots of different formats. And, the

board sees themselves as serious students as well. But also by playing together and

partying together and doing fun things together. So like the garage sale we had for

this family two weeks ago, the central office organized all that. And, you know, I

made hot chocolate and it's fun and homemade bread and all kinds of things. So we

had a little party for the people who were coming in. (Initial Interview, 2004)

As a superintendent, Dr. Herron exhibits commitment to her constituents (students,

parents, teachers, faculty, and the broader community) by modeling facilitative and

participatory leadership, by engaging in the work required of others, and by establishing

an industrious culture focused on continuous improvement.

One of the ways she does this is by maintaining a collective focus on the district

mission: To inspire and prepare students as leaders, scholars, stewards and citizens for a

diverse and changing world. "Always get them back to 'here's what we're doing, here's

why we're doing it.' And I tell lots of stories about kids. I try to get kids front and center

as much as possible" (Initial Interview, 2004). Dr. Herron's practice of what has become

a rhetorical leadership quality (being a visionary) further sets her apart from the typical

superintendent. While some district and school administrators purport to possess

visionary leadership skills, which often go undetected, Dr. Herron molded that intangible

concept into a meaningful pursuit that continues to drive the instructional programs

throughout her district. Her practical methods for facilitating curriculum and instruction,

coupled with an Ethic of Care approach that values relationships and commitments to

others, offers school and district administrators an alternative to traditional leadership

models of the past. According to Helgesen (1990),

As women continue to assume positions of influence in the public sphere, they are

countering the values of the hierarchy with those of the web, which affirms

relationships, seeks ways to strengthen human bonds, simplifies communications, and

gives means an equal value with ends. (p. 52)

Drawing inspiration from literature on school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999) and the use

of metaphors to instill organization change (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), Dr. Herron

established unique forums for nurturing connections and orchestrating in-depth

instructional and learning processes. These forums have served to strengthen the

relationships between teachers while offering direction for their instructional

commitments to students.

<div align="center">Functional Metaphors</div>

Part of the process of portraiture involves observing and listening for institutional

metaphors through words, rituals, archival data and traditions. Some come in the form of

recurring themes and patterns of thought adhered to by the participants who inform and

are informed by their day-to-day surroundings. In some instances, community metaphors

are explicitly announced through mission statements or mottos. Some exist more

implicitly but are detected through school culture or climate. Teachers within a district

may not necessarily recognize the existing metaphors perpetuated throughout the school

system. During Dr. Herron's preliminary conversations with school constituents, she

identified a negative recurring metaphor fed by teachers, administrators, students and

community members alike. "The myth of the victim played itself out in many of the

conversations" (Archival Data, 2008). Dr. Herron's own words articulated her findings

this way:

At (Middleton), in the absence of any other coherent vision, *the metaphor of the factory dominated the lives of teachers and learners alike.* The factory metaphor minimizes human potential, creativity, interaction, and innovation. Yet, interestingly, schools that serve our neediest students frequently are the ones that most closely align to the view of school as factory. The dehumanizing of teachers who work in such settings is seen in materials described as 'teacher-proof,' and in policies and procedures that minimize the ability of teachers to deal with the unique perspectives and the ways and rates of learning of individual students. Students who do not succeed in such mechanistic settings are seen simply as seconds off the assembly line—and from schools are passed too often to prisons—the other institution that adopted wholeheartedly the factory metaphor.

In almost every community in the United States elements of the factory metaphor remain embedded in schools. In places where poverty, lack of leadership, or other social issues sap a district's energy, schools too often hyperbolize the factory metaphor and frame the work of school in ways that narrow the possibilities for children and adults to thrive. The additional hammer of accountability that has become such a force since the passage of NCLB also magnifies the issues and thwarts creativity and innovation in addressing school reform. This seemed to be true for (Middleton)—a school that had been spiraling downward for many years. (Archival Data, 2008)

For Middleton School District, metaphors literally guide the instructional programs, K-12. While school reform often results in top-down decisions, manipulated teacher buy-in, and plug-in programs, Dr. Herron invited her faculty to engage in change that would

result in a renovated school culture and innovative instruction involving a visionary process based on metaphors. While the concept emerged from Dr. Herron's studies on school culture and the use of metaphor, she embraced ideas that faculty suggested as worthy explorations.

Beyond the School Walls

Middleton School District initiated its *metaphor*ic change in the middle school, a building requiring immediate triage:

> The pattern of enrollment was clear—(our district) was hemorrhaging at the seventh and eighth grade. Students would continue through our elementary schools and then families would move from the district before their students began in the middle school. We wanted metaphors that would lead us in exploring the active, constructivist approaches to teaching and learning that we felt helped children and adults thrive in a respectful and nurturing environment. (Archival Data, 2008)

A further insight into what might support Middle School students was communicated in a later e-mail exchange:

> We were hiring a lot of new staff for the middle school and two of them talked about it (expeditionary learning) as a great way to engage students. We started reading about the concept, brought in a consultant for the program and the staff met with her and liked the idea. (E-mail communication, 2009)

Thus began an educational journey for both teachers and students as they embraced the nationally renowned Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound Principles (Hahn, 2005) listed in Table 4.3.

According to the Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound Schools (ELS) website,

"The ELS approach promotes rigorous and engaging curriculum; active, inquiry-based pedagogy; and a school culture that demands and teaches compassion and good citizenship" (Expeditionary Learning Schools Outward Bound, para. 1). Explanations of each principle, along with a chart of expectations for participating schools, are also provided on the website.

Table 4.3

Expeditionary Learning Principles (Hahn, 2005)

1. The primacy of self-discovery
2. The having of wonderful ideas
3. The responsibility for learning
4. Empathy and caring
5. Success and failure
6. Collaboration and competition
7. Diversity and inclusion
8. The natural world
9. Solitude and reflection
10. Service and compassion

Middleton Middle engages students in authentic research activities, integrated units and off-site learning opportunities. Learning at MMS takes place both within and beyond the school walls requiring active student participation and collaborative planning on the part of teachers. Implementation of the expeditionary metaphor has transformed the middle school in a number of ways. Teachers collaborate more, teachers form stronger relationships with students, and discipline is now viewed differently. According to Dr. Herron,

> We work to embed the metaphors deeply–still have a lot of work to get there. The
>
> middle school teachers work almost every summer to insure the expeditions are
>
> integrated cross the curriculum. The teachers have become collaborative and work

closely together in planning and implementing their work. I am impressed with the

level of teamwork. (E-mail Communication, 2009)

As a result, administrators have seen a 75% decrease in discipline referrals at the middle

school over a three-year period of time.

March foray with Middle School scientists-in-training

Experiencing an expedition, at any age, stimulates a thirst for discovery. Of course,

capturing that thirst becomes a difficult task in the midst of 25 boisterous and irreverent

middle school students. I joined one such group from Middleton Middle for an

expedition on a nippy March afternoon, for which the local weatherman projected a high

of 39 degrees. It always surprises me that one can encounter seemingly isolated wild

habitat environments within minutes, even blocks, of city stress. Turning off the main

bustling thoroughfare, I found myself on a winding two-lane residential road where

estates hide among the wooded terrain. It was easy to miss the turn into the ecology

center as wild grass and bare winter tree branches camouflage the small brown cabin,

rather than the massive brick building I had expected. Unlike the occasional sirens and

the constant symphony of traffic a few blocks away, once my car engine was turned off, I

realized chirping birds dominated this air space. I had traveled a hundred miles from

civilization in less than five minutes. I beat the school bus to the location so I embraced

the moments left to take in my surroundings. The gravel road had ended at a small

parking area, leading me to believe that schools scheduled expeditions in small groups

only; thus, preserving the ambiance of the site. My car faced the hidden road with the tall

grass prairie in front of me and a wooded area with paths and a creek behind. When

MMS students arrived, we walked directly into another small cabin without windows on

either side. The door faced a wall of two large windows beside a set of glass doors. On the left, was a counter with tubs of supplies for observing in the wild, while a stone fireplace took up the wall to the right. Students crowded around four tables. Various rocks lined the windowsills and a poster of various birds hung in front of the fireplace.

Initially students sat, looking bored and distracted by each other, holding their own conversations as one of the five center guides (dressed in orange vests) attempted to frame the agenda. I recalled fieldtrips to science centers and museums where adults with limited exposure to children made honorable but futile attempts to capture and maintain group attention with factual information that only parents and teachers would find intriguing. In this case, one of the guides became frustrated enough with the teenage ambivalence and rude remarks to try her hand at bridling their wandering attention, while the chaperoning teacher stood by quietly. "We have third graders that show more respect than you are. Now, if I need to be a bitch, I will." Clearly, this woman knows little about the characteristics of middle school students or the accepted strategies for working with them. I gather she has also missed episodes of the Dog Whisperer, as she fails to come across as calm-assertive. One student immediately responds, under her breath, "Can I say that word, too?" Needless to say, the belittling has a small effect on the atmosphere of the group as a whole except they now have the women's attitude to add to their list of complaints. Quickly enough, however, the team leaders decide to divide and conquer. While the ecology guides lack the pack leader qualities necessary in leading a large group of middle school students, each exhibits fluent knowledge for their group focus.

Students come to this center to explore nature and collect data. These students are prepared to split into five groups in order to collect data on different topics: fossils/rocks,

birds, bugs, trees, and abiotic factors (temperature). Each group meets briefly to review their mission, review the data collection sheets on their clipboards and then heads out for their excursions.

The center also provides gloves and hats if needed. The bird group, led by the lion-tamer, remains in the cabin to learn about some of the birds they may encounter and to observe from the warm inside first. This also allows time for birds in the wooded area and near the creek to acclimate to the visitors. Later they gather on the deck attached to the back of the cabin and begin their outdoor observations of bird feeders positioned within view. They also walk out front, past the parking area, to identify birds in the prairie. Although the day is frigid, cardinals, woodpeckers, golden finches, and red birds serve as documented sightings on their data sheets.

I make my way to each group and find their mindsets have, for the most part, settled into the day's task. In each cluster, one or two students appear disinterested but resigned to the activity. Some of the girls huddle for warmth. The fossil / rock group starts out at the creek where they discuss the various types of rock typical to the area and look for specimens. The water level is low, so we are able to stand directly on part of the creek bed, composed of various rocks, fossils and some pieces of glass. These students learn that limestone is distinguished from other rocks by its weight and color, while chert is darker than most other rocks in the area and was used by Native Americans to make arrowheads.

As the insect group passes, I join them. They have been going to various locations down the path searching for insects under logs, rocks, on the creek surface and beneath bug boards. Bug boards are 3 x 3 sections of wood that have been placed throughout the

wooded area for the purpose of providing shelter for insects attracted to wood and dirt.

Insect groups identify the insects huddled under the boards, while the abiotic team counts

the number of living organisms at the various locations, documenting the air and ground

temperatures as well. As I walk with the group, students find a tiny snail inside a large

log and the leader offers a helpful tip for identifying poison ivy, "Groups of three, let

them be."

Elsewhere, the abiotic team has discovered a family of slugs beneath one of the bug

boards. Their mission is to determine the relationship between temperature and number

of living organisms at a particular location. The slugs are thriving with a land

temperature of forty degrees, coupled by an air temperature of thirty-eight. This group is

quiet but engaged. Students in the tree group have visited several spots with different

types of trees. At each site, they measure the circumference of each trunk, the length of

the longest reachable branch, and the distances between each bud on that branch.

Following 30-45 minutes in the field, groups gather inside one of two cabins to

discuss their findings and plan their follow-up expedition that will occur in April.

Between now and then, the trees will grow leaves, colors will change from brown to

green, the varieties of birds may increase, insects will emerge from the depths, and the

creek will rise, announcing spring's arrival. The expedition project will culminate in

student presentations to faculty and other school teams.

Blending Nature with the Nature of the Child

Unlike many district-level administrators, Dr. Herron did not seek a district-wide

approach to school reform. Instead, she encouraged faculty at each level (early

childhood, elementary, middle school and high school) to identify metaphors that would

best fit their students and meet their needs. The Early Childhood Center that houses the district's preschool, kindergarten and first grade students chose the Reggio Emilia Approach.

In contrast to 212 schools within their state, Dr. Herron's ECC teachers decided to detach from the grassroots developed Project Construct program for their young students. Initiated in 1992, Project Construct applies Piaget's cognitive constructivist approach that links understanding to development stages and considers learning to be a joint venture of construction between the teacher and the student (Kamii & DeVrie, 1980) to early childhood education, focusing on the social, cognitive, language, and physical development of the individual child. The developmentally appropriate informal and formal assessments align with state standards allowing on-going evaluation of student progress.

> *Project Construct* is a process-oriented curriculum and assessment framework for working with children ages three through seven. *Project Construc*t is based on constructivist theory, which states that children construct their own knowledge and values as a result of interactions with the physical and social world. The project design provides for a variety of resources, including curriculum material and assessment instruments, support pieces for educators and parents that address a range of theoretical and practical concerns, and guidelines for teacher evaluation and professional development. (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory website, 2008, para. 2)

One must keep in mind, as well, that the average school district superintendent has minimal knowledge of the early childhood program. Dr. Herron's interest in how

learning takes place at each level reflects her commitment to student achievement as well as her particular leadership priorities.

Through a partnership with a local university, one of the district preschool teachers had the opportunity to observe the Reggio Emilia program in its home country, Italy. This personal experience brought insight into what the Middleton Early Childhood Center could aspire to become. Without prior knowledge of the program, a visitor would immediately pick up on environmental clues that learning looked and sounded different from other early childhood schools. Unlike Project Construct's more traditional approach to early childhood education, Reggio Emilia offers a strong child-directed curriculum model, drawn from Vygotsky's (1962) social constructivism theory highlighting the role social encounters play in a child's construction of meaning and understanding. The curriculum has purposive progression but not scope and sequence. Teachers follow the children's interests and do not provide focused instruction in reading and writing" (Reggio Emilia). Additional components of Reggio Emilia that make this learning approach stand out from others includes: (1) the role of the environment as the "third teacher", (2) the emphasis on expressive learning through print, art, music, drama, construction, puppetry, and shadow play, (3) assessment through documentation and display of learning experiences, (4) child-centered projects, and (5) the role of the teacher as researcher (Brainy-Child.com, 2002, paras. 3-6).

On my visit, I spent time taking in the information displayed on the walls, both in classrooms and in the hallways. The chain-link fence in front of the school that keeps trespassers out and continues within its boundaries to keep students, faculty and parents away from construction areas distracts from the garden areas and the addition to the south

end of the building. Once inside the front doors one gets a sense that art and nature play

a vital role in the development of young children within the Middleton School District.

The entryway welcomes visitors on the left with a large aloe-type plant in a hearty red pot

next to a stone bench embossed with blue marbles and glass. Above hangs a frame-

mounted article from a local city newspaper showcasing the schools' gardening project in

2004. On the right, a wooden bench with pillows sits next to a sizable antique armoire

decorated with metal figures of children and a basket plant. Bright turquoise walls

extend above the shoulders to the ceiling presenting more colorful figurines of children

holding butterflies, flipping in the grass and celebrating nature. This introduction to the

school is apropos, as one will soon discover.

Children, art and nature resonate throughout the building. A tall bulletin board next

to the office displays pictures of students engaged in a collaborative painting activity next

to pictures of their art. Down farther, another display explains the Seed to Table project

highlighted in the newspaper article. The environment plays a crucial role in a Reggio

Emilia program. Student-generated art and pictures of students engaged in meaningful

learning serve to validate the inquiry-based discoveries of the students. In this display,

students are shown working with plants and taking notes of the botanical experience as

they "learn from their environment" by growing herb, flower and vegetable gardens.

This is more than an activity within a unit of study: this is the Seed to Table project that

goes on throughout the school year as a *special* class, like Art, Music and Physical

Education.

For the Middleton Early Childhood Center, the Reggio Emilia project is ever-

evolving. In fact, the teachers studied the program for two years prior to initiating any of

the components. Given the exploratory nature of pre-school, transitioning from Project Construct to Reggio Emilia has broadened student learning. Next year the transition will continue into first grade. Right now, however, all students at the Early Childhood Center (Pre-K through First Grade) participate in Seed to Table and Studio. One of the basic components of the Reggio Emilia Project is the atelier or studio where students create art while engaging in the environment. Collaborative planning ensures students continue topic connections from Seed to Table and Studio. During my visit, the connections lined the hallways and the shelves of the common learning rooms in the form of mosaics, models, paintings, and artifacts from nature.

I began in the Seed to Table "collaborative space," a room without corners. Located at one end of the building, this area provides a scenic view of the playground and the construction site of a Reggio Emilia-inspired pre-school which will include a piazza and learning spaces designed for exploring water, construction and light. This room is separated in the middle by two large doors with opaque panels to accommodate classes on either side. Today a teacher is reading a story to students about a garden, an appropriate read for students within this space. Various plants line the windows that circle the room above the waist-high walls. Students are seated in a low circular seating area within a cul-de-sac of shelves. There are two areas like this side-by-side. The two-toned wooden floors are a nice alternative to school tile and add to the modern ambiance. Unlike the low ceilings in the rest of the building, the high ceilings of this structure provide an airy and spacious quality. The learning theme for this side of the room is announced by the many books and magazines about bird watching, gardening, flowers, herbs, butterflies and nutrition on the counter to the left, just inside the door. To the

right, decorative shelves hold baskets, seed packets and collections from nature walks. This wall faces visitors and shields students from hallway distractions. On the other side of this adorning boundary, sit four computer Mac-stations lining the curved wall leading to the circular seating areas. In the middle of the floor are small flower starters for planting. The atmosphere and décor exude a *Home and Garden* ambiance.

