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# The Relationship between Distributed Leadership as Practiced by Principals and the Organizational Commitment of Teachers

Gregory Edmond Jacobs

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AS PRACTICED  
BY PRINCIPALS AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OF TEACHERS

by

GREGORY EDMOND JACOBS

(Under the Direction of Linda Arthur)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the degree of the relationship between distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers. Participants in this study were administered an instrument containing two surveys, the revised Affective Commitment Scale (ACS) (Allen & Meyer, 1990) and the Leadership Density Inventory (LDI) (Smith, Ross, & Robichaux, 2004). The ACS was used to assess the participants' level of affective commitment, and the LDI was used to measure the practice of distributed leadership in the participants' schools. The surveys were distributed to teachers in fifteen schools located in four school districts in a rural, South Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) district. The response rate for this study was 84.2%.

A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was used to determine the degree of the relationship between distributed leadership and the affective commitment of teachers. The findings revealed that a moderate, positive relationship existed between the practice of distributed leadership and the affective commitment of teachers. Teachers showed a greater commitment to their schools when leadership was shared among all stakeholders, especially teachers.

INDEX WORDS: Distributed leadership, Organizational commitment, Affective commitment, Educational leadership, Georgia Southern University

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## DEDICATION

This research study is dedicated to my wife, Sherrie Jacobs, and to my three children, Ryan Gregory Jacobs, Grant Redmond Jacobs, and Anna Katherine Jacobs, for their patience and support during this endeavor. I am truly blessed to have such a wonderful family.

I would also like to express many thanks to my in-laws, Ray and Brenda Strickland for their support and kindness.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

21<sup>st</sup> Century school principals can no longer devote most of their time to bells, butts, and buses. Operational tasks which have traditionally rested in the hands of principals have taken a back seat to new demands that include such diverse educational areas as instruction, curriculum, assessment, public relations, and professional development (National Education Association [NEA], 2008). It is virtually impossible to find a single individual who possesses the expertise, let alone time, to direct a school in so many essential areas. As a result, school principals are engaging in the practice of distributed leadership (Hartley, 2007).

Distributed leadership is a means by which principals can utilize the expertise and efforts of teachers and other administrative personnel to improve schools through shared decision making. Hoy and Miskel (2008) reveal that distributed leadership occurs as “multiple individuals and groups substitute or share the responsibilities that have traditionally been attributed to a single individual.” (p. 438). According to Hoy and Miskel distributed leadership is necessary due to the complexity of school organizations and the numerous tasks that are so wide ranging that no single individual has the energy or skills to handle all of the leadership functions. Generally, principals who try to do it all are unable to fully address the many diverse tasks that are expected of them. The school suffers, and the principal’s tenure is greatly decreased due to exhaustion, stress, and poor performance.

In the age of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and standards-based learning, principals face tremendous pressures due to wide-ranging accountability expectations associated with running schools. These pressures along with “the graying of school leadership” have contributed to a potential shortage of school leaders, especially effective school principals (Professional Association of Georgia Educators [PAGE], 2006). As the threat of a school leadership shortage looms on the horizon, school districts are scrambling to identify and develop their leaders of tomorrow. Universities and other leadership development organizations such as the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI) are partnering to help school districts grow their leaders from within their own ranks.

By allowing teachers and other school leaders to contribute in the decision-making processes, principals are able to provide the future leaders of the school with valuable leadership experiences. Distributed leadership allows the teachers with expertise in specific areas of need to have input in the decision-making processes of the school. The affective commitment of teachers in schools that practice distributed leadership is expected to be high since they have ownership of decisions in their schools. Affective commitment is a component of organizational commitment that refers to an employee’s emotional attachment to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). This fact greatly benefits schools since the investment of time, money, and personnel in developing future leaders is secured by the desire of teachers to stay in the organization. The intent of this study is to examine the degree of the relationship as perceived by teachers between distributed leadership as practiced by principals and the affective commitment of teachers.

## Background

There are several reasons that school principals have begun to practice distributed leadership in their schools. This overview of literature examines the reasons that distributed leadership has emerged in many schools: the failure of the charismatic, heroic leader and increasing, complex demands on principals. Following the factors that influence the emergence of distributed leadership, distributed leadership is defined and the roles of principals and teachers in distributed leadership environments are examined. Finally, organizational commitment is defined, and the dimensions of organizational commitment are discussed, with a focus on affective commitment. Antecedents and outcomes associated with organizational commitment are reviewed. A summary of key findings from the literature support the examination into the relationship between distributed leadership and affective commitment.

