Measuring a Leader's Practice: Past Efforts and Present Opportunities to Capture What Educational Leaders Do

Jason Huff
Vanderbilt University

DRAFT

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"If you ask a manager what he does, he will most likely tell you that he plans, organizes, co-ordinates, and controls. Then watch what he does. Don't be surprised if you can't relate what you see to these four words."   (Henry Mintzberg, 1975)

While Minztberg's studies have focused on the private sector, his quote captures in part the complexity of studying leadership practice. Just as researchers have long debated exactly what "educational leadership" is, so they have debated and studied exactly what these leaders do. The examination of leadership practice has evolved from often atheoretical surveys and/or observations to more formalized protocols involving structured observations, interviews, and surveys. The current education policy environment of standards and accountability has drawn attention to the role that principals play as instructional leaders for their schools, and this focus has pushed the question of just what principals (and other school leaders) do to promote student learning and achievement.

This paper reviews earlier studies of leadership practice in education and outside before focusing on recent works that have formed the current state of the field. It first offers an overview of studies both in and outside of education that help to illustrate prevalent approaches before moving to an analysis of the works. This analytical discussion is guided by three questions. First, who have researchers identified as leaders; to whom have they looked as leaders in their studies? Second, on what particular actions or behaviors have researchers focused to construct leadership practice? Third, what different methods have researchers used in their studies, and how have they influenced

our picture of leaders' practices? The paper concludes with a consideration of the

significant debates and gaps that will influence the measurement of leadership practice in

the years to come, and it offers examples of work that may help to address some of these

issues.

Selection of Studies for Review

Selection criteria for inclusion in this review were based on the following two questions;

each study had to address one or both of them:

1) Did the study focus primarily or exclusively on leadership practice in its
   overall design OR did it utilize measures of leadership practice which it
   discussed in detail?
2) Was the study empirical in nature? Did it draw on primary or secondary data
   to analyze leadership practice? Pieces that simply cited others' research to
   argue their points were read for their perspective, but their findings were not
   included in the review.

Though Drake and Roe (1994) cautioned against applying findings from business and

other areas because schools are qualitatively different from businesses or public sector

organizations, educational leadership studies have borrowed heavily from other fields in

the past, and this review includes a number of pieces from outside of education. The

majority of studies outside the field consist of work from the for-profit world, but a small

number of public sector studies appear as well. Inclusion of these not only helps to

illustrate how other paradigms have influenced education, but they also provide cases

against which to compare educational studies and their selection of actors, practices, and

methods as well as their findings. Table 1 provides a summary of the studies selected in

the review; it lists the works in two categories, educational leadership studies, and for-

profit and public-sector studies. The table illustrates what particular methods were used

in each study as well as what participants were included for the research. The sample

size specifies the number of leaders that researchers included in their studies. The

participant column does not indicate what particular actor was the focus of the study but

rather what people were interviewed, observed, or surveyed in the study; more than just

leaders were included in many of these studies.

TABLE 1
A summary of the research included in this review according to types of measure, sample size, and participants included in the study.

Educational Leadership Studies

Author(Date)	Methods: Artifacts	Interviews	Obs	Survey	Video	Logs	ESM***	Activity Sampling	Sample Size*	Participants**
Wolcott (1973)	x	x		x	x				1	Prin
Peterson (1977)			x						2	Prin
Sallet, et. al. (1979)			x						619	P, T
Crowson & Porter-Gehrie (1980)			x						10	P, T
Martin & Willower (1981)			x						5	P
Kmetz & Willower (1982)			x						5	P
Hallinger (1983)	x			x					144	P, S, T
Morris, et. al. (1984)			x						26	P
Hallinger & Murphy (1985)	x		x	x					10	P, S, T
Krug, et. al. (1990)		x					x		87	P
Martinko & Gardner (1990)			x						41	P
Leithwood & Jantzi(1999a)				x					110	T, S
Leithwood & Jantzi(1999b)				x					110	T, S
Camburn, et. al.(2003)				x					484	P, T
Gronn & Hamilton (2004)	x	x	x						2	P, S, T, Pa
Spillane (2005)			x	x	x				13	P, T