From the hallway, a class mission posted just outside the attached space greets me. It reads: "We . . . think, draw, learn. We . . . invent, sculpt, learn. We . . express, paint, learn. We . . . imagine, build, learn. We . . . learn together" (Artifact Display, 2009) In other schools this would be the art room; in this school it is far more. Slim cabinets and walls of lime green and orange are sprinkled between windowpanes, with age-appropriate wooden tables and benches for students. From the doorway, I see shelves where student-made models and collages of school and neighborhood invite attention. Students have explored their school neighborhood and community as a way of developing their identities.

Evidence of learning is not limited to the classrooms at the Early Childhood Center. As one walks down the hall, student artifacts draw the visitor's attention to creations that reflect awareness of nature. Students' writings are posted, regardless of spelling and grammar errors. Their words are celebrations of discovery. On one poster, students have taken opportunities to capture the first snow with their snowflake creations posted next to photographs of white snow on dark brown branches and student compositions, such as "brr, little wit puf ball, tiny cotton falls down, finst snow" (Artifact Display, 2009). A large brown cabinet holds student-colored birds with bright feathers glued to them. Next one finds a loom made of grasses, flowers and branches collected by students for a

"communal weaving." Down farther, a large round mural of painted muted winter colors is posted next to small artifact collections that reflect the sparkle aspect of winter.

In the classrooms, student-created items replace the manufactured teacher materials that typically cover instructional spaces, offering a minimalist yet meaningful presentation. Upon entering Ms. Myers' (pseudonym) classroom, you will see a familiar sight: letters of the alphabet high across the left wall. What makes this alphabet unique is the fact that individual students who chose a design of their choice and painted that design on the capitalized block letters created it made of red construction paper. Classroom-length windows face the door, leading to the far wall on the right. I am intrigued by the earthy brown, green and orange colors used on the bulletin boards. A large carpet area for morning meetings lies before the hand-made calendar of burlap string and paper where dates are handwritten. Next to the calendar are two maps, one of the neighborhood and one of this classroom. Both reflect student collaborations and inquiry into their local environments. On the wall leading back to the door, another bulletin board displays photographs of students engaged in learning, discovery and creation. Digital cameras capture daily learning events for display and documentation. Ms. Myers maintains a daily journal with photos and details of daily learning. One of my favorite displays can be found outside every classroom door. There are two posters placed side by side. On one is a photograph of each child in the class. On the second, students have drawn self-portraits, which are placed in the same order as the photographs on the first poster. For this visual, students sit before mirrors to identify facial features and use this information as they depict their self-awareness. Their learning environment begins with them.

Dr. Herron's creative inclination towards teaching and learning frees others to question traditional practices. After embarking on the studio metaphor with her young students, one teacher questioned the importance of having students travel everywhere in straight-line formation in a classroom embracing discovery. I wondered how often leaders of surrounding school districts afford their teachers the opportunity to question traditional practice without punitive repercussions. Regarding Dr. Herron's leadership, Ms. Myers said, "She helps us think" (personal communication, 2009).

Learning on Display

An article by Koetsch, D'Acquisto, Kurin, Juffer and Goldberg (2002), published in the *Educational Leadership Journal,* ignited interest in developing a metaphor for the elementary school. The article detailed how elementary students in Virginia and Wisconsin create museum exhibits to culminate units on state history and Hispanic art and culture. As part of a Kids Curators Museum Project, students at Middleton Elementary conduct research and develop exhibitions requiring in-depth ownership of learning. The engaging process increases students' problem solving, teamwork, critical thinking, and communication skills.

Teachers also augment instructional planning skills. Designing learning for optimal student engagement lends itself well with the Understanding by Design format used district-wide for unit development. For teachers in the Middleton School District, creativity results in hard work. One faculty member voiced it like this:

Because of the nature of *Understanding by Design,* it's very complicated. It's very

sophisticated and rigorous. It challenges staff. And in turn with having such a

sophisticated curriculum it's going to have an impact on student achievement. But

you have to implement that structure with fidelity. So that means training and staying

on them and reviewing the curriculum. (Faculty Interview #1)

In order to provide an environment reflective of the museum metaphor, architects

designed the district's new elementary school with exhibit areas for each grade level and

a kiva for community dialogue. "The first kivas appeared at the beginning of the Pueblo

period, about A.D. 750. Today, the Hopi and other descendants still use kivas for

ceremonial, religious and celebratory purposes."[4] A kiva is a circular gathering spot,

offering layered seating so that all can see the speaker in the center. Attending to the

ambiance in one's surroundings through architecture and décor at the elementary school,

similar to the studio at the early childhood center and renovation of the central office,

accommodates feminine sensitivities. In Helgesen's (1995) study, the four women in her

study specifically transformed office workspace to encourage interaction among workers

with glass walls, circular rooms connected to offices, food and drink, low room dividers

without doors, and by placing team leaders in proximity to their teams.

Middleton students have become skilled docents, providing guided tours for parents

and other visitors, and have gained a unique understanding of museum exhibits having

studied them at local museums to inform their own exhibits. Learning looks and sounds

different as a result of the new image of learning at the Middleton elementary school.

Fact and skilled-based learning has been replaced with student inquiry, museum visits

and perspective walls. Not only have students' questions replaced the textbook, students

now engage in learning across grade levels and apply knowledge by developing charts

and graphs for their exhibits. Students become experts of the knowledge they present to

parents and community members during museum exhibitions. Leadership and self-

efficacy are by-products of the museum approach to learning.

The new elementary school is a two-story structure of taupe and soft clay colored brick with green trim and drain pipes. Its modern look contrasts against the older one and two-story red brick and newly sided A-frame homes that seem to cluster together. High ceilings greet visitors in the foyer, giving a bright and roomy introduction to the building. The white wall accented by three rows of checkered tiles of black, muted purple and soft steel blues align with the white and blue tile-striped floors. A large green pillar offsets the color combinations. I wait patiently for the docents to arrive. Four third-grade students, who have just presented the second of two annual exhibitions for parents and community members the previous night, gather in the office to begin the tour. Exhibitions culminate inquiry studies in social studies and science. Economics is the theme for the third grade exhibit. The group is eager to share what they know on the topic and to guide me through their interactive presentation.

The first stop is a display panel that announces the topic of the exhibit along with three Essential Questions that my docents refer to as "EQ's." Not only have teachers immersed themselves in the *Understanding by Design* (UBD) process, students speak UBD fluently. The EQ's for this project included: (1) How do people make choices about using goods and services to satisfy their needs and wants? (2) Why is it important to save for the future? And (3) Why can't we have everything we want? I am handed a clipboard, an envelope of monopoly-type money and a Savings Quest sheet to fill-out throughout the exhibition. Josh (pseudonym) explains that their exhibit is based on an Internet game at www.mysavingsquest.com. Josh's assertive personality quickly overshadows the others. There are eight stations to complete. The first two require

museum visitors to choose a career (teachers, firefighter, chef, doctor or mayor), all paying $2,000 a month (despite pay differentials in the real world), and set a savings goal for items ranging in price from $80 to $700. An informational panel presents vocabulary that each docent can explain: opportunity cost, expense, services, needs, wants, and goods. Participants pay for retirement, taxes, and entertainment in stations three and four. Rent and food plans present choices of frugality and luxury in the next two stations, with apartments costing $450 to $625 and food plans from $275 to $450 a month. The final station presents an unplanned expense for which participants have to roll a die.

Throughout the tour, I had the students calculate my on-going totals using mental math. Josh found this challenging, quickly crunching numbers and announcing the correct answer; although at times, he had to re-figure. I pose questions to Josh's assistants in order to give them opportunities to interact. Have they ever saved money to purchase a "want"? Fran says she saved for a computer that she ended up receiving as a gift. What have they done to earn money? Mia babysits and Mark earns money participating in medical studies. Sadly, my final amount fell just short of allowing me the vacation option I chose at the beginning, so we brainstormed what my options would be to obtain that goal. They all agreed that I could keep saving until I had enough money. They convinced me that their learning activities for this project paid-off. I continued my tour of the building to see other museum exhibits.

I find that the second grade community has an exhibit on just that: community. Concentric circles around a bulletin board greet the visitor. Students have written the communities they belong to within each circle. This is a colorful hall with two large sections taken by student drawings forming quilt-like displays. A message separates the

two quilts in the center explaining how communities are composed of many threads that are woven into a fabric. The pink paper quilt on the left holds thirty-four student drawings depicting self-portraits and the groups to which they belong. Encircling the quilt are photographs of individual students with personal quotes about the groups in which they participate and how they help their community. The purple quilt to the right holds forty drawings of students participating in an activity of their choice. Student photos and comments placed around the quilt tell how they help others and make the right choices.

On the other side of the wall is the community space or pod for the four second-grade classrooms where the rest of the exhibit displays a student-created neighborhood map with three-dimensional houses of all sizes and colors. On either side of this six-foot wide map are over 75 colorful paper cutouts that represent members of a community, accompanied by student written descriptions of the role they play. (Examples: I wear cute clothes in shows. I am a model. I wear a big coat and see animals every day. I am a vet. I cut your hair and paint your nails. I am a salon worker. I paint, draw, make sculptures. I am an artist.) Sea foam green sheets serve as the backdrops for an exhibit, which I found to be most impressive, as the average lesson or unit on communities limits students to learning about policemen, firefighters, doctors and teachers. They also have a small display with cutouts of city council members with actual photographed faces. I understand the city mayor visited this museum exhibit.

Upstairs, the fourth grade exhibit on the Revolutionary War begins with historic facts and historic biographies that line the hallway leading to the main exhibit. The presentation is both overwhelming and impressive. Three display cases hold items that

may have been found in Native American bandolier bags, in slave bags, and in women's pocket bags. The walls of the display are covered in burgundy sheets, with navy blue sheets on the sides. Posted on the sheets are pictures, descriptions and maps of colonial life. To the right are maps and history of the slave trade. Displayed before the wall is a student-constructed slave ship made from cardboard boxes, tubes, and butcher block paper, with a sail of string and white paper. Open tubes of paper line the bottom of the ship with stick figures of slaves leaving a stark reminder of our country's past.

In a connecting hall, one finds detailed timelines of the revolutionary war battles with pictures, dates and descriptions of various battles. Biographies of generals, descriptions of weapons, and a table detailing the strengths and weaknesses of United States and British armies remind adult visitors of former history classes and forgotten information. From left to right backdrops of navy blue, burgundy, white, and steel blue sheets cover this wall, accented by white sheets above or down the side of darker colors. The feel is very colonial.

Of the three elementary exhibits, the 3rd grade economics exhibition seemed very teacher created, although the students leading the tour were excited about the experience and were able to explain the process very well. Moreover, while students had the opportunity to choose the expense they chose to pay for rent, food and savings, income was the same for each of the careers. When I shared my impressions with Dr. Herron, she pointed out a noteworthy stance. "I think it is interesting that you noticed the third grade exhibit—which is probably the weakest one I have seen. These are two of our senior teachers who never got onto the museum idea. They see it as a display" (E-mail communication, 2009). As in most school systems, receiving pushback from faculty

resistant to change is inevitable but not always so obvious.

Student Empowerment

Finally, learning at Middleton High School places students in the role of Apprentices: "We kind of provide a boutique education: it's unique, it specializes, individualizes" (Faculty Interview #1, 2009). Here students will experience and apply skills to authentic situations. The study of migratory birds and environmental sustainability provide insight to scientific issues beyond high school. "Performance events at the end of each unit of study in all courses require students to apply their learning in real-world settings" (Archival Data, 2009). Conference writing, videography and web design hone skills typically developed in college. Moreover, the high school principal plans to collaborate with local businesses to incorporate apprenticeships aligned to student interests in the next couple of years.

On my visit, Mr. Douglas (pseudonym), who has served as the principal of the High School for twelve years, proudly leads me into an Advisory Class that takes place from eleven to noon daily. Furnishings appear new and modern with trapezoid-shaped tables, a SMARTBoard (an interactive electronic whiteboard used to enhance learning), and a wooden office cabinet. A green wall and yellow painted air duct supply color to the white classroom. We walk directly to the cabinet where a large chart is posted for tracking student progress for the Cornerstone Graduate Program. This program sprouted three years ago as faculty collaboratively contemplated how to envision their metaphor: *School as Apprenticeship*. They began with what they considered to be the cornerstones of the district mission statement: citizenship, scholarship, stewardship and leadership. Using these as markers for success they created a grassroots character program for which

they have received national recognition. Students challenge themselves throughout high

school to earn the necessary points to graduate as a Cornerstone Graduate. Advisory

periods are used for self-monitoring, handing-in related projects, reflecting and goal

setting; while extra-curricular activities provide point opportunities as well. For example,

to earn their ninety points in any of the four Cornerstone areas, a student can choose from

a variety of activities offering 5 to 25 points each over their four-year high school career.

For Leadership, a student could participate in student council, as editor of a publication,

serve as a sports captain or volunteer as a tutor. Citizenship choices could include being

a member of the National Honor Society, lettering in sports, or voting. Scholarship

points can be earned by passing a full-year Advanced Placement class, performing at or

above the national average on ACT or SAT exams, or by surpassing graduation

requirements. Likewise, serving as a teacher's aide, volunteering or participating as a

member of a community youth organization provides some avenues for earning

Stewardship points.

As we stand before a chart in another Advisory, one student announces that he

already qualifies as a Cornerstone Graduate, evidenced by all of the stickers next to his

name for each area. There is casual conversation at a low level while some students work

in a white three-ring binder. Students use the binders to track and document their own

progress in the Cornerstone Program. As Mr. Douglas explains, the strength of the

program lies in its grassroots creation. Other schools have requested information about

their program, but he warns that the effect of plugging-in someone else's concept may

not result in increased character or student performance for them. For Douglas and his

faculty, the work that went into the development was worth the contribution they make daily by developing and guiding their fellow citizens of tomorrow.

At Middleton, each level of schooling places a high value on display of student work. For the high school, students share their best work on the Wall of Fame. According to Dr. Herron,

> The use of metaphors to fuel school transformation is in many ways directly counter to the current thinking on school reform with the intense emphasis on accountability. At (Middleton), however, we have found that over time we have shifted important attitudes and practices as a result of our reframing of our work. (Archival Data, 2009)

Viewing the metaphoric frames through an objective disconnected lens, I found the high school Cornerstone program and the early childhood Reggio approach to be the most developed and embedded in practice. Daily advisories require students to face personal goals and maintain their chosen focus throughout the school year, and from year to year. Likewise, at least in the classroom I observed in the early childhood center, learning is created, authentic, student-driven and manipulated by curriculum programs. At the elementary school, the museum focus seems well into its development yet still under construction for some teachers.

While I was at the elementary school, one teacher having seen me documenting the exhibits invited me into his classroom to see his Inferencing Bulletin Board. Noting the effect of the museum exhibits on student motivation, he had posted a conversation with a student regarding her understanding of inferences. The student indicated that she made inferences from information that the author did not include in the story. Also posted on the board were book jackets and inferences made by students who had read those books.

This display of student thinking reflected the teachers understanding of the museum concept. Knowing the value placed on display of student work in this district, I would have liked to see more photographs of students engaged in the learning process as part of the Elementary Museum Exhibits, such as those at the early childhood center. Continuing the practice of capturing learning in such a way, throughout the Middleton experience, seems like an obvious thread with the potential to further connect learning K-12.

<div align="center">The Leader's Perspective</div>

As evidenced by the student work posters at the Early Childhood Center, the museum exhibits at the elementary school, the expedition presentations at the middle school and the wall of fame and Cornerstone tracking system at the high school, Middleton celebrates and documents student learning by displaying related artifacts. While viewing the displays across the district, I remembered one of my second grade students making a card for me with personal endearments written inside surrounded by hearts and drawings of the two us on the playground. After posting the card on the bulletin board behind my desk, a handful of other girls in the class eagerly presented me with more cards. By posting these cards, I sent a powerful message to those students; I appreciated and valued their artistic and thoughtful efforts. I wish now I had made greater efforts to collect creations from the boys that would have been equally validating.

Two important aspects of Dr. Herron's leadership spring from the importance she places on the display of student work throughout the district. First, she is ever-conscious of the culture and climate of the learning environment. Typically this awareness serves to accommodate positive working environments for adult faculty and staff. Dr. Herron,

however, perceives the needs of all constituent groups from her vantage point; she understands the implications of the displays for students, teachers, parents and the broader community. For students, the displays influence them affectively, offering approval, motivation and pride in academic accomplishments. For parents and community members, the displays stimulate powerful aesthetic senses, confirming confidence in the school system. For teachers, the student-created artifacts offer products for assessment, as well as opportunities to evaluate instruction. Dr. Herron understands the effectiveness of affective leading. For the broader community, the displays are an extension of her cultural influence and her consistent focus on students.