### *Emergence of Distributed Leadership*

The failure of the charismatic, heroic leader and the increasingly complex demands on principals have led to the emergence of distributed leadership in schools (Hartley, 2007). Evidence from multiple sources indicated that the two were not mutually exclusive (Harris & Spillane, 2008; Hartley, 2007; PAGE, 2006; Specialist Schools Trust [SST], 2005). Findings from these studies suggested that the new and more complex demands on principals have in fact led to the failure of school leaders who attempted to meet all the demands alone.

The characteristics of charismatic leaders have implied a heroic quality. According to Northouse (2007) charismatic leaders were dominant, confident, and founded in strong values. Charismatic leadership has been associated with

transformational leadership (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Northouse). Northouse noted that House considered charismatic leadership synonymous with transformational leadership. Weber defined charisma as “a special personality characteristic that gives a person superhuman or exceptional powers” (Northouse, p. 178). Ghandi and Lincoln were leaders who exuded great charisma and influenced positive change for multitudes. While positive outcomes were often associated with charismatic leadership, there were also potential dangers of abuse of power and single-mindedness (Northouse).

Charismatic school leaders have often captured the attention of the public through news headlines. Joe Clark, the bat wielding principal in New Jersey not only made headlines but he also turned around a toxic school. Many charismatic school leaders have turned around failing schools by setting new expectations for staff and students (PricewaterhouseCoopers [PwC], 2008; SST, 2005). However, Collins (2001) and PwC indicated that the void left by charismatic leaders often resulted in the organization returning to its previous state. As the demands on principals have increased and become more complex, charismatic leaders have struggled to meet the needs of schools.

Since the implementation of NCLB in 2001 the expectations of school leaders have changed. Bossi (2007) indicated that the challenges of the principalship in the early 1980s bear little resemblance to what new educational leaders face today. As noted in the introduction to the Educational Leadership Policy Standards for 2008 by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (2008), the increasing demands of raising student achievement for students in all subgroups, improving instruction, analyzing data, and communicating to parents and community, have led to more complex job descriptions of school administrators. Further, the traditional administrative tasks of managing school



finances, keeping buses running, and hiring teachers have not diminished. An independent study of school leadership in England by PwC (2007) also revealed that the role of school leaders has become more challenging and more complex in recent years due to the complexity and range of administrative tasks. This qualitative study of 50 schools in England and Wales not only brought to light the changing roles of school leaders, but also identified government policies and initiatives such as Every Child Matters (ECM) as key factors for the increasing complexity and range of leadership responsibilities.

Similarly in the United States, NCLB and other state and federal educational initiatives have taken the blame for many of the additional tasks that principals in the United States currently juggle on a daily basis. The new work of schools has become so complex and wide-ranging that even the most charismatic principals can no longer single-handedly lead a school effectively (PAGE, 2006). Images of a singular school superhero have faded. A new paradigm for principals has emerged that includes delegation, instructional leadership, data analysis, staff development, coalitions with staff, parents, and community (Education Writers Association [EWA], 2003). A policy brief from the NEA (2008) also stated that principals need to be educational visionaries and guardians of legal, contractual, and policy mandates.

The NEA (2008) reported that principals have begun to understand the need to transition from their roles as operational managers to instructional leaders and educational reformers, but they were overwhelmed by the number of managerial tasks that consumed their time and attention. PAGE (2006) asserted that the demands on principals today were simply too large and too complex to handle alone. Fullan (2002)

stressed that it was vital for principals, the change agents of the school, to transform the organization through people and teams. Distributed leadership has been identified as a means by which principals can utilize the expertise and efforts of teachers and other administrative personnel to improve the school through shared decision making.

### *Distributed Leadership*

Distributed leadership has emerged over the past few years as one of the hot topics for educational leadership practitioners. Gronn (as cited by Hartley, 2007, p. 202) referred to distributed leadership as “the new kid on the block,” attracting a great deal of attention from school reformers and researchers. Though distributed leadership has been tagged as a relatively new practice in education, distributed leadership has existed in various other arenas for hundreds of years. According to Griffith (1971, p. 90), Sun Tzu stated in *The Art of War*, “To manage a host one must first assign responsibilities to the generals and their assistants, and establish the strengths of ranks and files.” According to Hartley, in England, distributed leadership has received an official endorsement. In the United States distributed leadership was included in new educational leadership standards, school standards, and leadership development programs. The popularity of the notion of sharing leadership responsibilities within an organization has blossomed, especially with the increasing demands and expectations placed on leaders.