For-Profit and Public Sector Studies

Author(Data)	Methods: Artifacts	Interviews	Obs	Survey	Video	Logs	ESM	Activity Sampling	Sample Size	Participants
Mintzberg (1973)			x						5	CEO
Kotter (1982)			x	x					15	GM,Sub
Hales & Tam (1996)	x		x	x				x	20	Man
Watson (1996)		x	x						10	Man
Grugulis (1997)		x	x						40	Man
Dargie (1998)		x	x			x			4, 8	CEO

*Sample size indicates the number of leaders included in the study.
**The following letters indicate participants for the studies:

P	Principals
T	Teachers
S	Students
Pa	Parents
GM	General Managers
Sub	Subordinates (reporting to GM's in Kotter's piece)
Mgr	Managers
CEO	Chief Executive Officers

***Experience Sampling Method

An Overview of the Literature

Early Looks at Leadership Practice: 1970-1989

Some of the first significant work to focus on educational leadership practice came in the 1970's with Wolcott's well-known ethnography of Edward Bell (1973) and Peterson's observations of two elementary school principals' tasks (1977). With *The Man in the Principal's Office* Harry Wolcott took an in-depth, ethnographic look at a single principal over the course of a school year but did not provide a systematic analysis of his data. He presented thick descriptions of Ed Bell's life and interactions during the year, but he offered few if any explanations of how these descriptions fit with established theories of leadership. Peterson (1977) noted this gap in Wolcott's work as he brought more structure to his observations of two principals by noting the frequency, duration, and functions of their tasks over several weeks. However, his piece also cited only limited theoretical precedent to guide his design and findings. While these two studies marked some of the first explorations of principal practices, they also illustrated the early shortcomings of the field.

As some studies broadened with the use of surveys (Salley, McPherson, & Baehr in 1979 included 619 principals in their study), others proceeded with deeper, closer looks at principals. From the field of for-profit leadership, Mintzberg (1973) offered some of the earlier significant analyses of management practice, and his use of structured observations helped to inspire a number of similar designs in the study of school principals. Researchers relied more on the use of interviews and observations and began to look more closely at the multivariate character of principal actions and their impacts (Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie, & Hurwitz, 1984; Crowson & Porter-Gehrie, 1980;

Martin & Willower, 1981; Kmetz & Willower, 1982). These efforts captured more of the dynamic nature of principal work, but much of this descriptive work did not contribute to development of significant policy or stronger overall theories about the principalship. Kotter's (1982) book used more in-depth observations and interviews of for-profit general managers and their subordinates to study manager practices, and he emphasized the importance of interpersonal relationships and networks through which the general managers acted.

In his dissertation Hallinger (1983) noted other shortcomings in the research, namely, the lack of behavioral indicators to identify leadership in schools, issues of generalizability, and a shortage of explanatory models resulting from the work. Much of the work up to that time had focused on elementary schools within urban, poor areas, and researchers and practitioners often struggled to generalize the results to schools not fitting those characteristics. Building in part on Hallinger's dissertation, which sought to use a survey that operationalized different behavioral measures of principals, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) looked more closely at principals' instructional management behaviors by using both surveys, observations, and artifact analyses of schools and staffs of 10 principals. Their findings contradicted previous structured observation-based work: the study showed that principals spent more time in managing curriculum and instruction than was previously reported. Hallinger and Murphy questioned the ability of structured observations to capture principals' instructional management practices, and they recommended more work to look at the effects of different instructional management styles as well as qualitative efforts to generate thicker descriptions of just how principal manage curriculum and instruction.