Second, Dr. Herron intentionally monitors the messages sent to members of the school community, those composing both the inner and outer circles. She states on her website, "The three most important things we can communicate to students (are): This work is important. You can do this. I will help you" (Archival Data, 2009). She borrows this mantra from Dr. Jeff Howard (1995), resident of the Efficacy Institute, which calls educators to evaluate the non-verbal messages they send, particularly to minority students. The early childhood's Reggio Emilia approach endorses this concept by identifying the environment as the third teacher. Students in that setting not only learn from the surrounding natural environment but also create learning spaces that reflect themselves as learners. Reflecting Dr. Sharroky Hollie's (2002) work in print environment, Dr. Herron insists that displays of student work include student reflections, rubrics, labels, quotes, photographs, teacher input and artful mountings: "We have much to mine in our use of displays of learning work. I encourage all of us to explore the

power of this teaching and learning strategy. Our school cultures will be richer for the effort" (Archival Data, 2009).

Dr. Herron began her ascension into this superintendency by collecting constituent feedback. That feedback revealed years of administrative neglect, coupled by an equally destructive school identity from students, faculty and community leaders. In the last ten years, Dr. Herron has influenced and shaped these perceptions in powerful ways:

> Creating a healthy organization . . . talking about what we'd like to create together . . . by wading into the middle of it and running right along with them (teachers) . . . by studying together . . . by playing together and partying together and doing fun things together . . . supporting teachers . . . establish(ing) good relationships . . . building teacher theory and teacher pedagogical expertise and creating that shared sense that we know how to teach reading, and math and everything else . . . talking about community . . . articulating the vision . . . being a steward for that vision . . . telling stories, offering examples . . . putting things out there for people to help them be reminded of what we're about. (Initial Interview Data, 2005)

On her website Dr. Herron confidently shares perceptions drawn from teacher feedback across the district indicating that Middleton has, in fact, evolved into a healthy organization. Her interpretations include the following ideas:

- (Middleton) is a place where creativity and innovation are valued.

- Collaboration is critical to our work in the district.

- Our students thrive in environments that support them in building their understandings through active, social learning.

- The learning work our students produce is important to us: we display it,

analyze it, and celebrate it.

- (Middleton School District) hires and supports high quality teachers who assume important leadership roles in the district.

- Parents are an important part of our success.

- Genuine change takes a long time and requires both outside experts and our own best thinking to take root.

These positive sentiments are not just hype from the leader to reassure constituents that all is well. They reflect an arduous journey from unhealthy to healthy that did not happen overnight.

<div align="center">Feedback from the Field</div>

Rating the Leader

Keeping these perceptions in mind, I wondered if faculty members possessed the same common assumptions about their district, adding two open-ended questions to my faculty questionnaires: (1) What message(s) do(es) the leadership practices of your superintendent send to you about teaching and learning? and (2) What message(s) do(es) the leadership practices of your superintendent send to you as a person (Appendix E)?

Color-coded faculty questionnaires were given to each building administrator for dissemination and collection; 30 yellow copies to the Early Childhood Center, 40 blue copies to Middleton Elementary School, 25 purple copies to Middleton Middle School and 35 green copies to Middleton High School. The twenty-one item, Likert-type questionnaires utilized a scale of 1 (not at all descriptive) to 4 (above average), asking faculty their perceptions of Dr. Herron's leadership. Follow up interviews with three faculty members, with experience as teachers or administrators within at least two other

school districts, allowed me to obtain more elaborated feedback from the field. (The faculty interview questions can be found in Appendix D.) Crime and accident investigators report that five individuals can witness the same accident and each will have a unique version of the event, proving that everyone perceives actions, behaviors, interactions and motivations differently. Likewise, school administrators sometimes interpret reality as potential, as seen through the lens of their vision; while faculty, who may not be as melded to that vision, see the here and now as they work, minute by minute and day to day, to make a difference with their struggling students, eager learners, and bored high-achievers. In the Middleton School System they do this while balancing curriculum design, unit development, technology integration, intervention implementation, public academic presentations, off-site learning and metaphoric transformation. Teaching within the Middleton School District requires commitment and hard work.

Regarding professional learning communities

Questionnaires were disseminated to teachers at each district building (early childhood, elementary, middle school and high school). Faculty members were asked to respond to questions regarding their perceptions of Dr. Herron's leadership in the following five areas: (1) Professional Learning Communities, (2) Leadership Capacity, (3) Relational Leadership, (4) Care versus Justice-Oriented Leadership, and (5) Messages to Faculty. From a pool of 108 certified teachers, I initially received 48 (44%) completed surveys. A second request resulted in the return of twenty additional questionnaires, totaling 68 (63%).

The Faculty Questionnaire included 19 Likert-type items on a 1 to 4 scale, multiple-choice questions and the two open-ended questions cited above (Appendix E). Table 4.5 (Appendix I) reflects the raw data and percentages for each question, while Figure 4.1 presents the raw data only in graph form. Viewing both the table and the graph, responses to the first question which is non-evaluative and asks respondents to indicate the extent of their familiarity with Professional Learning Communities show that 59 out of 68 (87%) of those responding to the first question claim to have an average to above average understanding of learning community concepts, while nine considered their knowledge in this area as below average understanding at best.

Figure 4.2:

Middleton Faculty Questionnaire Graph of Raw Data
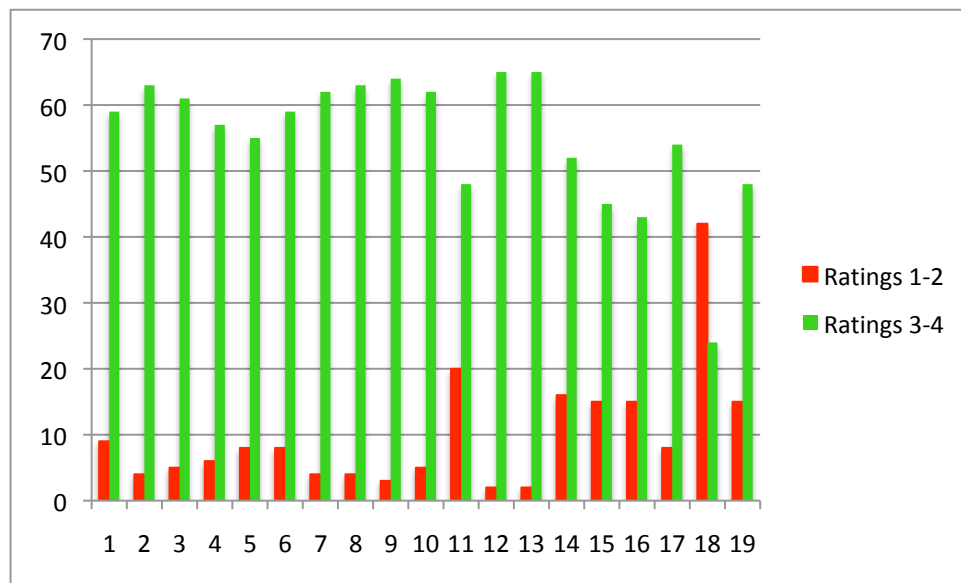
For the first set of evaluative questions (2-5), an average of 91.5 percent of responses rated Dr. Herron's advocacy toward professional learning communities positively. In fact, a 94 percent (63 out of 67) majority agreed that she supported and fostered data-driven decision-making; followed by 61 (92 percent) of the respondents concurring that

she supports and fosters a continuous focus on shared mission, vision, values and goals. Educational researchers tout the importance of both of these practices for effective leadership (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Marzano, 2003). Healthy agreements also surfaced regarding Dr. Herron's utilization of shared leadership (90 percent), her practice of engaging the faculty in developing collective commitments (87 percent) and the importance she places on setting quarterly SMART goals for increasing student achievement (88 percent). (Two teachers at the elementary school specifically recognized their principal for orchestrating goal setting at the building level, rather than the superintendent.)

Measuring leadership capacity

The second set of questions (7-9) asked respondents to consider Dr. Herron's willingness to develop leadership capacity throughout the district. Again, a high percent of respondents (94 percent) rated Dr. Herron as average or above average for encouraging leadership opportunities in question seven. Question eight asked faculty to assess their capacity as a building team to function effectively (meet the needs of their students) while experiencing the long-term absence of their principal. Ninety-four percent of district respondents demonstrated a positive outlook in that situation, revealing a strong sense of self-efficacy, stability and established structure. In other words, in the absence of their school principal, the leadership capacity of each building team would collaboratively play a role in maintaining and sustaining an academic environment for their students. In some school districts, high ratings for question eight could reflect an overall sense that the absence of the building principal would make little difference due to a lack of leadership or administrative support on a day-to-day basis. In this particular

case, I have observed the established routines and structures enough to know that leadership roles and expectations among faculty members are clear and functioning. Therefore, my interpretation of the overall high rating for this question reveals a faculty vested in leadership and capable of sustaining collectively-established school practices.

Question nine also served to confirm Dr. Herron's support in developing leadership capacity by inquiring about the extent to which individual teachers felt free to make instructional decisions about their students and classroom. Responses to the first two sets of questions indicated a prevalence of Origin identities (deCharms, 1968) within the Middleton School District. Only three of the 67 respondents rated Dr. Herron as below average on this question. In other words, under Dr. Herron's leadership, teachers have creative freedom and are not expected to follow a textbook or a scripted instructional format, which is in opposition to Reading First schools that require adherence to curricular resources such as Open Court or to scripted instructional programs such as Success for All.

Districts who were recipients of Reading First grant monies from 2000 to 2005 to help meet NCLB standards were required to adopt specifically approved reading programs, and teachers were required to follow the manuals and scripted instruction with strict fidelity. Many teachers felt instructionally constricted with little room or support for creativity. Moreover, some of these programs are not closely aligned with state standards, resulting in instructional gaps. Therefore, the extent to which Middleton teachers see themselves as the instructional leaders within their own classrooms speaks to Dr. Herron's understanding of the needs of teachers, in addition to those of students. Furthermore, the faculty judgment for question nine was confirmed in more than one

interview. The first faculty member interviewed said, "If you are truly hands-on and you want to immerse yourself in the profession, this is the place to go because you have a lot of say-so as to what's happening instructionally" (Faculty Interview #1). The second interviewee corroborated but added a cautious disclaimer. "We want you to be present when we make decisions about teaching and learning . . . Still, some staff feel that despite the presence of their opinions, their input is not always valued and that decisions are made top-down" (Faculty Interview #2).

Critique of relational leadership

A slight shift in consensus occurred in the third section (questions 10 to 14) regarding relational leadership. While the high ratings remained above 70% on each question, two questions regarding relational leadership increased the number of dissenters: (Question 11) To what extent do(es) the action(s) of your superintendent reflect care and concern for colleagues, as well as students? And (Question 14) To what extent does your superintendent create a trusting environment by welcoming differing opinions on how to progress toward or define the district vision? I considered questions 10-14 to be strong indicators of a leadership based on an Ethic of Care, as they related to relational leadership attributes. Exhibiting care and concern for others and creating trusting environments reflect leadership practices often absent in school systems, including those from which my own experiences are drawn. From a research standpoint, I had interpreted observed interactions and behaviors between Dr. Herron and others as caring. Her awareness of others, faculty and community members alike, and their needs indicated a concern for their well-being. Furthermore, I had also observed Dr. Herron's behavior patterns during meetings with administrators and with teachers, noting her deliberate

routines to facilitate discussion and to alter her own stature from leader to participant. While the majority of respondents (71%) seemed to reflect my own perceptions, twenty faculty members expressed a different point of view. Responses to the final two open-ended questions later revealed the sentiments behind the low ratings to Questions 11 and 14.

For Question 11, 29 percent of the respondents rated Dr. Herron's level of care and concern as below average, while 71 percent rated her as average or above average in care and trust building. For Question 14 on creating a safe environment for input, a small but strongly negative group, representing 24 percent of respondents, rated Dr. Herron well below average, but 76 percent, a strong majority, rated her as average or above average. Although the majority of respondents perceived a caring leadership that welcomes competitive strategies for reaching the district vision, the increase in dissention was unexpected in this section particularly. I interpreted Dr. Herron's consistent engagement with faculty, her hands-on approach to curriculum design, her personable demeanor, her guidance in the area of professional development for teachers and administrators, her prodding of others to perform beyond their limits, her commitment to innovation, her willingness to provide seemingly unlimited resources for professional development (particularly for book studies and intervention planning) and her willingness to roll up her sleeves and "wade into the middle of it" with staff and students as care and concern.

Aside from Questions 11 and 14, Dr. Herron received high ratings (93 percent) for her influence in fostering and supporting a collaborative and cooperative environment. When asked to rate their superintendent on the extent of courage she exhibits by encouraging out of the box thinking, 97 percent agreed that this was one of her most

striking qualities. Moreover, an overwhelming number of respondents, 65 out of 67,

rated Dr. Herron as above average on Question 12 as well, which asked, "To what extend

does your superintendent lead with intuition, both mind and heart?" This made me

wonder if so many respondents perceive Dr. Herron as leading equally with both mind

and heart, would that not also indicate care and concern?

Care and justice decision-making

The third section of the questionnaire (Questions 15 to 17) surveyed teachers'

perceptions about Ethic of Care and justice orientations. I cautiously interpreted

responses in this area since the theories may not have been understood or familiar to the

faculty members. In addition, although I provided a brief explanation of care versus

justice orientations in decision-making, one must also consider that the majority of

superintendent decisions are not made in the audience of the teaching faculty. Therefore,

they had to call upon instances of decision-making for which they were present or at least

cognizant. Even given that consideration, when asked to rate the extent to which their

superintendent relied on a justice orientation in decision making, to the exclusion of an

Ethic of Care, 15 out of 60 respondents (25%) rated her as below average, with 75%

offering an average to above average rating. Similarly, when asked to rate the extent to

which their superintendent relied on an Ethic of Care in decision making, to the exclusion

of a justice orientation, 15 respondents (26%) rated her below average while 43 (74%)

rated her average or above. When asked about the extent that respondents perceive Dr.

Herron utilizing a blended approach to decision-making, an 87 percent consensus rated

her as average to above average. In other words, the majority of respondents perceive her

decision-making practices to be based on fairness as well as care for others.

Pawns and origins

Questions 18 and 19 asked participants to rate the level to which they identified themselves as Pawns and Origins, terms and concepts they may not have understood even with the accompanying explanations. In deCharms (1968) Origin / Pawn Theory, he characterizes a *Pawn* as someone who perceives his / her own behavior to be dictated by others, resulting in feelings of powerlessness. An *Origin*, on the other hand, determines his / her own behavior, resulting in feelings of accomplishment. The Pawn is forced into submission and internalizes an attitude of subservience, while the Origin is free to make his or her own choices. With this in mind, when asked the extent to which they would characterize themselves as Pawns within their school system, more respondents rejected the pawn identity (64%), and aligned with the majority who (76%) identified themselves as Origins. In reflecting on these questions, I see particular links to Questions 6 (To what extent does your superintendent support and foster shared leadership?) and Question 9 (To what extent do you feel able to make instructional decisions about your students and classroom?). It makes sense that if the majority of teachers accepted the Pawn identity, they would not have a strong sense of shared leadership or empowerment as the instructional leaders of their classrooms. In this case, however, the majority choosing the Origin identity coincides with the positive ratings on earlier questions.

Disaggregated data

Upon disaggregating the questionnaire data, minimal contrasts were evident when comparing the 24 questionnaires completed by male respondents to the 42 completed by female respondents. (Two questionnaires did not identify gender.) In fact, aside from Questions 5 (regarding the extent to which the superintendent engages faculty in

quarterly goal setting) and Question 6 (To what extent does your superintendent support and foster shared leadership), male-only responses mirrored the overall ratings of the collected questionnaires (Table 4.3 and Figure 4.1). While only 13 percent of the total respondents rated Dr. Herron as below average for engaging teachers in quarterly goal-setting, 21 percent (5 out of 24) of the male teachers rated her in that manner. Female teachers, on the other hand, gave Dr. Herron an overwhelmingly positive rating in this regard, with 36 out of 42 (86%) rating her as average or above average. When male teachers were asked about the extent to which the superintendent supported and fostered shared leadership, 87% gave her an above average rating, as did 37 (88 %) of the 42 female faculty members.

Data from each school submitting responses (Middleton Elementary, Middleton Middle School and Middleton High School) equally represented critical and positive feedback. For Middleton Elementary, 78 percent of the respondents (11 out of 14) gave Dr. Herron high ratings overall; with comparable results of 87, 84 and 86 percents of respondents at the middle school, high school and the early childhood center, respectively. Interestingly, one tenured teacher answered Questions 2 through 5 as "dk" or "don't know." Given the size of the Middleton School District (1,024 students with one early childhood center, one elementary school, one middle school and one high school) and the visibility and hands-on nature of Dr. Herron's leadership, it is difficult to imagine that a teacher with several years of experience within the district would not be able to render an opinion about the extent to which Dr. Herron supports and fosters a continuous focus on shared mission, vision, values and goals, or about her efforts in fostering data-driven decision making, or her leadership in engaging faculty in the

development of collective commitments or quarterly goals. Her silence is up for interpretation.

Constructed Responses

Knowing that a rating scale, taken alone, limits the processing and disclosure of reflective feedback, I incorporated two open-ended questions requiring respondents to consider the effect that Dr. Herron's leadership had on them professionally and personally. Having observed Dr. Herron's interactions with constituents in a variety of settings over a number of years, I developed a sense of what her leadership *looked like* and *sounded like* but, also, wanted to know what it *felt like* from insiders' perspectives. With this in mind, respondents addressed the following two questions: (1) What message(s) do(es) the leadership practices of your superintendent send to you about teaching and learning? and (2) What message(s) do(es) the leadership practices of your superintendent send to you as a person?