Defining distributed leadership has not proven to be an easy task. James Spillane has been at the forefront of the distributed leadership research since the late 1990s. Spillane and his cohorts formed the Distributed Leadership Study in 1998 to investigate and define distributed leadership (Spillane & Sherer, 2004). Spillane stated that distributed leadership was popular, due in part to the fact that it meant different things to

different people. Studies have pointed to the chameleon-like quality of distributed leadership (Harris, 2007). Distributed leadership has often times reflected a re-labeling of more established concepts like “empowerment,” “self-managing,” and “autonomous work groups” (Storey, 2004).

Spillane described distributed leadership in terms of the ways in which leadership was stretched over people and place (Spillane & Sherer, 2004). Several studies noted Spillane’s description of leadership distribution as being stretched over people and place (Harris, 2006; Mangin, 2007). Harris continued by identifying three frames in which to consider distributed leadership: the theoretical frame, the empirical frame, and the normative frame. Penlington, Kington, and Day (2008) described two types of distributed leadership, “decisional distribution” and “consultative distribution,” in their findings from a case study of 20 schools in England. The construct of distributed leadership has evolved as researchers have continued to investigate the factors that define distributed leadership.

#### *Distributed Leadership, Roles and Responsibilities*

The practice of distributed leadership has requirements that the formal and informal leaders of the school work together in addressing the improvement needs of the school. Joseph Murphy, Associate Dean of the College of Education at Vanderbilt, described the emerging role of school leadership as interactive, web-like, collective, and vested in many as opposed to a few (PAGE, 2006). Distributed leadership has revealed the opportunities to allow those with the expertise in specific areas of need to emerge and lead teams to solutions and innovations (MacBeath, 2005). Though all members of the organization have worked collectively to improve the school, the roles of the formal and

informal leaders within the organization have varied due to the circumstances or parties involved (Spillane & Sherer, 2004).

The roles of the formal leaders of the school, especially principals, were documented in several studies (de Lima, 2008; Harris, 2003; Moller & Eggen, 2005; Presthus, 2006). Fullan (2002) referred to the principal of the future--the Cultural Change Principal--as a person who must see the big picture and transform the organization through people and teams. Presthus identified the essential tasks of the principal in distributed leadership practice as the medium through which meaningful information was shared, a culture of care was established, and communication was emphasized. Moller and Eggen recognized the differing distributed leadership characteristics of principals in schools varying in size, geographical location, and socio-economic conditions. McBeath (2005) explored the varying perceptions of distributed leadership from the formal and informal leaders of 11 schools in England. The findings have revealed a great deal about the diverse roles, barriers, and benefits of distributed leadership.

The teachers' roles in distributed leadership practice have not been ignored in the literature. Harris (2003) analyzed the relationship between teacher leadership and distributed leadership; in particular, the relinquishment of power by formal leaders, the internal school structures, and delegation versus distribution. MacBeath (2005) identified key personal traits of teachers, such as trust and acceptance of peers' leadership potential that were required to effectively participate in the practice of distributed leadership.

#### *Organizational Commitment*

While there are a number of models of organizational commitment, Boezeman and Ellemers (2007) asserted that the Allen and Meyer conceptualization of commitment

most clearly defined it as a psychological construct that was independent of the behavioral intentions people may have. Allen and Meyer referred to commitment as a psychological state that bound the individual to the organization. Prior to the work of Allen and Meyer, Wiener (1982) expressed that organizational commitment reflected one's persistence in making sacrifices to the good of the organization. A few years later, Reichers (1985) suggested that organizational commitment was the process of identifying with the goals of an organization's multiple constituencies. However, the work of Allen and Meyer has emerged to form the foundation of most of the research regarding organizational commitment especially their multi-dimensional view of organizational commitment.

Organizational commitment used to be thought of, and researched, as a one-dimensional concept (Finegan, 2000). However, the concept of organizational commitment has evolved to its current understanding as having a tripartite nature including affective commitment, emotional commitment, and continuance commitment (Liou, 2008). Of these three types of organizational commitment, affective commitment has proven to most strongly relate to job performance and attendance. Jaussi (2007) further explained three dimensions of attitudinal commitment that contribute to outcomes within an organization: positive affect for the organization; identification with the organization; and, willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization. Freund and Drach-Zahavy (2007) noted that the affective organizational commitment of nurses was the main motive for effectiveness at work. Such findings have indicated that different professional groups were motivated by different commitments and that senior leadership had to deal with this notion as they sought to unify teams.