Martinko and Gardner (1990) continued with Mintzberg's structured observations and studied 41 school principals to examine the nature of principals' managerial behaviors and whether or not they varied according to principals' effectiveness and their environmental and demographic surroundings. They found evidence that supported Mintzberg's earlier work which showed that managerial work is "brief, varied, fragmented, and interpersonal" (p. 331) and that it was related to differences in grade level, staff size, location, and socio-economic status, but they found little support for managerial work varying according to principals' level of effectiveness.

One particular body of research attempted to push more deeply into the "why" of leadership practice by examining principals' beliefs and perceptions of actions (Krug, Ahadi & Scott, 1990, Scott, Ahadi, & Krug, 1990). These studies argued that "what leaders believe about their work is paramount in explaining differences between leaders" (p. 7). Krug, et. al., admitted that other leader characteristics helped to determine practices and behavior, but they contended that leaders' beliefs shaped their perceptions of events and were the primary influences in their actions and/or response to circumstances. They used an experience sampling approach to capture the reports of 87 principals throughout their work days over the course of five days. Their analysis of findings showed that differences in principals' beliefs rather than activities helped to explain differences between more and less effective instructional leaders. They proposed that instructional leadership may be viewed more accurately as an approach to administration rather than a set of practices. However, while their use of experience sampling approach promoted the use of an alternative measure for leaders' intentions and

behaviors, work that employs this method alongside others would offer stronger claims to validity still. They also did not defend at length their choice of principal effectiveness measures, and this leaves open the question of their reported relationships between beliefs and effectiveness. Finally, though their sample size of 87 subjects was an increase over a number of the previously discussed studies, the sampling of a single work week (5 days) still raises the same question of generalizability that exists for observational data: just how much can one generalize findings from one week's (or other short time frames) worth of data?

Other works using much larger samples have included measures of leadership practice on wider and less direct bases, as measures of practice in many of these studies have been used to look at principals' and other educational leaders' impacts on students and school conditions. Leadership practice was just one component of their efforts to determine leaders' influences on different outcomes. For example, Leithwood and Jantzi (1999a, 1999b) used survey items that measured teachers' perceptions of principal practices such as showing respect for staff, regularly observing teachers, working with teachers to improve effectiveness after observations, and participating in discussions of educational issues. They viewed the impacts of principals (and teacher leaders) as mediated through the conditions of school structure, social networks, and organizational culture before they could have an effect on student engagement in their schools. In one article (1999a) they found that teacher leadership effects on student engagement did not have a significant effect on engagement while principal leadership effects had a weak but statistically significant effect on engagement. Camburn, Rowan and Taylor (2003) also used measures of leadership practice as part of a larger study, with this one looking at

distributed leadership in the context of elementary schools adopting comprehensive

school reforms. They used survey items to measure teacher reports of instructional

leadership, building management functions, and boundary spanning functions, setting

instructional goals, developing instructional capacity, coordinating curriculum, and

monitoring improvement. HLM results of the survey analyses showed that principals

generally engaged in higher levels of leadership practices than individuals in other

positions (such as assistant principals and comprehensive school reform coaches) but that

these other leaders reported almost equal engagements in specific areas (such as assistant

principals in building management). They also reported that various background

characteristics such as amount of university coursework in literacy and mathematics were

stronger predictors of principals' engagement in instructional leadership practices.

Analysis of the Work

Using the three guiding questions of the study, this section examines the cited

pieces and includes additional ones that help to illustrate the salient themes offered here.

By viewing the research through these lenses I hope to explain how these factors have

shaped both the research designs and their findings, and I use the conclusion to discuss

the gaps and opportunities that exist for future work to address.

Who Are the Leaders?

The early studies included here illustrate well how researchers initially viewed

leaders as individuals (primarily male) acting upon the organization. Wolcott's very title

emphasizes his focus on a single man in the role of principal. Even as Martin &

Willower (1981) and Morris, et. al. (1984) used alternative methods to Wolcott's

ethnographic approach, they still focused on individuals in principal positions. Their

models were almost entirely uni-directional in their effects: they emphasized how leaders' actions can influence others around them as well as the different conditions in which they work. Morris, et. al., leave some room for factors that may influence principals, but their main concern is still how these formal leaders affect teachers, students, and schools.