Messages about teaching and learning

Thirty-nine of the 68 questionnaires returned (57%) included written responses to the open-ended questions. I categorized the qualitative responses for each question in Table 4.6 (Appendix J) and Table 4.7 (Appendix K), according to their correlations to the five relational leadership attributes listed in Appendix F – Relevant Dimensions.

By and large, responses to the open-ended questions echoed my own observations of what Dr. Herron's leadership-in-action looked like and sounded like throughout my research. I believe she has been successful in communicating why they do what they do. This is evidenced by a couple of the responses:

- "She is concerned that they (students) become responsible members of the global community and prepared for the 21st century" and

- "She is very academically focused and very interested in developing curriculum that can be taught so that all students can learn."

Dr. Herron reiterates those sentiments continuously when she speaks about the importance of developing a sense of future in the minds of her struggling African American students and by immersing herself and her faculty collectively into curriculum design.

Overall, 39 of the 68 respondents (57%) answered Question 20, the first constructed response question. Of those 39, nineteen (49%) provided neutral answers, which were neither positive nor negative; while 16 respondents (41%) offered distinctly positive feedback. A small minority (4 out of 39) responded with critical feedback, which is detailed in a later section. Many of the faculty comments supported my own observations of Dr. Herron's Ethic of Care leadership in action:

- "She cares very deeply,"

- "She is very dedicated,"

- "Dedication and commitment are key,"

- "Professional development is paramount," and

- "There is a strong sense of mission here."

Unlike the rhetorical administrative verbiage common in many school districts, Dr. Herron follows up her words with actions. She models the caring, dedication, commitment, professional development and sense of mission that she expects of others.

Through her words and actions, Dr. Herron has developed a professional culture that no longer sees itself as struggling against the tide but is now paving pathways for success (success for their students as well as for themselves). This sense of self-efficacy is reflected through words that identify the stepping-stones to their success:

- "The student is more important than the subject" . . .

- "They (students) are important. They (student) are what we do" . . .

- "Kids learning . . . [success] [enthusiasm] [community] [technology] [teaching   and learning] is important"

- "Try real hard. Try new things"

- "Must always be looking to move forward"

- "Best practices are important" and

- "Nothing's impossible. Everyone can learn."

According to the written responses, Dr. Herron has communicated that the academic success of each student is the district's priority and has laid out the path to meet that goal: through determination, innovation, attitude, quality instruction, inclusivity, and by embracing electronic media.

Personal messages

The second open-ended question (What message(s) do(es) the leadership practices of your superintendent send to you as a person?) was meant to gain a sense of what Dr. Herron's leadership feels like on a personal level. Out of 36 respondents, 50 percent reported personal messages of their value, importance and contribution to the school district. These responses attest to Dr. Herron's efforts in practicing inclusivity and in fostering a sense of belonging, self-esteem and self-efficacy among her faculty. Neutral

responses, regarding vision and hard work, reflected 28 percent of the responses to the final question; while eight respondents critiqued messages associated with workload, limited personal life and lack of teacher input. Table 4.7 (Appendix K) contains a summary of those responses.

When one considers the amount of personal interaction that a teacher within a typical school system experiences with the superintendent, the responses for this question serve as a testament to Dr. Herron's perceived Ethic of Care leadership. It is quite atypical for teachers to interpret the leadership of their superintendent on a personal level since most have little interaction with central office administration. I wonder if her leadership approach would be different in a much larger school system or in a school district with far fewer financial supports.

The following statements attest to Dr. Herron's skill in community building:

- "She deeply respects and cares about her teachers"

- "I am valued"

- "That I count as a person but she will always expect more"

- "That I share in the commitment of the district. That I am a vital component of how the district attains its goals"

- "I am crucial to the function of the team"

- "She makes me feel like I'm a valuable member of the team"

- "You can do it and you can make a difference"

- "I am an expert and professional"

- "We all have something to contribute," and

- "She thinks teachers are capable of great things."

As I read and reread these words, hearing these voices, I reflect on my own experiences as a teacher and as an administrator to compare how I would have responded to these questions or how others would answer the questions on my leadership style.

While teaching, I served in two different school systems. I honestly received no message from the superintendents of either district. Out of three superintendents serving during those years, I saw two walk through a building once. None of them knew me by name or that I had received a grant for computers in my classroom, or that I organized and implemented Science Olympiad for my building two years in a row (using my second grades as station managers), or that I inspired my 5th graders and students throughout my building to read for recreation by reading to them, or that I wanted to make a difference. As a teacher, I was one of the invisible components of the school engine that kept those districts running for years.

As a principal within a school district comparable to the size of Middleton, I received the message that while my efforts as a building leader were recognized and respected, the male administrators would make district-wide decisions, even those specific to my building. In another district, all three male superintendents that rotated through during my term sent the message that they had the control and I had none. My job was to follow directives and support their decisions. I interpreted those gender-bias messages as prodders, meant to keep me in my place (as a woman) and mold me into co-opting those same behaviors towards the faculty members within my buildings. I entered administration with the naïve notion that I could make a difference. I found, instead, that I was expected to follow more rules and not question the authority of those with loftier titles. I felt bullied, left out, and frequently ostracized for having my own opinions. With

memories like these, it was refreshing to see the positive personal messages perceived by 50% of those responding to the final question.

Critical feedback

On the other hand, it was just as important to consider the ten percent of responses that criticized Dr. Herron's messages. In response to "What messages do the leadership practices of your superintendent send to you as a person?" the following statements were made regarding the expectations placed on teachers.

- Forward thinking is important, but workload is unseen.

- This district isn't easy! That we push our teachers and expect a lot from our teachers.

- If we aren't willing to give the world, then we don't need to be at (Middleton). Personal life doesn't always come first.

- Work early, work often. Eliminate your personal life.

- That there's a disconnect between what our teachers endure and do on a daily basis and what our superintendent wants them to accomplish.

Decision-making reflected another area of concern for respondents, as indicated by the following comments.

- Sometimes it seems as though there's no room for disagreement with the administration. I don't think people always feel safe to express their concerns or alternative views.

- My way or the highway.

- I will tell you what to do.

- She really cares but doesn't really listen to what the teachers are really going through.

Dr. Herron's responded to the critique in a reflective way: "I would say I am not surprised by the feedback. Makes me realize we need to work even harder on conversations so that everyone feels his or her voice is genuinely heard" (Member Check, 2009).

Upon analyzing the critiques, I identified three predominant themes being addressed: (1) high expectations, (2) the vision-driven mission, and (3) the necessity of recurrent articulation. Dr. Herron's advocacy of hard work stems from her own upbringing and work ethic. Too often, students graduate from high school and enter the work force without ever experiencing or observing hard work. Likewise, some school districts require a minimum amount of hard work or teamwork on the part of teachers, thus perpetuating the one-room schoolhouse concept or just the putting in the 9 to 3 day expectation. This also speaks to the level of personal initiative exhibited by individual teachers. As a teacher, I constantly challenged myself to make my instruction more meaningful and embraced opportunities for training. Others, however, were content to teach as they always had, voicing resistance to the inevitable changes in learning and instruction necessary to equip students within an ever-evolving society. One interviewee explained the Middleton work ethic like this:

You're gonna work hard (in this district). And we try to hire people who are very mission driven and very passionate, hard-working people. We're very upfront about you're going to work hard because this is a small place and where everybody wears multiple hats. We all pitch in because we want to do what's best for kids. We want

this place to thrive and we're just burning with that passion . . . It's just non stop. But

they are appreciated for what they do. They do have a voice. They are so intimately

involved in everything that they do. There's that sense of efficacy there and a high

level of professionalism that I've *never* experienced before in other districts. (In

other districts) You just came in, taught what you were going to teach, and then you

leave and some teachers like that. (Faculty Interview #1)

She continued by adding

It's really an opportunity for them to know education inside and out and then we

invest a lot of money in their professional development. So if you want to learn a lot,

this is a good place to come. Our teachers are top-notch, highly intelligent,

passionate, hard-working people.   And everyone's breaking their back and their

knuckles are bleedin' . . . I mean, it's like we're making it happen any way we

possibly can. We will do whatever it takes to educate children and communicate with

parents. (Faculty Interview #1)

Another faculty member described the superintendent-driven work ethic like this:

"Teaching is not just an 8-3, September-May job. If you think the latter is true, you

should work somewhere else!" (Faculty Interview #3). These statements along with

those regarding tendencies to endorse multiple projects address Dr. Herron's mission-

driven vision for the district and what learning experiences can be made available for

students across the district.

These comments triggered two thoughts for me. First, sharing and perhaps

reformulating the vision and mission often in small group settings is vital to keeping the

focus on the goal rather than the pain involved in reaching that goal. Second, those

voicing these opinions may not have experiences working in other districts where the superintendent not only has no vision but also would not know how to model the decisions and work necessary to accomplish that vision. One must also consider how the faculty members interpret shared leadership. For example, do they view it as a democratic decision-making process or as more work?

In Helgesen's (1990) study, while web-like leadership offered open lines of communication, there was no question about who bore the final responsibility for the organizations.

> All could be characterized as strong leaders: they have vivid personalities, are direct, and most important, have specific visions of where they wish to lead and the methods they must use to achieve their goals. Nor are their organizations run as participatory democracies, with everyone contributing in a haphazard way. The women are authorities as much as if they sat at the very top of a hierarchical ladder, but that authority has more subtle ways of manifesting itself. (p. 53)

Dr. Herron is an authority in curriculum and instruction. One well qualified to scaffold the instructional skills of her teachers. Borrowing a word from Dr. Herron, these teachers do not see the hard work and leadership of their superintendent as the luxury it is. Too many teachers complete their careers without ever experiencing leadership that interacts, engages, participates, models and learns with faculty. One district member said it like this:

> We do a lot of small innovative programs other districts can't do because they're so big and you have to deal with all these other bureaucratic issues. We have to get that out to the public that really communicates a commitment to innovation in education.

We are a very progressive district concerned with providing genuine and creative learning opportunities for children. (Faculty Interview #1)

Again, I wondered if progress becomes stifled when too many initiatives demand attention at once. Others in this district are concerned about sustained expectations and its effect on morale and retention as well.

I believe that our focus has become diluted by the many wonderful things we offer kids. They are all good, but there are more initiatives and programs than we can deliver with fidelity and quality. (Faculty Interview #2)

Another teacher describes the issue this way:

The superintendent is constantly thinking outside the box regarding student achievement. She believes in data and effectively uses it to guide principals and teachers. She is attentive to the achievement of all groups of students and is very aware of the perceptions of the community regarding minority achievement. There tends to be a consensus among staff that we try to do too much at one time and have difficulty pursuing priorities with fidelity. Our superintendent is very creative and worldly, wants kids to have similar experiences, and seeks them out for implementation in schools. It can feel like we are constantly shuffling our goals and schedules to accommodate her lofty, albeit wonderful, ideas. (There are) lots of new ideas constantly sprouting up. Some ideas are strong healthy plants, nurturing learning, achievement and morale. Others are weeds or just pretty flowers using up resources (time and energy). (Faculty Interview #3)

With a growing consensus regarding the number of initiatives simultaneously running or cycling through the district, I have to consider that there may be relevance to the concerns

expressed here. Had Dr. Herron disregarded one of her own tips for implementing innovation? Her own words rang in my ear:

> Now, the trick about creativity is that you have to be really careful that your creativity doesn't become other people's work. So you can't say, 'Oh! This is a good idea. Now I want somebody to go do it.' So you have to be sure that people are creating with you; not implementing your creativity. (Initial Superintendent Interview, 2005)

Had she crossed that barrier? I wondered how often Dr. Herron monitored the pulse of her faculty. As in any learning situation, teachers have to monitor how often they are directing rather than facilitating growth.

The critical feedback from a small number of questionnaires and interviews reflect frustrations with the daily expectations. Moreover, while interviewed at different times and locations, each of the three interviewees voiced the belief that Middleton experienced higher teacher turn over than in other school systems, as a result of the workload.

> Well the attrition here is very high. We have a lot of turn over here at (Middleton). We attribute it to the very high workload and expectation of excellence. The small size causes teachers, just like everyone else, to wear a lot of hats. And, the intensity of the curriculum designing . . . You know, in most districts, you have curriculum coordinators and all kinds of staff available to do those things and (here) teachers do it. (Faculty Interview # 1)

Each faculty interview confirmed that the district workload posed challenges for teacher retention.

> It's (teacher attrition) much worse (than in other districts). Teachers are expected to perform brilliantly as teachers, curriculum writers, leaders, tutors, and more. They

have to not only wear more hats than they would in other districts, but to do so

expertly. They burn out and leave. (Faculty Interview #2)

In spite of the challenges, however, one faculty member perceived an overall positive

outlook for teachers in the Middleton School District.

>Many teachers do not stay working here because they want to have families and the
>
>time commitment (after school, weekends, summers) is too great. These expectations
>
>come from our superintendent but are also a natural consequence of working in a
>
>small district. Some teachers cite low salaries as a concern. I think most teachers
>
>would say that this is comfortable and beautiful place to work, and that overall they
>
>feel supported by leadership. (Faculty Interview #3)

>Interestingly, I inserted the attrition question, "How (if at all) does teacher attrition

compare to that of other districts in which you have worked? To what would you

attribute those comparisons?" to the interview survey at the last minute. Drawing from

my most recent experience as a building principal in one district, as well as my current

leadership role within another district, I knew that leadership practices often affected

teacher retention. As I contemplated these faculty comments in relation to the Ethic of

Care leadership concept, I wondered if the cost of losing valuable hard-workers was

worth the intensity of the work ethic. Can instructional and academic improvements be

sustained with such a revolving door in place? I wondered if teachers could participate in

the hard work of the district on a rotating basis so that everyone contributed but also

experienced relief at times. I also wondered how teachers who have left would reflect on

their experiences at Middleton five years from now.

In member checks with two of the faculty interviewees, both indicated that the workload in regards to the curriculum design was driven by a desire to meet state requirements for the upcoming school improvement review, "a struggle between the data driven requirements of the state and the constructivist model of the school district" (Faculty Member Check, 2009). Still, the workload and high expectations were perceived as influential factors in the rate of teacher attrition.

Addressing Human Needs

Although I consider Dr. Herron an Ethic of Care leader, I reluctantly had to admit that I might have stumbled upon an area of competing ideologies. Reflecting on this data took me back to a prominent undergraduate theory called Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943).

Figure 4.3:

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid[5]

My professional opinion, drawing from experience as a teacher, principal, instructional leader and researcher, stems from the belief that caring leadership strives to meet the needs of teachers in order to meet the needs of students.

Maslow (1968, 1970), a practicing psychotherapist and self-identified humanist, conducted personality studies for more than two decades resulting in his theory of basic human needs. He believed in intrinsic motivators that drive humans to reach their full potential. He originally posed the following question: "What makes people neurotic?" (1968, p. 21). He considered neurosis to be a deficiency disease related to human needs. His initial hierarchy included five levels of needs: physiological, safety, belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. The first four levels indicate deficiency needs that cause tension and stress if not met. Maslow considered self-actualization to be a growth need that includes cognitive and aesthetic aspects.

I could describe self-actualization as a development of personality which frees the person from the deficiency problems of youth, and from the neurotic problems of life, so that he is able to face, endure and grapple with the problems, the unavoidable, the 'existential' problems to which there is no perfect solution. That is, it is not an absence of problems but a moving from transitional or unreal problems to real problems. (Maslow, 1968, p. 115)

Dr. Herron's focus on the needs of African American students presents a challenge of this caliber. Maslow later added a transcendence level to his concept that reflects one's motivation to facilitate self-actualization in others. Modern companies sometimes use the updated eight-stage model (seen in Figure 4.3) that includes each of the theory components listed above. In my application of these hierarchical needs, I see a

framework rather than a hierarchy. This may just be my aversion to hierarchies of any kind but I prefer to consider Maslow's six needs, beyond those associated with physiological and safety issues, as simultaneous endeavors which are easily correlated to Ethic of Care leadership. Moreover, while I believe individuals contribute to their own cognitive, aesthetic and self-actualization needs, research indicates that the neglect of one's needs by others can have negative effects on the Self identity of adults and children alike (Blumer, 1969; deCharms, 1968; Maslow, 1970). I have personally observed the effect such neglect has on teachers. Ethic of Care leaders understand that teachers must not only feel a sense of belonging and self-esteem but then should see it facilitated by their leaders in order to most effectively meet those needs for their students. Professionally speaking, I feel most productive and content in my work when I feel supported, appreciated, needed and part of the team. Likewise, at my most discontented points, I felt disconnected, out of the loop, irrelevant, and, at times, invisible. In short, applying Maslow's needs is as important to working with faculty as it is when working with students and plays an important role in Ethic of Care leadership.

Administrators, in this sense, consciously consider where faculty members are in their lives (i.e., starting a new family, beginning the empty nest era, or single and career-focused). Thus, they differentiate responsibilities, just as a teacher would differentiate instruction within the classroom, while conserving performance expectations, important growth processes and rigor. Thoughtful and collaborative planning guides this approach in order to maintain building and district momentum towards the collective mission and vision. This perspective speaks to the importance of orchestrating a balanced life, with time structured for disciplined work, study, reflection, and growth, in addition to family,

self, and celebration. In many ways, Dr. Herron accommodates this balance by incorporating get-togethers, parties and fun activities into the district culture. In this study, however, the voices of faculty members are collectively offering a noteworthy critique.