*Affective Commitment, Antecedents and Outcomes*

Researchers have discovered many attributes, antecedents, measurements, and outcomes associated with organizational commitment (Liou, 2008). Organizational culture, job involvement, salary, workplace climate, and job satisfaction were found in the literature as predictors or outcomes of organizational commitment (Freund & Drach-Zahavy, 2007; Ma & MacMillan, 1999; Schroder, 2008; Sikorska-Simmons, 2005). The studies by Freund and Drach-Zahavy and Sikorska-Simmons were conducted in healthcare fields and included community clinic staff and assisted living staff as participants. Sikorska-Simmons revealed that job satisfaction and organizational culture were strong predictors of organizational commitment for assisted living staff. Freund and Drach-Zahavy reported that the organizational commitment of community clinic workers including physicians, nurses, and office staff produced effective teamwork in the clinics. Schroder investigated the predictors of organizational commitment for faculty and administrators of a private Christian university. He related the importance of six significant predictors of organizational commitment including: organizational policy, work itself, religious commitment, salary, working conditions, and achievement.

The organizational commitment of school employees has received attention in the research community. Nguni, Slegers, and Denessen (2006) investigated the effects of transformational and transactional leadership on primary teachers' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational behavior. The study, conducted in Tanzania, revealed that transformational leadership dimensions had strong effects on organizational commitment. Yilmaz (2008) reported a positive correlation between the loneliness levels of Turkish principals and the compliance levels of organizational

commitment. A study by Hulpia and Devos (2009) investigated the relationship between job satisfaction, a predictor of organizational commitment, and distributed leadership. The results indicated that the job satisfaction of school leaders was significantly related to the use of a school leadership team. The study also revealed that the amount of formal distribution of leadership roles to teachers did not have a significant influence on the school leaders' job satisfaction. Wu and Short (1996) sought to determine the relationships between teacher empowerment, job satisfaction and job commitment of teachers in a northeastern state. Findings from the study indicated that teachers' perceptions of their level of empowerment were significantly related to their perceptions of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Storey (2004) noted that teacher empowerment and distributed leadership were often defined by each other. Studies revealed relationships between distributed leadership and job satisfaction, and between job satisfaction and organizational commitment in various fields, including education. However, to date, few if any studies have sought to determine the degree of the relationship between distributed leadership as practiced by school principals and the affective commitment of teachers in rural, southern schools.

An argument can be made for principals to practice distributed leadership as new and increasing demands on principals reduce the effectiveness of singular, charismatic school leaders. Principals have a responsibility to build a committed community of teachers and leaders who promote continuous improvement. Distributed leadership is a practice that principals can use to build cohesive teams of teachers who are able to meet the ever-increasing expectations placed on schools for increasing student achievement.

Increasing the leadership capacity of a school by practicing distributed leadership ensures a committed organization capable of sustaining continuous improvement.

#### Statement of the Problem

Though much work has been done in defining and investigating various aspects of distributed leadership and organizational commitment, there appear to be few studies linking the two constructs together. The importance of determining the relationship between distributed leadership and organizational commitment is necessitated by the fact that formal leaders of schools are often chosen from the ranks of teachers within the school. Teachers are part of the team for administrative positions. Research indicates that opportunities for teachers to gain leadership experiences are present in schools in which the principal practices distributed leadership.

Distributed leadership is a popular topic in today's educational climate. With principals facing increasing and diverse demands on their time, the era of the charismatic, superhero principal has passed. Effective principals are leading teams of teachers in meeting the new demands of school leadership such as instruction, assessment, data analysis, and community planning. The teachers possess the skills and expertise in these areas to solve problems and meet school goals. The leadership experiences that teachers gain when school decisions are spread over multiple people assist in the development of leadership skills and promote leadership aspirations in teachers for future roles as formal leaders within their schools. As a result of practicing distributed leadership, principals ensure an environment of continuous improvement due to the sustainability of leadership within these schools.