Only slowly has this paradigm of the individual as leader begun to change. Gronn lamented as late as 2003 that "the dominant contemporary conception of leadership remains the doctrine of 'exceptionalism'" in which "leadership that is exceptional is presumed to be manifest behaviorally in individual deeds of heroic proportions" (p. 281). However, he concluded his piece with references to work that had begun to incorporate distributed leadership in their designs and predicted that these approaches "should assist the overall project of visibilising work and sharpen our understanding of work practices" (p. 286). Leithwood and Jantzi (1999a) reflected that their project was among the first to use a large-scale study that included the effects of teacher leadership, and they called for others to test their findings. Camburn, et. al.'s 2003 study cited previous work establishing team leadership in elementary schools and focused explicitly on just how it was distributed across individuals ranging from the principal to particular teacher leaders. While there are many disagreements over exactly how to conceptualize and measure this concept (Heller & Firestone in 1995 define leadership as a set of functions leaders are expected to perform while Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond in 2001 see it as much more practice based, as do Gronn and Hamilton, 2004), the fact remains that researchers have begun to move past the traditional view of a leader as an individual solely responsible for the various changes or outcomes in schools.

What Is Leadership Practice?

Much of the initial work in this area focused on leaders as managers. As early as 1964 Sayles studied business managers with the central question "What, then, is the manager's job; what is the nature of administration?" (p. 14). To answer the question he focused on their functions, activities, and relationships to others rather than their formally stated roles. Mintzberg (1973) followed this by observing CEO's and their contacts, mail, communication, and nature of activities and asked why each leader did what he did. Both of these researchers, instead of analyzing formal roles or positions, looked at work activity to define exactly what a manager was. In their focus on managerial leadership they saw leaders' main functions as demanding actions and responses from their subordinates and monitoring their activities. These conceptions of leadership in business were quite influential for education.

In their surveys Salley, et. al. (1979) focused more on this same type of managerial behavior for principals than on principals' efforts to guide or impact instruction. Crowson and Porter-Gehrie (1980) emphasized the many types of problems that principals deal with and how they react to them, and they demonstrated that principals tend to spend most of their time on managerial functions unrelated to instruction. Morris, et. al. (1984) listed different managerial responsibilities as some of the main effects that principals could have on schools.

> The building principal's first responsibility is to harness the unpredictability of the school community. As the one most often in contact with the school's pupil, parent and neighborhood clientele, the principal must maintain an orderly learning environment…Both stabilization and enhancement activities are essential elements of the principalship role…(p. 77)

Some of their findings include cases in which a principal acts as an "'instructional leader,' to encourage new curricula and experimentation, upgrade staff quality, add programs, and alter attitudes," but much of their work focuses on principals' supervision and evaluation of teachers, staff, and students to maintain order within schools. Martinko and Gardner (1990) studied 41 school principals to examine the nature of principals' managerial behaviors and whether or not they varied according to principals' effectiveness and their environmental and demographic surroundings. They found evidence that supported Mintzberg's earlier work which showed that managerial work is "brief, varied, fragmented, and interpersonal" (p. 331) and that it was related to differences in grade level, staff size, location, and socio-economic status, but they found little support for managerial work varying according to principals' level of effectiveness.

Hallinger and Murphy's 1985 assessment of principals' instructional management behavior pointed out this over-emphasis on traditional managerial activities and focused more on the instructional management functions and behaviors of principals. Their conceptualization of instructional management included principals' direct (with student and teachers) and indirect (with school policies, goals, etc.) activities, and their first two findings contrasted with previous work:

(1) Generally, the principals are more actively involved in managing curriculum and instruction than the literature leads the reader to expect. Yet within this one district there is still substantial between-school variation, particularly with respect to specific principal policies, practices, and behaviors.
(2) The principals supervise and evaluate instruction more closely than has been found in previous studies (p. 233).