In an effort to maintain the anonymity of the interviewees who took part in this study, I have not disclosed their names or descriptions within this paper. I incorporated their feedback throughout this chapter and wanted to draw attention to their responses to questions I posed only to them: (1) What message does your superintendent send to parents and community members? and (2) What message does your superintendent send to students? Again, I believe these words to be backed-up with actions. The participants agreed that the messages to stakeholders are as follows:

- Relationships with all stakeholders, especially parents, are keys to our success.

- Our door is always open.

- We listen to you and value your input in the decisions we make about teaching, learning and all other matters.

- We will do whatever it takes to make you happy.

They also concurred about messages sent to their students:

- We want you to have freedom and choices in your learning.

- We want your learning experiences here to reflect what you will be doing when you graduate from our district.

- We want you to enjoy the learning process.

Summary

Returning to related literature, in her study, Helgesen's participants represented successful female leaders of large corporations who supplanted traditional "hierarchically structured, chain-of-command, rigidly defined" (p. 30) management with a more female-oriented structure. As the chief executive of the Girl Scouts, for example, Frances Hesselbein institutionalized a circular concept of leadership, saying, "I use circles because symbolically they are important. The circle is an organic image. We speak of the family circle. The circle is inclusive, but it allows for flow and movement; the circle doesn't box you in" (p. 44). When conflicts arise between departments, she tosses the issues out to the competing parties, requiring them to collaborate on a solution.

According to Helgesen (1990), as director of the Executive Development Center for Ford Motor Company, Nancy Badore's management philosophy endorses the concept of teaming. "She runs the Center along participatory lines; the management chart shows her in the center, with (lead) team members branching out like the arms of a tree" (p. 47). Her monthly team meetings serve more as forums for information sharing than simply as progress report sessions. Dorothy Brunson, president and CEO of Brunson Communications, sees herself "as a transmitter – absorbing and beaming information where it needs to go" (p. 47). In decision-making she obtains feedback from her team of disc jockeys and takes time to consider responses to various proposals before making a final determination. For Middleton, teachers and administrators played instrumental roles in developing school metaphors. Some now feel decisions are being made for them rather than with them. Finally, entrepreneur and founder of Western Industrial Contractors Inc. in Denver, Barbara Grogan "focuses attention on encouraging the participants (at local business meetings) to exchange ideas with one another, and forge

new alliances among themselves" (p. 48). Like these women, Dr. Herron's Ethic of Care leadership strives to reduce intimidation, fosters communication, exhibits approachability, facilitates networking, and values transparency. I believe no one can deny that, "She (Dr. Herron) is very passionate about improving . . . student achievement" and that "the difference (between her and other superintendents, male or female) is in the person and the sense of mission she has" (Faculty Interview #3).

While there remains much work to be done in regards to the achievement gap among the white and African American students within the Middleton School District, Dr. Herron's efforts have resulted in a much-improved self-image for the school district, a highly structured learning environment for students and faculty, and a school culture that overall values community-building and hard work.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter recounts the experiences that inspired this study, restates the purpose and

methodology of the research itself, and summarizes the findings presented in Chapter 4.

This final section presents interpretations of those findings and recommendations for

further research.

Background: Pursuing an Ethic of Care

In recalling my administrative beginnings, similar to my entry into teaching, my

idealism and desire to make a difference soon gave way to disillusionment. I envisioned

myself ministering to my teachers, as my grandfather had done with the undocumented

aliens in the southwestern Oklahoma and northwestern Texas region. I desired to

implement his legacy within my profession. Over time, this idealistic mindset became

overshadowed through my day to day experiences with traditional, authoritarian school

leaders who often marginalized teachers and principals. I knew early on that I did not fit

easily into that world. In fact, I often felt as though I were outside of my reality

observing actors and behaviors that were opposed to my personal constitution. In my

mind, those practices echoed the screams of historical injustices of discrimination and

control that engulfed many educational systems. I could not block out or ignore those

screams.

Until now, my initial vision of effective administration had become rusted from years

of exposure to unhealthy school climates. With the experience of this case study, I have

successfully been able to shed the collected toxins and re-surface my original vision of

educational leadership. I also possess a new appreciation for the experiences that led me to this point and of the lens through which I viewed them.

At the onset of this journey, I thrived on capturing confirmations of inequalities I had observed and experienced. Case studies and research studies (Astin & Leland, 1999; Brunner, 2000; Helgesen, 1990; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Rosener, 1990; Shakeshaft, 1989; Tallerico, 1999) validated my previously unsubstantiated perceptions of pervasive problems in educational leadership. Those perceptions of male-dominated leadership, irrespective and neglectful of feminine sensitivities – expected, routine, and ordinary to others – struck me as offensive, intolerable, and outdated. Gilligan's (1982) *In a Different Voice* shaped my passion by inspiring me to be an ear for the voices of teachers and administrators struggling to be heard within hierarchical and uncaring school systems. (This made the collection of words of the Middleton faculty members through questionnaires and interviews that much more valuable.)

I remember the turning-point afternoon that I sat at a dining room table devouring Gilligan's (1982) book, relating to the struggle for voice and seeing the value of providing a mouthpiece for experienced teachers who had been stripped of their voice upon entry into a profession that continued to dictate a woman's place and for new idealistic teachers still eager and capable of envisioning themselves making a difference in the lives of their students. While the girls in Gilligan's (1982) study faced the moral dilemma of abortion, I could see the less obvious dilemmas in education taunting teachers to choose between toeing the district line (obeying) or risking the chance of being labeled as trouble-makers or insubordinate by voicing concerns or issues with administrative directives. For decades, teachers had been trained to follow directions without argument,

without a voice. This was the K-12 world of education for which modern women, like myself, obtained Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in order to play subservient roles, often and ironically dictated by other women. Dr. Herron described the treatment like this: "Schools treat teachers as children. It's been women's work, not very well respected" (Administrative Retreat, 2004).

Helgesen (1990), also a proponent of Gilligan, described the difference between the popular leadership byword "vision" and the more female-liberating "voice" by illuminating that "A vision may exist alone, in the mind of a single human being --- it can still be a vision if it remains uncommunicated. But a voice cannot be a voice unless someone is there to hear it; it finds its form in the process of interaction" (p. 223). From years of experience in the (mind) field of education, I knew that "voice" was a missing component in many school systems, often breaking the spirits of young teachers and thrusting some of the most competent and effective teachers into contexts that insured burn out.

Feminist literature on female leadership (Blount, 1998; Brunner, 1999; Garn & Brown, 2008; Grogan, 1999; Chapman, 1997) led me to embrace and endorse the valuable and too often hidden qualities women bring to this work, but which then become stifled by teaching and school leadership: qualities associated with an Ethic of Care. Helgesen (1990) took me beyond the educational setting into the corporate world where she confirmed the worthiness of female leadership. Thus, my pursuit of an Ethic of Care has resulted in a personally meaningful journey and in the documentation of an Ethic of Care leadership model in action. As someone who has always been frugal with praise

and admiration, I feel fortunate to have studied a female superintendent that I consider to be an inspiration and a role model for other women aspiring to the superintendency.

When I began my pursuit of an Ethic of Care, I thought I was looking for care to be a quality that a leader expressed for teachers. I was looking for an educational administrator who could empathize with teachers by seeing issues from their perspectives and who included teachers in on-going decision-making processes, especially for decisions that would ultimately facilitate instructional change. In my experience, educational administrators (both male and female) tended to endorse and make top-down decisions, often failing to see the connections between teacher development and student performance, making decisions affecting instruction with no input from teachers, and unaware of the moral dilemmas created as a result of disconnected leadership.

Many teachers came to view educational proclamations for student-centered practice as rhetorical jargon. After all, how could educational leaders value students while simultaneously devaluing teachers? Although some administrators pride themselves on the level of teacher buy-in obtained for school initiatives, in the long run teacher buy-in does not equate to teacher ownership and commitment. More often, it results in pressured compliance from teachers who have given up on voicing contrary opinions, resulting in the development of Pawn identities.

My initial concept of what an Ethic of Care looks like in education has been modified as a result of this research. While I continue to view an Ethic of Care as the missing ingredient in school reform and school leadership, my transformed model of Ethic of Care leadership is exemplified, not only in the extent of one's commitment to faculty, but to students, parents and community as well. This goes far beyond adding a drop of care

to one's leadership characteristics repertoire. Leaders must make genuine and conscious decisions to be sensitive to the needs of others and model the responsibilities and commitments that reflect an Ethic of Care.

As I began my ascent into Chapter 5, I surrounded myself with the literature that initially spoke to and fueled my desire to pursue an Ethic of Care in the realm of educational administration, specifically the superintendency. Each author verified my personal perceptions of educational leadership: (1) the superintendency continues to be male-dominated position (Grogan, 1999 & Blount, 1998), (2) many women do not find the superintendency appealing, due to the politics and distance from curriculum and instruction (Grogan, 1999), (3) many female superintendents struggle with gender-bias issues (Garn & Brown, 2008; Short & Scribner, 2000; Skrla 2000b; Tallerico, 2000; Blackmore, 2002; Hall, 1995; Hollingsworth, Lock & Schmuck, 2002), (4) many female superintendents co-opt the authoritarian leadership characteristics often associated with male superintendents in order to fit the traditional superintendent mold (Chase, 1995), (5) feminine leadership qualities are often undervalued in education (Beck, 1994; Chase, 1995), (6) women bring unique leadership qualities to the superintendency (Grogan, 2000; Astin & Leland, 1999; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Rhoads, 1997; Sernak, 1998; Beck, 1994), (7) the most effective leaders lead from the heart (Regan & Brooks, 1995), and (8) an Ethic of Care offers aspiring and practicing superintendents key ingredients for developing healthy organizations, for engaging in community building, and for establishing positive learning cultures (Sernak, 1998; Bowden, 1997; Helgesen, 1995; Beck, 1994).

I found that, in contrast to the literature that initially inspired my research, case studies similar to my own that reflect how women lead and affect change on their own terms now draw my interest. The need to validate my own perspectives has been replaced with a desire to present educational leadership in terms of what it can be for women and men: a forum for caring leadership.

Intent and Methodology

As stated in Chapter 1, the intent of this study was to explore *how* the ethic of care is experienced within one mid-western school system as an alternative approach to the traditional bureaucratic institutions of education in many school systems. Evidence of Ethic of Care principles and practices (Gilligan, 1982; Sernak, 1998) are presented through an instrumental case study of a superintendent who is perceived by her colleagues to be an Ethic of Care exemplar. Chapter 3 described a qualitative, grounded theory approach utilizing portraiture as the main methodology. In using portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), elements of context, voice, relationship and emergent themes constitute the contributing threads of the final product. Moreover, by concentrating this study on the experiences of a female superintendent whom I and others in educational leadership perceive as a paradigm case and role model of an Ethic of Care leadership style, I theoretically frame this study within a feminist agenda.

Participants

One female superintendent represented the focus of this instrumental case study, based on reputable recommendations, indicating that her leadership style reflected an Ethic of Care. Ethnographic data gathering methods included: (a) anecdotal observation notes from three shadowing days, (b) multiple in-depth interviews with the

superintendent and three staff members, (c) analysis of documents and material culture, and (d) surveys / questionnaires of district teachers with open-ended questions. Interviews of three district faculty members offered the opportunity for follow-up inquiries once the observation data and questionnaires had been analyzed. Taken as a whole, the data reflected what an Ethic of Care leadership looks like and sounds like, as seen and heard through observations of the superintendent in various meetings with administrators, teachers and students. Data further offered indications of what this leadership approach feels like, from interviews with three administrators and the questionnaires obtained from sixty-eight teachers, representing faculty from the early childhood level through 12th grades.

Themes and Metaphors

In portraiture, themes emerge as the portraitist (1) listens for repetitive refrains, resonant metaphors and symbolic expressions, (2) identifies cultural and organizational rituals, (3) triangulates data, and (4) reveals contrasting and dissonant data (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). While each school in the district purposefully engaged in well-articulated metaphors, the over-arching themes resounding from the district as a whole included the following themes (Figure 5.1):

- *engaged leadership,*

- *studious culture,*

- *presentation,*

- *sweat equity*

- *perpetual evolution*

Other related and recurrent patterns reflected the emergent concepts of collaboration, empowerment, mission-driven, progressive, and global perspectives. The five themes are explained below.

Engaged leadership

Engaged leadership is a prominent element of Dr. Herron's superintendency. Her active facilitation and participation of curriculum design, reading intervention review, technology training, and unit development reflect her commitment to professional development. Her preparation for these sessions parallels the provocative discussions she uses to guide the learning process for her colleagues. While she maintains a focus on meeting the needs of students through authentic and innovative learning opportunities, Dr. Herron begins each meeting by connecting with others through stories and humor.

Figure 5.1:

Overarching Themes / Ethic of Care Applications
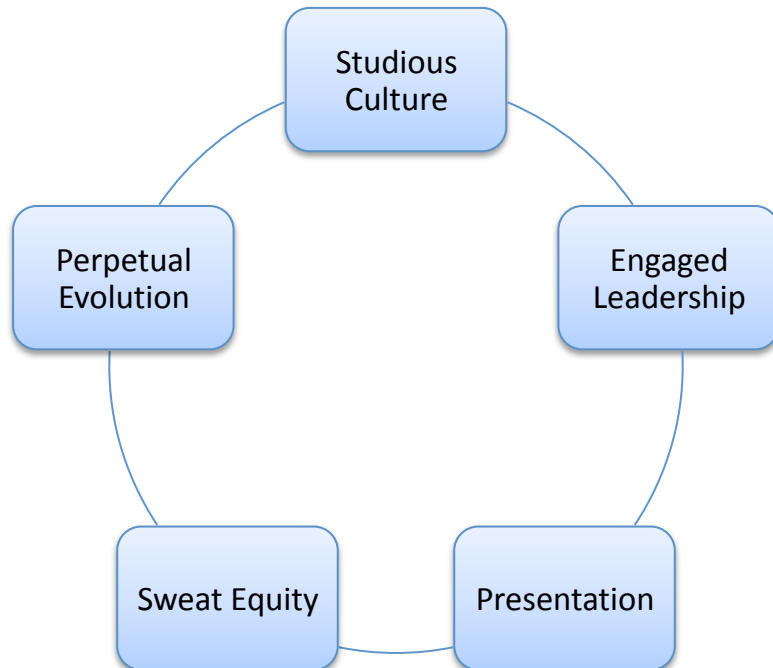
For Dr. Herron, culture and community building drive the work of the district. Consequently, she is on first name basis with teachers, students and Board members throughout the district and can often be overheard inquiring about individual accomplishments and/or projects of which most superintendents would not be aware. Her community building efforts extend into the broader community, as well, as she provides her e-mail address to patrons on her district webpage where she posts information about her efforts to transform the school district. Her active engagement with faculty in professional development, with parents in exploring social justice issues, with board members by including them in learning and with students as a tutor and mentor reflect the value she places on relationships, setting her Ethic of Care leadership apart from that of the traditional superintendent prototype.

Studious culture

The studious culture that permeates the Middleton School District also reflects Dr. Herron's value for learning and commitment to cultivate the efficacy of her faculty. She feeds her own academic and teacher needs by facilitating group studies and by modeling reflective practice and deep thought. She is the quintessential life-long learner guiding others to be the same, insatiable for academic input. Studies are not random or top-down. Many books suggested by teachers and administrators as worthy sources of instructional and leadership wisdom are read and applied.

For example, Dr. Herron's administrators and members of the curriculum development team and district buildings have recently studied *Working on the Work* (Schlechty, 2002), *Rigor is Not a Four-Letter Word* (Blackburn, 2008), *How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students* (Brookhart, 2008), and *Good-Bye Round Robin*

(Opitz & Rasinski, 2008). These studies are meaningful and correlated to long-term

growth. Regarding *Working on the Work* (Schlechty, 2002) Dr. Herron explained

> It's designed to take us to the next level on our study of rigor. Because I really want
>
> us to get into looking at student work more purposefully. We've been moving into
>
> that direction. We've done some work with it. Working on the Work is what we're
>
> doing now. Next year we'll be in full-scale examination of student work. And, we'll
>
> be using a couple of texts that I found that are over there now on examining student
>
> work. This is kind of leading up to that, helping you think about that kind of culture
>
> and helping teachers realize that you don't work on students, and administrators that
>
> you don't work on teachers . . . that you should always focus on the type of work
>
> students are doing. (Member Check, 2009)

On her district webpage, Dr. Herron posts the professional books studied across the

district in order to keep parents and the broader community apprised of educational

research. She also lists her personal reading selections, which include: *The Guns of*

August (Tuchman, 1962), *People of the Book* (Brooks, 2008), and *The White Tiger*

(Adiga, 2008). Dr. Herron believes that the best teachers of reading model reading to

their students and the best teachers model learning, thinking, and thinking about learning.

Presentation

Another attribute of Dr. Herron's Ethic of Care leadership reflects a keen sense of

image consciousness and how the district is presented and what messages are sent to

parents as well as the broader community. Some messages are straightforward and

formally articulated, like those to community members on her website: "Please send

questions or items you would like me to address." Or to students . . . "This work is

important. You can do this. I will help you." Or to parents and faculty members addressing social justice issues: "Quite frankly we have been failing our African American students."

Others messages are more subtle, speaking to our aesthetic senses . . . like the décor of the central office, the kiva at the elementary school, the atelier (studio) of the early childhood center, or the renovated classrooms in the middle and high school building. Student museum exhibits at the elementary school, art / nature exhibits at the early childhood center, expedition displays at the middle school and Cornerstone charts at the high school send messages of recognition and accomplishment. These messages have been personally sent and/or influenced by Dr. Herron through her continued support of the district's adopted metaphors.

Messages sent to faculty are important to this study. In addition to collecting interpretations of her messages to faculty on questionnaires, I observed the messages sent to teachers and administrators through her actions and interactions. For example, when Dr. Herron facilitates meetings, she orchestrates the participation of each member of the group, frequently by requiring progress reports from individuals or teams on assigned projects. This was the case for the Principal's Council Meeting in December of 2009. Two principals presented units of study that were developed and implemented by teachers in their respective buildings – one principal offered a video presentation of one of the unit lessons. Principals, in turn, offered warm (praise) and cold (instructional critique) feedback of the unit that the presenter then took back to the teachers for reflection. "I think that's a great way for principals to stay on their toes in terms of what they're doing. You're sharper when you know you're going to be talking about it"

(Member Check, 2009). Dr. Herron handled the review of instructional strategies in the same manner for the curriculum team. This practice sends the message that everyone is responsible for contributing to the growth of the district.

Sweat equity

A theme of sweat equity emerged from the critical feedback through which faculty members expressed a level of discomfort regarding the expectations placed on them. Sweat equity is defined as "unreimbursed labor that results in the increased value of property or that is invested to establish or expand an enterprise."[6] Dr. Herron is the first to acknowledge the hard work necessary to reach the district goals, validating comparisons to the "family farm". She tries to balance the challenges with what she terms "softness":

> You can't sustain this kind of work if you don't have some softness. You have to have some real joy and pleasure and if you have to feel that you have the energy to create. If you're beaten down, it's hard to be energetic and creative. Feeding them and having chocolates around . . . it's just little things that say we're going to try to take care of your creature comforts and we know that the work you're doing is hard. (Member Check, 2009)

Relating sweat equity to home-buying, those purchasing newly built homes often have the opportunity to shave costs off the price by completing some of the hard work in the final stages of construction, like painting interior walls or sodding the yard. By doing this, the owners invest their own effort in the final product, strengthening the pride in ownership. The critical voices in the Middleton District seem to be reluctant investors, not completely sold on what promises to be a final product worthy of attaining – e.g.

increased student achievement and success - plus recognition as an innovative school system. The majority of faculty members do, however, see the benefit of the hard work. Likewise, their hard work does not go unrecognized.

> We try to hire people who are very mission driven and very passionate, hard-working people. They are appreciated for what they do. Our teachers are top-notch, highly intelligent, passionate, hard-working people. (Faculty Interview #1)

Dr. Herron values the efforts of the Middleton faculty.

> We have an amazing group of hard working teachers. They are passionate and mission-driven or they wouldn't work here. By and large they are motivated by the vision of the school we have created–but it also pushes them and tires them out. It does us all. (Dr. Herron, E-mail Communication, 2009)

Realizing the value of sweat equity will be important for districts embracing the Ethic of Care leadership concept and the related components of commitment and responsibility to others.

A second important consideration will require a shift in leadership responsibilities, from delegator to participatory leader. When it comes to rolling up her sleeves, Dr. Herron says, "I just think it's important for them to see that I understand the struggles that they're going through because I'm really trying to do that myself and to get schooled in the kind of hard things they're learning" (Member Check, 2009). Principals and central office administrators, then, become facilitators and role models of sweat equity.

Perpetual evolution

Upon her arrival in the school district, Dr. Herron faced the challenges of establishing new traditions within a school system possessing historic peaks and valleys. This has

been done, to a large extent, by developing a culture of adult learners, engaged in a cycle of research – application and reflection.

> I think a healthy culture takes care of internal things and values its people and their ideas but also makes sure that there's also the flow of fresh ideas in. I think that's a fundamental rule of a leader: to make sure that you're supporting ideas being born inside and making sure that that fresh flow of ideas is circulating. (Member Check, 2009)

Innovation serves as the epicenter of the Middleton School District, driving professional development, instructional improvement and student learning. While other districts cringe at the thought of the next change initiative, perpetual evolution reflects the Middleton approach to education. By posturing the district at the front end of innovative practice, Dr. Herron engages faculty in proactive transformation, experimenting with and reflecting on current knowledge, skills and strategies. In short, Dr. Herron has cultivated a leading educational community engaged in continuous improvement.

On the other hand, while Dr. Herron's drive, knowledge and skill in curriculum and instruction, community building focus and engagement in professional development surpasses that of many superintendents, one limitation may be her blinders to faculty voices. Such blinders prevent one from viewing circumstances from the perspective of others and from hearing what the voices are saying. Feedback is reduced to noise. My reflections led me to wonder if the act of listening and responding to others effectively dismantles the role of final decision-maker – a strong hold in the superintendency and other executive positions – resulting in a perception of weakness, a perception to avoid. Would responding to faculty members stressed by the workload and expectations cause

others to see Dr. Herron has a weak leader or a strong but caring leader? And, to what

extent did the workload and high expectations influence what some in the district

perceive as a high rate of turn-over for teachers and administration? When asked

specifically about the high turn-over in building and central office administration over the

past five years, two of the faculty members interviewed attributed the seven instances to

three retirements, one non-renewal and three workload-related resignations (Member

Checks, 2009).

<div align="center">Findings Related to the Literature</div>

In Chapter One, I endorsed the components of Professional Learning Communities

(DuFour & Eaker, 1998), Leadership Capacity (2003) and Relational Leadership (Regan

& Brooks, 1995) as strong measures for Ethic of Care leadership. I discovered that Dr.

Herron incorporates all of the components without formally adopting and implementing

an officially named program. By adopting metaphors district-wide, she accessed current

research while building community confidence. She continuously secures resources as

teachers and building teams explore instructional innovations and interventions. The

district, as a whole, reflects the shared values and expectations of hard work and

dedication to improving student achievement as well as focused teacher professional

growth. Collaboration, reflection, dialogue and group study constitute the norms of every

curriculum and administrative meeting.   While buildings are data-driven, they are not

drowned in data. Teachers engage in peer observations and coaching, offering colleagues

warm (positive) and cold (critical) feedback for the purpose of reflection.

Helgesen (1990) found that, "Women, when describing their roles in their

organizations, usually referred to themselves as being in the middle of things" (p. 45). In

fact, one of the most powerful qualities of Dr. Herron's leadership is her willingness to do just that. She not only referred to "wading into the middle" of curriculum and instruction during our initial interview, she modeled that concept by engaging with the curriculum team to identify interventions to meet the needs of low-performing students, by working on social studies units with middle school and high school teachers, by learning and demonstrating how to use SMARTNotebook technology (a software application that can be used in conjunction with electronic interactive whiteboards to create interactive lessons for the classroom or from remote locations) with high school teachers and administrators, by tutoring students for the ACT exam, and by partnering with her administrative support staff in mentoring young girls throughout their high school career.

Voice and leadership

In Helgesen's (1995) study, she writes that

Each woman's voice is both a unique expression of her own personality and an instrument for conveying and guiding her vision of how her organization should be run. Each woman's management style finds expression in her voice. Each is able both to model her values and find a way to instruct, influence, and persuade others to share those values. This ability to model and persuade is of particular importance in an organization where authority is not imposed from the top down in hierarchical fashion. (pp. 224-25)

The same can be said about Dr. Herron, as she frequently uses her voice as an instructional, reflective, probing, influential, persuasive, comforting, humorous and decisive tool. Helgesen (1990) compared her female CEO's to teachers for their skilled

use of voice. The importance of using the voice as a teacher lies in the interactions associated with the classroom. While instructing, teachers model, demonstrate, check for understanding and provide opportunities for students to apply new knowledge. This approach fosters a learning community culture. Too often, superintendents come across as far removed from the classroom due to the seeming lack of consideration of teacher time and effort during decision-making. Therefore, when a superintendent can be described as a teacher at heart, that sentiment speaks volumes of his/her respect and understanding for the challenges teachers face, as well as their continued connection to students.

For this study, voice holds a prominent place. Gilligan (1982) wrote, "Listening to women, I heard a difference (in life, history, psychology and politics) and discovered that bringing in women's lives changes both psychology and history. It literally changes the voice: how the human story is told, and also who tells it" (p. *xi*). For too long, the superintendency has been explored from a male perspective or from a female perspective trying to fit into a male-dominated role. Dr. Herron's Ethic of Care leadership tells a different story through *her* uncommon, female voice. Her perspective on being a superintendent inspires a new vision for district level leadership. According to Helgesen, "In order to use the voice with this kind of spontaneous and expressive pleasure (an obvious communication skill of Dr. Herron), one must first find one's voice" (p. 228). This sense of recognizing and knowing one's voice seems prominent among individuals of academic titles, those who have spent a great deal of time in study, self-reflection and experience. Her sense of voice, coming from a secure self, validates her Ethic of Care leadership.

In addition, as with the women in Helgesen's study (1995), Dr. Herron leads with ease, as if she is comfortable in her role and with herself. Others on her administrative team – like her new assistant superintendent, the new elementary principal or the new elementary assistant principal – appear stressed, unsure, and overwhelmed. Helgesen (1990) points out that it may take women longer to develop confidence in their career than men because the organizations in which they work have been fashioned almost entirely from male experiences and theories. "The structures in which women work were not devised by them, and so are weighted in ways that do not reflect their values" (p. 229). (This may answer why more women do not pursue the superintendency.)

Finding one's voice, then, represents a milestone especially important for women to attain (Gilligan, 1988). Once found, Helgesen's women likened it to the "ability to relax while swimming with the flow" (p. 229). One of her participants explained it like this: "I don't have to waste energy trying to be something I'm not" (p. 230). She continues by saying

> This notion of being true to oneself is the very essence of finding one's voice. Voice is a mode for manifesting internal truth. This notion of a search (finding one's voice) – which is really a search for self – makes explicit how embedded voice is in the process of personal development. Leading with a voice is only possible when one has reached a certain level of development as a person; otherwise, the voice will not ring true. (p. 230)

I would add that leading with voice also makes it possible to liberate other voices and to foster an Origin versus Pawn (deCharms, 1968) culture. Moreover, one must have the

ability to hear and recognize their own voice before they can acknowledge the voices of others.

Dr. Herron's ability to appreciate other voices was expressed in her response to the negative data: "I would say I am not surprised by the feedback. Makes me realize we need to work even harder on conversations so that everyone feels his or her voice is genuinely heard"(E-mail communication, 2009). According to Gilligan (1982), "To have a voice is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person. But speaking depends on listening and being heard; it is an intensely relational act" (p. xvi). As a woman and a female superintendent, Dr. Herron recognizes the importance of voice. This alone validates this study as an example to practicing and aspiring superintendents of how to practice an Ethic of Care in action that respects voice. This study also helped me transcend the years that I felt completely alone in hearing the voices of teachers.

From observing Dr. Herron on numerous occasions as she facilitated and participated in meetings, she exudes a distinct authority that others respect and admire. While hierarchy is not a concept I envision her embracing, others seemed to follow her lead more than influence it. On the other hand, her interactions with teachers and administrators presented a strong case for the tree structure of management referred to in Chapter 4, with Dr. Herron serving as the trunk with branches representing each team or building extending from the center, maintaining "a structure of interconnection" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 82). Dr. Herron's practice of stimulating thought by posing provocative questions also reflected Nancy Badore's story as told by Helgesen (1990).

Nancy Badore, having spent years in academia getting her Ph.D., ran her three-hour roundtable meeting like a Socratic dialogue, pushing her team members to ask more

questions, to look a little further. Not to push themselves harder or work more, but to think more deeply and range more widely in considering implications; the idea was to stimulate their imaginations. (pp. 226-27)

I observed this intellectual coaching throughout the study; and for some faculty members, the intellectual stimulation comes with the expectations that they *will* push themselves harder *and* work more.

Dr. Herron's facilitation of meaningful discussions regarding curriculum and instruction also speaks to how she listens to others . . . intently. "Listening is perhaps the prototypical female skill" (Helgesen, 1995, p. 243). The value she places on reflection and dialogue is evidenced in the level of engagement she commits to the entirety of every meeting. Like Helgesen's (1995) participants, Dr. Herron utilizes this seemingly passive skill "as a way of making others feel comfortable and important, and as a means of encouraging others to find their own voices and grow" (pp. 244-45).

Nurturing the Human Spirit

"Female values of responsibility, connection, and inclusion have been devalued in our culture, which tends to celebrate the lone hero, the rugged individual" (Helgesen, 1995, p. 233). Literature, however, encourages and points to a changing perspective.

The female view that one strengthens oneself by strengthening others is finding greater acceptance, and female values of inclusion and connection are emerging as valuable leadership qualities. What is needed . . . (are) leaders who can work against . . . feelings of alienation that affect our institutions, by bridging the gap between the demands of efficiency and the need to nurture the human spirit. Employees today are

less likely to put up with a workplace that emphasizes efficiency at the expense of

meeting human needs. (pp. 234-235)

In the realm of K-12 education, the accountability components delineated in the No Child

Left Behind (2001) legislation influenced school and district leaders to focus primarily on

test scores. For many school districts, this laser-focus on assessment performance has led

to the neglect of school culture and to the implementation of scripted curricula in lieu of

innovative instruction.

Today, the teachers considered most effective incorporate state-like test questions

into daily instruction, shaving off time for other meaningful learning opportunities; or,

they simply have students from supportive and stable homes that test well on the state

exam. Schools require teachers to increasingly focus on test-taking skills, which often

violates teachers' moral judgment that urges them to foster a love of reading and writing

and discovery. This practice occurs to an even greater extent in low-performing schools,

where test scores determine their accreditation status. For educators, accountability for

test scores represents the efficiency factor of corporations. I do not suggest that

accountability plays no part in quality education. What I am saying is that some

educational leaders are returning to the factory model of education that Dr. Herron

described in Chapter 4, where numbers outweigh people in importance, where leaders

view teachers as dispensable.

Interestingly, in the Middleton District, at the end of the first month of every school

year, when classroom personalities have emerged, teachers do not have an option to trade

students if they indicate poor academic performance, or if the class make-up consists of a

variety of academic levels, or if students exhibit negative attitudes. Teachers get what

they get and are expected to accept all of the differences in attitude and performance and meet the needs of each student.

As a building principal, I was also responsible for differentiating the professional development needs of teachers in my building. My commitment to them meant if they were struggling in the classroom, I was obligated to assist them in building instructional or classroom management skills since I was the instructional leader.   Consequently, I see the role of the superintendent as the primary facilitator for this type of leadership, an Ethic of Care leadership that values principals and teachers and takes personal responsibility for scaffolding their skills as a district team. For me, Dr. Herron exemplifies this Ethic of Care leadership in action.

Ethic of Care leadership may present a tall order for some whose concept of leadership reflects the traditional, top-down, hands-off, authoritarian model of their predecessors. However, by addressing basic human needs (Maslow, 1968; 1970) while developing a positive school climate, an Ethic of Care culture can be realized. If, in the most simplistic form, educators believe in the importance of meeting the basic human needs of students (physiological, safety, belonging, and esteem) in order to meet their academic needs (cognitive), it is time for districts to value the needs (for belonging, self-esteem, cognitive growth, aesthetics, self-actualization and transcendence) of teachers within their system as well. An Ethic of Care leader recognizes that the basic human needs illuminated by Maslow (1943, 1968, 1970) and embraced by educators in teacher training programs exist throughout one's life. Symbolic interactionists (Blumer, 1969; deCharms,1968; Deegan & Hill, 1987) write about the consequences of neglecting of these needs in adults.

While educators tend to place most emphasis on what Maslow considered the first

five needs – food/shelter, security, relationships, self-esteem, knowledge – (especially in

regards to students) the remaining three (aesthetic, self-actualization, and transcendence)

go unattended, though they represent Ethic of Care practices. Aesthetic needs

compromise those associated with beauty, balance and form. Self-actualization refers to

personal growth and self-fulfillment; and, transcendence involves assisting others in

reaching a point of self-actualization. A self-actualized (SA) people have been described

as

> *Focus(ed) on problems outside themselves.* SA people tend to have a mission in life
>
> requiring much energy, and their mission is their reason for existence. They are
>
> usually serene and worry-free as they pursue their mission with unshakeable
>
> determination. (Tuffley, 2008, para. 4, *italics added*)

Dr. Herron exudes this self-actualized quality allowing her the freedom to facilitate

acquiring it for others through guided study, group learning and meaningful application

of new skills and knowledge. While engaged in self-actualization, she is also able to

devote her efforts toward addressing the achievement gap between cultural groups within

the Middleton School District, as she continues to focus on her own development, as well

as the development of her faculty.

Conclusions

Data collected through observations, interactions, questionnaires and review of

archival data throughout this study indicate that Dr. Herron's Ethic of Care leadership in

action is perceived by most staff to nurture the human spirit. More to the point of this

study, the needs of teachers and administrators are valued to a much higher extent within

the Middleton School District – as indicated by the culture, values, styles (of the superintendent's leadership), rituals and connections (or responses to the superintendent's leadership) - compared to school districts in which I have worked. In my professional experience, there are too few districts who have Ethic of Care leaders. My purpose is to map the major components of Ethic of Care practice so others might emulate Dr. Herron's philosophy of leadership and her ways of building relationships.