Their findings that instructional management was more prevalent and more variable than previously reported raised an important question for the field: how much had the prevailing definition of leadership as traditional management biased researchers to

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overlook other behaviors and practices that principals were indeed using? Murphy and

Hallinger concluded their piece with recommendations for further research that examined

both the effects of different instructional management styles and the relationship between

instructional management and different factors such as teacher behavior and school

climate.

The field responded somewhat slowly to their recommendations. As late as 1990

Martinko and Gardner defined their "managerial events" in quite traditional terms

("tours, scheduled meetings, unscheduled meetings, telephone calls, deskwork, travel,

personal, observer interaction, other" p. 339) in their observations of principals. More

complex definitions of practice and behavior have, however, emerged. Leithwood and

Jantzi (1999a) asked their survey participants to rate the extent to which they agreed that

"school administrators (either principal, vice principal, or both) provided organizational

support for teacher interaction, regularly observed classroom activity, worked with

teachers to improve effectiveness after classroom observations, frequently participated in

discussion of educational issues, had a positive influence in the school," (p. 689) and took

other actions that they believed had direct effects on teaching and learning in the school.

Camburn, Rowan, and Taylor (2003) used survey items to measure teacher reports of

instructional leadership, building management functions, and boundary spanning

functions, setting instructional goals, developing instructional capacity, coordinating

curriculum, and monitoring improvement. HLM results of the survey analyses showed

that principals generally engaged in higher levels of leadership practices than individuals

in other positions (such as assistant principals and comprehensive school reform coaches)

but that these other leaders reported almost equal engagements in specific areas (such as

assistant principals in building management). They also reported that various background characteristics such as amount of university coursework in literacy and mathematics were stronger predictors of principals' engagement in instructional leadership practices.

These more recent studies demonstrate that the field has moved from more limited views of leadership defined by traditional supervisory and maintenance roles to the inclusion of practices connected to student and teacher performance. With the inclusion of new behaviors, research has begun to uncover just how principals engage in less traditional management practices and how they can (and do) impact school conditions and student outcomes. The focus on more specific behaviors, as used in recent studies, can help to pinpoint not only what behaviors or actions are most effective by also the mechanisms by which they influence teachers, students, and school communities as a whole.

What Methods Does One Use?

Wolcott's (1973) ethnographic work may represent the deepest study of educational leadership in terms of methodology, sample size (1), and description. After early widespread use of structured observations that followed Mintzberg (1973), the field has employed a wide array of methods to capture educational leadership practice. As this section also shows, many researchers from outside of education (in addition to Mintzberg) have influenced the field of education.

Kmetz & Willower's 1982 study borrowed Mintzberg's structured observations to summarize how five elementary school principals spent their time, and they compared their findings with Martin & Willower's 1981 reports of high school principals. They

were able to show how a small sample of elementary school principals spent their in

organizational maintenance, school program, pupil control, and extra-curricular activities,

and they echoed Mintzberg's report of managers' fragmented work lives: "that picture

includes a high volume of work completed at an unrelenting pace, variety, brevity, and

fragmentation of tasks" (p. 72). Nonetheless, they expressed caution about

generalizability from their small sample size, and they acknowledged some of the

limitations of their work:

> Structured observation is essentially the quantification of work activities. It tells
> us little or nothing about culture, symbols, context, and meaning. It tends to
> ignore the crucial one-time event that might be highly significant in favor of
> repeated trivial ones. Field research in the case study, participant and non-
> participant observation, and ethnographic styles can help fill these gaps. (p. 76)

Martinko and Gardner (1985) also articulated a number of limitations in the extant

structured observations such as small sample sizes, the paucity of inferential statistics

used for formal hypothesis testing in the studies, and theoretical limitations that do not

capture the variability between managerial behavior and environments. They called for

such things as multiple category coding, cross-tabular analysis, complementary

observation methods such as diaries by participants, and activity sampling as approaches

to improve the use of structured observations and to address these shortcomings.