Questionnaire responses revealed that, overall, teachers in the Middleton School District view the leadership practices of their superintendent as supportive of professional learning community concepts (DuFour & Eaker, 1998); she also fosters leadership capacity (Lambert, 2003a), and is a relational leader (Regan & Brooks, 1995). More specifically, respondents overwhelming agreed (65/67 or 97%) that Dr. Herron exhibits courage through her support for creativity and innovative instructional practices.

The physiological and safety needs of Middleton students are nurtured daily as students reflect on their goals, shifting students focus from conflict to achievement, and through collaboratives such as Joe's Place that meet those basic needs for the district's most vulnerable students. The learning atmosphere and learning community nurtures a sense of belonging and self-esteem, in addition to the cognitive needs of faculty members. Aesthetically, constituents experience the attractive learning spaces and the metaphors that drive the learning within each building. Dr. Herron actively facilitates self-actualization by guiding the growth of those in her circle of influence. She also challenges her constituents to look inside and beyond themselves to consider the social justice issues within their school and community.

School and district leaders who unintentionally neglect the human needs of their

faculty members, may not only be guilty of cultivating powerless Pawn self identities (Blumer, 1958; deCharms, 1968; Deegan & Hill, 1987), but they may also contribute to high faculty attrition rates. In some school districts, novice idealistic teachers arrive with a sense of self-efficacy and a determination to make a difference only to have their enthusiasm squashed due to lack of recognition for their contributions to the school, lack acknowledgement of their strengths, lack of praise and/or constructive feedback, lack of structured induction, lack of collegiality, and lack of mentoring. These are cultural infrastructures that leaders cannot afford to neglect. Veteran teachers tend to become callous to the revolving doors of administrators, each of whom come in with their own agendas, and resign themselves to being invisible for the sake of job security. Teachers who remain in the profession seek belonging outside of the school setting. Although self-esteem sometimes comes as an innate quality enveloped within an individual's personality, day-to-day neglect at the work place wears on that armor. Sadly, the people faced with the challenge of building the self-esteem of fragile young egos often go without the same nourishment to their souls and spirits. An Ethic of Care leadership has the potential to rectify that neglect. On a contradictory note, however, the high expectations and work load in a Middleton District can foment dissent and resistance that also results in some teacher attrition.

I realize now, when I look over my notes, that the characteristics and qualities that emerged regarding Dr. Herron's leadership were laid out during the initial interview and were then validated during observations and follow-up interviews. There were observable patterns and connections between what she said and what she did. Dr. Herron's person and her leadership appeared transparent and consistent over time. The

time lapse between the two phases of this research, although initially viewed as a hindrance, actually afforded a longitudinal view of Dr. Herron's leadership style resulting in a stronger study.

An initial interview and numerous observations were completed in the fall of 2004. Personal issues caused me to take time from my study but upon my return in the fall of 2008. Time seemed to stand still and I picked up where I left off by being exposed to the fruits of several years of Dr. Herron's leadership. I was nervous and unsure about Dr. Herron's interest in continuing with my study, but I had no reason to be. At the end of our re-orientation meeting, I thanked her for allowing me to impose on her once again. Her response was, "Not at all. It's nice to have you back in the fold." That was exactly how she made me feel as she introduced and re-introduced me to new and tenured faculty during administrative meetings with principals and curriculum meetings with teachers. At times, I felt more welcomed as a visitor in her district than as a faculty member within my own. Those on-going welcoming responses to me, an outsider and researcher, spoke as much to her sense of community as it did to the lack of community in my own professional life. My experience of care in this way undoubtedly shaped my feelings and interpretations at some level.

Dr. Herron's Ethic of Care leadership in action offers practical considerations for those aspiring to engage in school reform using an inside/out approach, one that begins by remolding the school culture into a caring working and learning environment based on commitments and responsibilities to others (students, teachers, parents, administrators and board members).

Ethic of Care Leadership

By incorporating human needs into their mission statements, school districts can collectively commit to strive for self-actualization and transcendence when working with faculty as well as incorporating those components into service learning projects for students. Ethic of Care leadership facilitates a higher-level of commitment to school constituents by sending the message that belonging, self-esteem, cognitive growth, self-efficacy and service to others are valued components of the school community. Nurturing the human spirit in this way requires Ethic of Care practice supported by 'best practices' in the research listed in Table 5. 3. Ethic of Care leadership results from a commitment to support and facilitate the growth of others within a school system. An Ethic of Care leader views that commitment as a responsibility to those in their network of relationships with fellow administers, teachers, staff, students, parents, school board members and community partners.

Table 5. 1:

Ethic of Care Themes Supported by Literature

Ethic of Care Practices	Supporting Literature
Caring Leadership	Doyle & Doyle, 2003 Sernak, 1998 Beck, 1994
Feminine Influences	Brunner, 2002 Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002 Astin & Leland, 1999 Begley, 1999 Grogan, 1999 Rhoads, 1997 Helgesen, 1990 Biklen & Brannigan, 1980
Leadership Capacity	Lambert, 1998a, 1998b, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2005a, 2005b, & 2006
Learning Organizations	DuFour & Eaker, 2008 & 1998 Piggot-Irvin, 2006

Shared Decision Making	Fullan, 1991
	DuFour & Eaker, 2008 & 1998
	Hargreaves, 2004
	Lezotte, 1997
	Schon, 1987
Sustainable Leadership	Navarro, Ingram & Tefari, 2007
	Hargreaves, 2005
	Hargreaves & Fink, 2004
	Donahoe, 1993
Transformative Leadership	Servgiovanni, 1990
Web-like Leadership	Lezotte, 1997
	Regan & Brooks, 1995
	Helgesen, 1990

Ethic of Care Principles

An Ethic of Care leadership approach is one that involves a conscious decision to incorporate an Ethic of Care as a fundamental principle of leadership; this means that relationships are valued and commitments to others (within one's circle of influence) are considered in decision-making. Ethic of Care leadership serves as a social justice platform questioning the gendered politics of traditional hierarchical educational leadership while simultaneously offering a leadership approach suitable for both male and female leaders and by seeking an alternative approach to school and district leadership. One noteworthy paradigm shift involves how leaders view and subsequently model the concept of *power*. Ethic of Care leaders replace traditional authoritarian "power over" (Hargreaves, 2005) practices with what Astin and Leland (1999) describe as "power as empowerment" (p. 4). Under such leadership, power is considered to be "an expandable resource that is produced and shared through interaction by leader and followers alike . . . The leader perceives power as a unit of exchange, and in empowering others, empowers himself or herself" (p. 4). In addition, because the caring components of Ethic of Care leadership are drawn primarily from feminist literature (Gilligan, 1982;

Helgesen, 1990; Noddings, 1984, 1999; Regan & Brooks, 1995), they serve to validate personality strengths, often but not exclusively, associated with women (care of others, valuing relationships, responsibilities to others). These characteristics are now recognized as worthy characteristics for all types of leaders in a global society (Helgesen, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1992, 1990).

The insights gleaned from this research project allow for a preliminary listing of Ethic of Care Principles. These are assertions of characteristics that taken together may constitute a group of assessment criteria to identify leaders who exemplify a similar set of core beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

Ethic of Care Principles

- An Ethic of Care leader practices web-like leadership in order to facilitate connections, communications and relationships with those in every area of the organization.

- An Ethic of Care leader resists hierarchical and rigid chain of command structures.

- An Ethic of Care leader develops the leadership capacity of others through power sharing.

- An Ethic of Care leader inspires and influences others to reach their full potential by promoting the cognitive growth of others through engaged inquiry and the support and practice of action research.

- An Ethic of Care leader models character qualities in dealing with faculty, parents, community members and students.

- An Ethic of Care leader fosters a sense of belonging in others by being inclusive.

- An Ethic of Care leader fosters positive self-esteem through consistent communication, support, validation, inclusion, and by recognizing and building on the strengths of others.

- An Ethic of Care leader includes others in decision-making processes that will ultimately affect them.

- An Ethic of Care leader is able to view issues from the perspective of individuals throughout the organization.

- An Ethic of Care leader conducts annual needs assessments to obtain feedback from all constituents for the purpose of improving service to others.

- An Ethic of Care leader is aware of the messages that he/she sends to others through words, deeds and behaviors.

- An Ethic of Care leader recognizes the importance of voice and listens in a way that makes others feel their voices have been heard.

- An Ethic of Care leader is active and personally engaged with others at all levels of the organization, focusing full attention on the matter at hand.

- An Ethic of Care leader embraces diversity and exhibits cultural responsiveness.

- An Ethic of Care leader embraces social justice issues, guiding others to think beyond themselves.

The results of this study indicate that caring leadership requires: (1) a conscious decision to consider others in decision-making processes, (2) an appreciation for relationships and community building, (3) respect for others (regardless of their title), and (4) a dedication to nurturing relationships and culture by establishing strong and consistent patterns of communication.

The leadership style described here is not the sole province of women leaders. Many caring male leaders in education practice such principles to varying degrees. However, too often leaders are shaped in ways that discourages them from such practices for fear they will be perceived as weak, soft, or non-decisive. Caring behaviors may be unfairly accepted as an added strength in men but a weakness in women leaders.

Recommendations for Future Research

A single case study of one female superintendent served as the focal point of this research. For this reason, future research is encouraged to replicate this study in a multi-case study format. This can be accomplished a number of ways: using three to five female superintendents, three to five male superintendents, or a case study comprised of an equal number of male and female participants for the purpose of determining the extent to which these groups exhibit Ethic of Care leadership by exhibiting and fostering Ethic of Care principles.

Drawing from the overarching themes, it would be interesting to survey high-performing and low-performing schools across the state to determine the extent in which the superintendents engage with faculty at every level of school, maintain a studious culture, model sweat equity, monitor the messages they send to faculty, students and parents (as well as those sent to students and parents from faculty), and instill a climate of

perpetual evolution. I would encourage further inquiry about the extent to which superintendents facilitate web-like leadership and generous information sharing as opposed to hierarchical management and information hoarding. Follow up studies in which teachers across the state are surveyed regarding messages received on professional and personal levels from their respective superintendents will provide additional narrative collections and leadership feedback.

I would specifically ask the following questions:

- To what extent does your superintendent engage in the teaching and learning process by learning alongside faculty and by rolling up their sleeves to do the curricular work necessary to move learning into the 21st century realm?

- To what extent is your superintendent engaged with faculty in curriculum design and reflective study?

- To what extent is your superintendent knowledgeable of curriculum and instruction at each level, Prek-12?

- To what extent does your superintendent listen to teachers, administrators, parents and student regarding innovation?

- To what extent does your superintendent foster a mission/vision focus throughout the district?

- To what extent is your superintendent committed to meetings the basic needs (belonging, self-esteem, cognitive growth, self-efficacy, and transcendence) of district faculty and staff?

- To what extent does your superintendent function through a hierarchical structure of leadership?

- To what extent does your superintendent facilitate a web-like structure of leadership?

In this case study, Dr. Herron applied the learning drawn from her own dissertation study to her practice as an educational leader. It would be interesting to know how many superintendents across the state apply the in-depth knowledge gained from their dissertation to their day-to-day practice?

Closing Remarks

The moral ramifications associated with the marginalization of teachers and the absence of their voices inspired me to pursue an Ethic of Care, a caring approach to leadership that valued relationships instead of viewing them as inconsequential in the day-to-day work of educators. I discovered that others shared my perceptions of traditional hierarchical leadership and the need for caring leaders who appreciate and exhibit feminist attributes . . . "those claimed and defined by women" (Regan & Brooks, 1995). Helgesen's (1990) women, for example, embraced their own personal leadership qualities, resulting in organizations wrought with female touches such as flattened hierarchies, aesthetically appealing work spaces, networking versus competition, dialogue and reflection, and collaborative decision-making. Dr. Herron's leadership reflects those leadership qualities to a large extent making her a worthy exemplar, rather than a paradigm case, of Ethic of Care leadership. Ethic of Care leadership, from my perspective, is an ideal worthy of pursuit, yet perhaps unreachable. In this light, one must continuously strive to perfect practices that foster Ethic of Care principles.

My pursuit of an Ethic of Care has never been to claim a female advantage to leadership or to diminish the efforts of caring male administrators. This pursuit served, instead, to reveal an Ethic of Care as an alternative leadership approach that values relationships and commitments to others. It is my hope that caring leadership becomes the norm for superintendents leading school districts rather than the exception so that principals and teachers have the opportunity to experience a thriving learning culture that fosters learning within their buildings and classrooms and as a sense of pride in ownership of their work as Origins.

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Footnotes

[1]In order to maintain the anonymity of the research participants and the school district, this reference also requires anonymity due to the indentifying information within the article.

[2]Home valuations were retrieved on February 20, 2009 from http://www.zillow.com/.

[3]School district data was retrieved from the state department of elementary and secondary education website (http://dese.mo.gov/%20planning/profile).

[4]The description and use of the *kiva* was retrieved on February 10, 2009 from www.cliffdwellingsmuseum.com/arch3.html.

[5]Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid was retrieved on March 3, 2009 from http://www.-bkone.co.in/clubBK/MaslowsHierarchyofNeeds.asp.

[6]The definition of *sweat equity* was retrieved on May 13, 2009 from http://www.-dictionary.com.

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APPENDIX A
Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
Pursuing an Ethic of Care: A Case Study of a Female Superintendent

Participant _____HSC Approval Number   040526A_____

Principal Investigator ___Rachelle Rico____PI's Phone Number __(314)680-9675_____

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1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Rachelle Rico, under the direction of Virginia Navarro, PhD. The purpose of this research is to observe the practices of a female superintendent whose leadership style is based in "an ethic of care" (Gilligan, 1982). You have been asked to participate in the research because your colleagues in educational leadership feel you exemplify this style of leadership. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the research. Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate or to decline participation will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Missouri. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

    The purpose of this study is to explore the practice of a female superintendent who is perceived to lead primarily through an ethic of care morality by documenting how this care-oriented leadership is practiced by the superintendent and perceived by fellow administrators and teachers. Data collection methods will include: (1) an in-depth interview with a female superintendent, (2) in-depth interviews with three additional district faculty members, (3) administration of a faculty survey/questionnaire composed of nineteen Likert-type questions and one prompt for which faculty will be asked to describe an observation of or interaction with their superintendent that enhanced their perception of that person, (4) three full-days of shadowing the superintendents to observe interactions with faculty members, and (5) the collection of archival data.

    a) Your participation will involve
    ➢ an initial 1-2 hour, tape-recorded interview.

- ➢ possibly being tape-recorded and/or observed during various district meetings between August – December, including but not limited to: the annual administrators' retreat, monthly administrative council meetings, monthly principal council meetings, full-day professional development days, early releaser professional development days, and after-school curriculum meetings.
- ➢ being shadowed during three separate full days that include meetings with principals and teachers.
- ➢ a member check (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) that involves sharing interpretations of data for the purpose of confirming and reviewing data and direction of the study.
- ➢ support in the dissemination of questionnaires to be completed by district administrators and teachers.
- ➢ providing access to archival district data including but not limited to: media interviews, speeches to the district and public, memorandums to faculty, communications within newsletters, etc. . .

Four participants will constitute the major focus of this case study. The primary case study participant is a female superintendent. Three in-depth interviews will also be conducted with faculty members at various district levels. Additional data will be obtained from participants including nine district administrators and 147 district teachers through a survey / questionnaire. No names will be disclosed in published work.

b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately sixty hours of observation time, 2-4 hours of interview time and 3 full days of shadowing. Since the observations and initial interview have already taken place, the only time that will be required moving forward will include 3 full days of shadowing and two hours to review, confirm and reflect on collected data.

3. There may be certain risks or discomforts associated with this research. They include: uncomfortable feelings that might come from answering certain questions, the time and effort expended for observations / shadowing, the confirmation and reflection of collected data, and the intrusion of tape-recorded dialogue. There is also the limited risk of participant identification; however, every precaution will be taken to maintain complete anonymity for everyone involved in this study.

4. Your participation will contribute to the knowledge about an ethic of care in practice and may influence training programs for educational leaders. The possible benefits to you from participating in this research are feedback regarding your leadership style and your practice is perceived across the district.

5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from

this study. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Rachelle Rico (314)680-9675 or the Faculty Advisor, Virginia Navarro (314)516-5871. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research Administration, at 516-5897.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Participant's Printed Name
Date

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator or Designee   Investigator/Designee Printed Name
Date

College of Education   **Division of Educational Leadership**

One University Blvd.
St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4499
Telephone: 314-516-5944
Fax: 314-516-5942

APPENDIX B
Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
Pursuing an Ethic of Care: A Case Study of a Female Superintendent

Participant _____HSC Approval Number   040526A_____

Principal Investigator __Rachelle Rico__ PI's Phone Number __(314)680-9675_____

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1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Rachelle Rico, under the direction of Virginia Navarro, PhD. The purpose of this research is to observe the practices of a female superintendent whose leadership style is based in "an ethic of care" (Gilligan, 1982). You have been asked to participate in the research because you work with a female superintendent identified as someone who exemplifies this style of leadership. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the research. Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate or to decline participation will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Missouri. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

    The purpose of this study is to explore the practice of a female superintendent who is perceived to lead primarily through an ethic of care morality by documenting how this care-oriented leadership is practiced by the superintendent and perceived by fellow administrators and teachers. Data collection methods will include: (1) an in-depth interview with a female superintendent, (2) in-depth interviews of three district faculty members, (3) administration of a faculty survey/questionnaire composed of nineteen Likert-type questions and one prompt for which faculty will be asked to describe an observation of or interaction with their superintendent that enhanced their perception of that person, (4) three full-days of shadowing the superintendents to observe interactions with faculty members, and (5) the collection of archival data.