In the business sector, Hales and Tamangani (1996) heeded these

recommendations with a multimethod comparative case study that looked at the

relationship between the nature of managerial work and organizational structure using

interviews, structured observations, documentary evidence, and activity sampling. The

authors argued that previous work suffered from a number of shortcomings: 1)

organizational context (either defined quite narrowly as a specific firm/institution or

broadly as a system of patterned relationships and activities) had often been presented

but seldom used in analysis of data, and 2) the concept of "organization" had often been

reduced to specific variables such as "size" or "centralization" (p. 733). With their

multiple methods of data collection they attempted to capture a more complex picture of

how organizational context related to managerial behavior. They used analysis of

documents and in-depth interviews to capture managers' role expectations, division of

labor, and organizational structure while utilizing structured observations and activity

sampling to collect data on managers' actual work activities. Hales and Tamangani

admitted to the limits of using only four organizations, and they called for work with

larger sample sizes to understand the connection between managerial practices and

organizational context. Nonetheless, their use of multiple methods to obtain a more

complex picture of managers' environments and practices provided an important example

for educational researchers to consider.

Dargie's public-sector work in 1998 provided further commentary on additional

methodologies to improve structured observations. She looked at four and eight private

and public managers respectively using Mintzberg's observational structure along with

interviews and diary log analyses and found differences such as those of the public sector

spending more time in crisis management, daily fire-fighting, and having more scheduled

meetings. While Dargie admitted that her studies' small sample sizes lacked external

validity, she argued that her triangulation of multiple methods (observations, interviews,

and analysis of diary logs) captured a more complex picture of public managers' work.

She did not elaborate further on lessons she gained from employing these methods, but

her findings nonetheless illustrate how additional methods help to inform observational

data, and they bolster the case by Martinko & Gardner (1985) and Hales & Tamangani (1996) for supplementing structured observations.

Survey-based studies with larger sample sizes certainly can make stronger claims to external validity than many of the more narrowly focused studies already cited in this section. However, such survey-based studies have generated mixed findings as they have moved into more complex definitions of leadership. Initial attempts to establish direct connections between leader actions and student outcomes have reported weak or inconclusive outcomes, and only those studies that include mediating factors in their designs have been able to uncover more significant impacts by leaders (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). As summarized previously, only after operationalizing principal and teacher leader effects as mediated by various school conditions were Leithwood & Jantzi (1999a, 1999b) able to find weak but significant principal effects, and no significant teacher leader effects, on student engagement. Studies such as these can make stronger claims to generalizability because of their larger sample sizes, and their methods provide a broader look at reports of leadership practices, but they do not offer closer examinations of how these practices differ from leader to leader, nor do they explore specifically how these practices affect teachers, students, and the overall school atmosphere. As conceptualized thus far, these designs offer powerful descriptive results, but their ability to explain the nature and impacts of leader practices is limited. In reviewing their findings about the impacts of teacher leadership (no effects on student engagement) Leithwood and Jantzi (1999a) reflected on these emerging views of leadership and their place in the research, and this view might well be extended from just teacher leadership to the new, broader models of leadership in general:

The results should not be viewed as surprising, however. Most areas of inquiry touching on school effects have proceeded through an initial phase of enthusiastic advocacy, followed by a phase of largely qualitative research in small number of exceptional cases aimed at better understanding the phenomena, to a more mature phase that includes quantitative testing of overall effects on a large scale…It is probably time the concept of teacher leadership moved into this third phase. (p. 700)

More qualitative works from Firestone, Spillane, Gronn, and others have used findings to argue convincingly for the inclusion of new individuals in the picture of leadership, and more quantitative approaches can benefit from their lead. As the image of "who" a leader is within a school stretches to capture those outside the principalship who also play integral roles in guiding a school, research can offer a more complex picture of not only of how principals affect schools, but also of how other leaders affect both the school and the principal.