    Your participation will involve
    ➢ a 1 hour, tape-recorded interview.
    ➢ a member check session (30 to 45 minutes) during which you will have the opportunity to confirm and/or reframe interpretations drawn from the interview.

> ➢ providing access to archival district data including but not limited to: memorandums to faculty, communications within newsletters, etc. . . generated by the superintendent.

Four participants will be the focus of in this case study. The primary participant is a female superintendent (case study). Three district faculty members (the assistant superintendent, the elementary principal and one teacher) will provide insight through in-depth interviews. Additional data will be obtained from participants including nine district administrators and 147 district teachers through a survey / questionnaire. No names will be disclosed in published work.

b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 1-2 hours.

4. There may be certain risks or discomforts associated with this research. They include: uncomfortable feelings that might come from answering certain questions, the time and effort expended for the interview, the confirmation and reflection of collected data, the data collection, and the intrusion of tape-recorded dialogue. There is also the limited risk of participant identification; however, every precaution will be taken to maintain complete anonymity for everyone involved in this study.

4. Your participation will contribute to the knowledge about an ethic of care in practice and may influence training programs for educational leaders.

5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Rachelle Rico (314)680-9675 or the Faculty Advisor, Virginia Navarro (314)516-5871. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research Administration, at 516-5897.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Participant's Printed Name
Date

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator or Designee   Investigator/Designee Printed Name
Date

APPENDIX C
Female Superintendent
Initial Interview Questions

1. Please explain a moral dilemma you have faced as a superintendent, your final decision and your rationale for that decision.

2. What leadership qualities and practices set you apart from the previous superintendent of this school district?

3. How have these qualities and practices assisted in transforming this school system?

4. How has gender affected your success?

5. How do you facilitate the development of the citizens of tomorrow?

6. How do you feel your leadership shapes teachers for the purpose of developing citizens of tomorrow?

7. How have you experienced gender-bias or discrimination as a teacher, principal, or superintendent?

8. Please share experiences you have had in working with a low-performing school system.

9. What were the obstacles for teachers within that system?

10. Do you consider yourself a feminist? If yes, how can a feminist perspective assist in improving low-performing schools?

11. What advise would you give to female principals interested in pursuing the superintendency?

12. Why do you suppose women represent only 8-12% of superintendents across the country?

APPENDIX D
Faculty Interview Questions

1. What message does your district send to the public?

2. What message does your district send to it's parents?

3. What message does your district send to it's students?

4. What message does your district send to it's faculty?

5. How do these messages compare / contrast to those of districts in which you have previously worked?

6.   Were those superintendents male or female?

7. Do you feel that the gender of your superintendent plays a role in how this school system differs from surrounding districts and/or others in which you have worked?

7. How (if at all) does teacher attrition compare to that of other districts in which you have worked? To what would you attribute those comparisons?

8. How is student achievement affected by the leadership practices of the superintendent in your school district?

9.   Given your district's focus on metaphors, what metaphor would you use to describe your experience within the district (i.e. chained to the data, invisible, . . .)?

APPENDIX E
Faculty Questionnaire
Perspectives on District Leadership

Please provide the following information:

Female _____   Male_____   Years in Education_____

Please rank the following on a scale of 1-4, with 4 = above average, 3 = average, 2 = below average, and 1 = not at all.

Please answer all questions to the best of your ability. Your feedback is very important. If you need to make additional comments regarding any question, please use the back of the questionnaire or send them via e-mail to: rchllrc@yahoo.com .

DuFour & Eaker's (1998) Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) have become a theme for schools seeking to improve student achievement. In a PLC, teachers collaborate to develop S.M.A.R.T. goals (Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time bound). Instructional decisions are data-driven and a pyramid of interventions addresses the question: What do we do when students are not learning? Teams also develop common assessments, which assist in evaluating instructional effectiveness. PLC schools maintain focus on shared mission, vision, values and goals while exhibiting a mindset of continual improvement.

1. To what extent are you familiar with Professional Learning Communities?

   1   2   3   4

2. To what extent does your superintendent support and foster data-driven decision-making?

   1   2   3   4

3. To what extent does your superintendent support and foster continuous focus on shared mission, vision, values and goals?

   1   2   3   4

4. To what extent does your superintendent engage faculty in developing collective commitments?

   1   2   3   4

5. To what extent does your superintendent engage faculty in setting quarterly or annual SMART (Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound) goals for increasing student achievement?

   1   2   3   4

6. To what extent does your superintendent support and foster shared leadership?

        1   2   3   4

Lambert's (1998a, 1998b, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006) concept of Leadership Capacity fits well within a professional learning community structure. Administrators build leadership capacity in others by encouraging, recognizing and teaching leadership roles and behaviors. Lambert stresses the importance of building the leadership capacity of teachers and the sustainability of leadership to the extent that a school could run itself (meet the needs of students in a collective manner) in the absence of a principal.

7. To what extent does your superintendent build leadership capacity by encouraging leadership opportunities?

        1   2   3   4

8. To what extent would your school be able to collectively meet the needs of students in the event of a long-term absence of your principal?

        1   2   3   4

9. To what extent do you feel able to make instructional decisions about your students and classroom?

        1   2   3   4

Historically speaking, educational leadership has been defined and practiced in masculine terms of hierarchy and authoritarian management. Regan & Brooks (1995) contend that by incorporating the feminist attributes of collaboration, caring, courage, intuition, and vision educational leaders balance leadership styles resulting in more effective influence. They define these attributes as:

Collaboration: "the ability to work in a group, eliciting and offering support to each other member, creating a synergistic environment for everyone" (p. 26).
Caring: "the development of an affinity for the world and the people in it, translating moral commitment to action on behalf of others" (p. 27).
Courage: "the capacity to move ahead into the unknown, testing new ideas in the world of practice" (pp. 29-30).
Intuition: "the ability to give equal weight to experience and abstraction, mind and heart" (p. 33).
Vision: "the ability to formulate and express original ideas, enabling others to consider options in new and different ways; eliciting everyone's thoughts and creating a trusting environment where everyone feels free to offer his or her own points of view, making vision possible" (p. 36).

10. To what extent does your superintendent support and foster a working environment conducive to <u>collaboration</u> and <u>cooperation</u>?

    1   2   3   4

11. To what extent do the actions of your superintendent reflect <u>care</u> and <u>concern</u> for colleagues, as well as students?

    1   2   3   4

12. To what extent does your superintendent reflect <u>courage</u> through risk-taking by encouraging out-of-the-box thinking or standing her ground in the face of opposition?

    1   2   3   4

13. To what extent does your superintendent lead with <u>intuition</u>, both mind and heart?

    1   2   3   4

14. To what extent does your superintendent create a trusting environment by welcoming differing opinions on how to progress toward or redefine the district <u>vision</u>?

1   2   3   4

Gilligan (1982) contends that the moral development of men and women differs due to differences in their socialization experiences. From a young age, boys are acculturated to be more autonomous and competitive while girls are shaped to value connectedness and relationship-building. Likewise, men tend to use a justice orientation (based on reciprocity, fairness and respecting the rights of others) in decision-making while women are more inclined to utilize what Gilligan calls "an ethic of care" (based on compassion and care for oneself and others) by considering the effects of decisions on others and their own relational responsibilities toward others.

15. To what extent does your superintendent rely on a justice orientation in decision-making, to the exclusion of an ethic of care?

    1   2   3   4

16. To what extent does your superintendent rely on an ethic of care in decision-making, to the exclusion of a justice orientation?

    1   2   3   4

17. To what extent does your superintendent exhibit a blended orientation of justice and care in decision-making?

      1   2   3   4

In deCharms (1968) Origin/Pawn Theory, he characterizes a "Pawn" as someone who perceives his/her own behavior to be dictated by others rendering that behavior meaningless and devalued because of their perceptions of powerlessness. An "Origin," on the other hand, determines his/her own behavior resulting in feelings of accomplishment. The Pawn is forced into submission and internalizes an attitude of subservience, while the Origin is free to make his/her own choices.

18. To what extent would you characterize yourself as a "Pawn" within your school system?

    1   2   3   4

19. To what extent would you characterize yourself as an "Origin" within your school system?

    1   2   3   4

Please answer the following open-ended questions. Your written words are very meaningful to this study.

20. What message(s) do(es) the leadership practices of your superintendent send to you about teaching and learning?

21. What message(s) do(es) the leadership practices of your superintendent send to you as a person?

Thank you for your time and participation.

APPENDIX F
Relevant Dimensions

I.   Relevant Dimensions

    A.   Professional Learning Communities (Eaker & DuFour, 1998)
        1. Data driven decision making
        2. Shared mission, vision, values and goals
        3. Collective commitments
        4. SMART goal setting
        5. Shared leadership

    B.   Leadership Capacity (Lambert, 2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2006)
        1. Leadership opportunities
        2. Sustainability
        3. Teacher ownership of instructional decisions

    C.   Feminist Attributes (1995)
        1. Caring
        2. Collaboration
        3. Courage
        4. Intuition
        5. Vision

    D.   Care versus Justice Orientations to Decision Making (Gilligan, 1982; Lyons, 1983)

    E.   Pawn versus Origin Identity Development

APPENDIX G

Pursuing an Ethic of Care: A Case Study of a Female Superintendent
Data Collection / Analysis Timeline

Phase I: Observations, field notes and possible tape-recordings of various district meetings:
  * Administrative Council Meetings (9-11am): 9/8/04, 10/6/04, 11/10/04, 12/8/04
  * Principal Council Meetings (9-11am): 9/29/04, 10/20/04, 11/24/04, 12/15/04
  * Professional Development Days (full days): 9/24/04, 10/22/04, 12/03/04
  * Early Release Professional Development Days: 9/15/04, 10/06/04, 11/03/04, 12/15/04
  • TLC (Curriculum) Meetings (4-5:30pm): 09/01/04, 11/03/04, 12/01/04
   (completed)

Phase II: Shadowing days and coding of data
  • Coding / Analysis of Initial Superintendent Interview: 12/04, 12/08-2/09
  • Shadowing Days: 1/21/09, 1/22/09, 1/30/09
  • Coding / Analysis of Shadowing Days: 2/2/09-2/13/09
  • Member Check with Superintendent: 1/30/09, 2/7/09, 2/16/09, 2/28/09, 3/8/09, 3/9/09, 3/14/09, 3/15/09, 4/18/09, 4/19/09
  • Interview of Faculty Member #1: 1/30/09
  • Interview of Faculty Member #2: 2/1/09
  • Interview of Faculty Member #3: 2/3/09
  • Member Checks with Interviewed Faculty Members: 2/18/09
  • Administration of Faculty Questionnaires: 2/09
  • Collection / Coding / Analysis of Archival Data: 2/09
  • Coding / Analysis of Questionnaires: 3/09
  • Dissemination of Second Round Questionnaires: 5/09

APPENDIX H

Figure 4.1

Proficient / Advanced Percentage Increases, 2001/2008
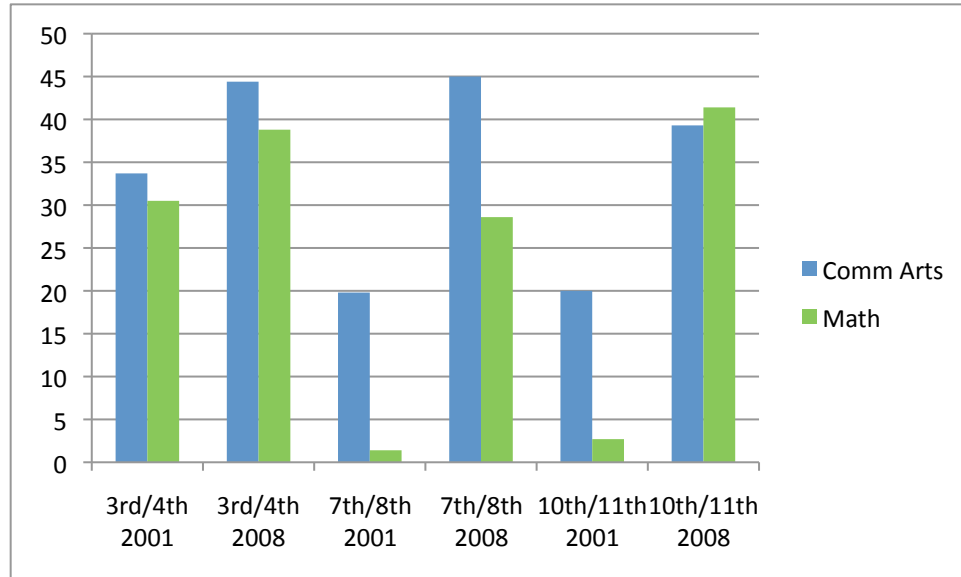
* The first bar in each pair represents the percentage of 3rd, 7th, and 11th grade students performing at the Advanced / Proficient levels in Communication Arts during the 2001 and 2008 state assessment window. Likewise, the second bar represents percentages in Math for 4th, 8th, and 10th grade students testing in 2001 and 2008.

APPENDIX I

Table 4.5:

Middleton Faculty Questionnaire Results N=68

Survey Questions	Questions Descriptors	Raw Data / Percentages			
		Low Ratings 1-2	%	High Ratings 3-4	%
Q-1	PLC's	9	13%	59	87%
Q-2	PLC's	4	6%	63	94%
Q-3	PLC's	5	8%	61	92%
Q-4	PLC's	6	10%	57	90%
Q-5	PLC's	8	13%	55	87%
Q-6	PLC's	8	12%	59	88%
Q-7	Leadership Capacity	4	6%	62	94%
Q-8	Leadership Capacity	4	6%	63	94%
Q-9	Leadership Capacity	3	4%	64	96%
Q-10	Relational Leadership	5	7%	62	93%
Q-11	Relational Leadership	20	29%	48	71%
Q-12	Relational Leadership	2	3%	65	97%
Q-13	Relational Leadership	2	3%	65	97%
Q-14	Relational Leadership	16	24%	52	76%
Q-15	Care / Justice	15	25%	45	75%
Q-16	Care / Justice	15	26%	43	74%
Q-17	Care / Justice	8	13%	54	87%
Q-18	Pawn	42	64%	24	36%
Q-19	Origin	15	24%	48	76%

APPENDIX J

Table 4.6:

Constructed Response Feedback: Messages about Teaching and Learning
What messages do(es) the leadership practices of your superintendent send to you about teaching and learning?

Caring
- That she cares and is committed to broadening the horizons of students. She is concerned that they become responsible members of the global community and prepared for the 21st century.   - The student is more important than the subject.   - She cares very deeply about the welfare and learning of our students. She wants the best for them and stays on top of things to make sure they are getting the best that our school can offer.   - They (students) are important. They (students) are what we do.   - Our superintendent believes in putting the needs of students (first).   - Kids learning and success is important.
Collaboration
- Collaboration and teamwork are the central themes.   - Each department has a faculty member responsible for curriculum writing and communicates the views of the faculty and what we are teaching.
Courage
- Innovation is welcome.   - She is very dedicated to them and wants to use the most current curriculum and instructional strategies.   - Try real hard. Try new things.   - Innovation is important.   - Cutting edge. Forefront.

•   Must always be looking to move forward.
Intuition •   Dedication and commitment are key. •   With high expectations comes intrinsic rewards and fosters an environment of hard workers. •   Enthusiasm is important.
Vision •   The community is important. •   That teaching and learning are not mutually exclusive. •   Professional development is paramount. •   Visionary! Nothing's impossible. Everyone can learn. •   Effective practices. •   She is very academically focused and very interested in developing curriculum that can be taught so that all students can learn. •   PD (professional development) is important. •   Best practices are important. •   Technology is important. •   Teaching and learning are important. •   There is a strong sense of mission here. •   This is about teaching and learning. •   Curriculum. •   Professional Development.

APPENDIX K

Table 4.7:

Constructed Response Feedback: Personal Messages to Teachers

What message(s) do the leadership practices of your superintendent send to you as a

person?

Caring
- She deeply respects and cares about her teachers.   - I am valued.   - That I count as a person but she will always expect more.
Collaboration
- That I share in the commitment of the district. That I am a vital component of how the district attains its goals.   - I am crucial to the function of the team.   - A message to be my best, help others do the same, and learn together.   - That we should all work together for the best interest of our students.   - She makes me feel like I'm a valuable member of the team.   - Our school works together as a community to ensure that the needs of our students are met. We meet regularly with administration to give our input.   - We're all a team and we can't afford any weak players.
Courage
- Work hard and be resilient.   - She wants all they (teachers) can give (and) has high expectations they will give it.   - Be dedicated and hard working.   - You are valuable. You can do it and you can make a difference.   (She) will let you do it if you step up.   - Planning time with early release days – yes, I favor this.

•   That late nights and extra duty are expected.
Vision •   I am an expert and professional. •   We all have something to contribute. •   She thinks teachers are capable of great things. •   She has boundless energy and expects those around her to also have boundless energy. •   By setting goals and sticking to a vision, progress is made. •   Strive for excellence. •   Excellence is expected with authentic learning as the main motivator. •   Driven, visionary, determined.