Current Affairs, Gaps, and Opportunities Ahead

This paper has thus far attempted to summarize studies and measures of leadership practice both in and outside of education. This last section concludes by identifying some of the remaining gaps and issues in the research that leave opportunity for future work, and it points to more immediate studies that offer examples of the next steps for the field.

First, much debate and discussion remains about the merits of various research methods, and the work included in this paper demonstrates the wide variation in methodology used to examine leadership practice. These differences help to explain the divergent and often contrasting pictures of leaders and leadership that have emerged in the findings. Disagreements over the levels of analysis tend to follow these same lines, as more qualitative researchers emphasize the need to capture deeper, closer pictures of

principal and teacher leader actions to explain practice while those from quantitative approaches question the external validity of such micro-level findings and promote studies that examine practices across a wider range of conditions. Clearly opportunities exist for researchers to begin to reconcile these differences, both through the continued use of mixed- and multiple-methodology studies and research that uses more qualitative approaches to explore the broader trends and patterns within and across schools that quantitative work has reported.

A number of recent studies both within and outside of educational leadership research illustrate the use of mixed-methodologies or relatively new research methods that may help to address some of these issues. The following example comes from an examination of literacy teaching. Rowan, Camburn, and Correnti's 2004 use of teacher logs to measure enacted curriculum included multiple methodologies and raised intriguing questions about the further use of logs to complement such things as observations and traditional survey questionnaires. They argued that traditional surveys often ask participants to report at a single time on events that have happened over long periods of time and that they have often forgotten, and that qualitative studies often sample too little time or too few participants to offer more generalizable pictures of curriculum coverage. Rowan, et. al. used teacher logs administered frequently over the course of an academic year as an additional methodology to third-party observations of classrooms and questionnaires completed by teachers near the end of the academic year. Their design illustrated how participant logs can be used in a complimentary fashion to provide both a broader and deeper look into literacy teaching, and it offers new ideas for research of leadership practice. First, the study included 150 third-grade teachers from

53 elementary schools, a sample much size greater than the more qualitative approaches reviewed in this paper. Second, their use of logs improved the study of this larger sample size by offering closer looks at teaching than traditional surveys and also helping to inform findings from the classroom observations they reported. This work demonstrates one direction that educational leadership researchers might pursue in their attempts to reconcile and address some of the debates over methodology and level of analysis.

Designs such as the one just described may also help to address the need to understand the influence of context on leadership practice. While surveys and questionnaires have offered some insight into how practices may differ across school contexts (see Camburn, et. al. for a comparison of leadership in schools involved—or not—in comprehensive school reform), such studies do not dig deeply into just how those contexts influence leadership. Spillane's 2005 article defined context narrowly by examining leadership within different curricular and subject areas in primary schools, and he argued that "investigations of leadership practice have to pay attention to how social structure is both constitutive of and constituted in practice" (p. 395). Future work in this area can build on recent research by showing not only how practices differ according to context but also how those contexts shape leaders and their actions.

A final issue for the field appears to be the "who" of leadership, as approaches such as "distributed leadership" widen the focus of the research to include more than just the formal leader's within a school or organization. While there are disagreements over exactly how to conceptualize and measure this concept (Heller & Firestone in 1995 define leadership as a set of organizational functions while Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond in 2001 see it as much more practice based, as do Gronn and Hamilton, 2004),

the fact remains that researchers have begun to move past the traditional view of a leader as an individual solely responsible for the various changes or outcomes in schools. Gronn (2003) argues that this move from the "doctrine of exceptionalism" (p. 281) has allowed researchers to view both leadership functions and the organizational structures of schools in more complex ways. Previous reliance on a focus on the individual has missed the integral roles that others outside of formal leadership positions play, and it has often simplified sound organizational practices within a school by attributing effects to a single individual. New research that captures more than just a principal's actions may help to paint a more complex picture of leadership and help to explain just how those leaders influence the school climate and teacher and student measures.

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