Succession planning for school leadership positions is feasible if teachers within the school are committed to the school, interested in formal leadership positions, and prepared for such leadership roles by experiencing leadership opportunities through distributed leadership. Organizational commitment is found to have three dimensions with the affective component addressing an individual's desire to stay with the organization because they want to be there. The fact that teachers want to stay and be a part of a school's decision-making process may lead to sustainable leadership and increase the leadership capacity within schools. Future leader vacancies are able to be met from within the school, and districts do not have to fear a shortage of school leaders.

Affective commitment and distributed leadership affect many aspects of an organization. Both constructs have been tied to job satisfaction for employees in multiple fields, including education. Studies have shown job satisfaction to be a predictor of affective commitment and an outcome of distributed leadership; however, the literature fails to provide evidence of affective commitment of teachers being related to distributed leadership as practiced by school principals. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the degree of the relationship as perceived by teachers between distributed leadership as practiced by principals and the affective commitment of teachers.

#### Research Question

Many school districts seek to fill leadership positions from within their own organization. For school districts to maintain a supply of aspiring school leaders, teachers within the schools must be committed to staying in the organization until formal leadership positions become available. Distributed leadership is a practice that principals may use to not only provide teachers with valuable leadership experiences, but also to

increase their commitment to the organization. To complete this research study, the following overarching research question was answered. What is the degree of the relationship as perceived by teachers between distributed leadership as practiced by principals and the affective commitment of teachers?

#### Importance of the Study

This study will allow the participants to reflect upon the degree to which distributed leadership practices are employed in their schools. Participants will also be afforded the opportunity to reflect upon their commitment to their school as influenced by shared leadership experiences. The school administration and teachers will benefit from the study as they are able to assess the implementation of distributed leadership and determine if both groups are on the same page in terms of the extent of implementation. The results of the study may provide schools the impetus to implement distributed leadership at deeper levels.

Educational leaders are keenly aware of the importance of continuous school improvement. As the educational environment changes due to shifts in student populations, challenging legislation, and financial uncertainty, principals find it a tremendous challenge to manage school improvement initiatives, maintain staff morale, and retain valuable staff members. Distributed leadership may prove to be a key ingredient in the aforementioned management issues. The organizational commitment of teachers tends to align with the staff morale and retention. Educational leaders who wish to grow their own leaders may benefit greatly from knowing that the organizational commitment of their teachers may be increased through the practice of distributed leadership.

Serving as assistant superintendent, this researcher is responsible for school improvement and professional learning, so it is very important to the researcher to see if the district is receiving a return on its investment of time and money in distributed leadership training and implementation. It is essential that schools practice distributed leadership since distributed leadership principles are found throughout the state of Georgia's school standards, the School Keys. Finally, maintaining a supply of committed, aspiring leaders in the district is a priority. If distributed leadership practices can engage the informal leaders and formal leaders in the school decision-making process and increase their commitment to the organization, then district leaders need to support the deeper development of distributed leadership practices throughout the district.

## Method

### *Research Design*

To determine the degree of the relationship as perceived by teachers between distributed leadership as practiced by principals and the affective commitment of teachers, the researcher employed a correlational research design. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), correlational research was used to discover relationships between variables by using correlational statistics. The relationship to be determined in this study focused on two variables: the practice of distributed leadership by principals and the affective commitment of teachers.

### *Sample and Sampling*

The sample for this correlational study was drawn from a population of teachers in a rural, South Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) district. Teachers included in the population had a Georgia Teaching Certificate with varying

levels of experience and certificate levels. The size of the population was approximately 2,000 teachers; therefore, the sample to be selected included 595 teachers from four school districts in a rural, South Georgia RESA district. Teachers from at least one elementary school, a middle school, and a high school made up the sample from each district. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) recommended a minimum sample size of 30 for correlational research.

Convenience sampling was used to select the sample from the population.

Convenience sampling was defined by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) as a means to select a sample that suited the purpose of the study and that was convenient. Convenience referred to a variety of reasons: the sample was located close to the researcher; the researcher was familiar with the sites; or, the researcher had access to the sample through individuals who were known to the researcher. Schools from which participants were selected were chosen based on the closeness of the schools to the researcher and the access that was granted to the researcher from school district leaders.

### *Instrumentation*

Participants in this study were administered an instrument containing two surveys: the revised Affective Commitment Scale (ACS) (Allen & Meyer, 1990) and the Leadership Density Inventory (LDI) (Smith, Ross, & Robichaux, 2004). The ACS was used to assess the participants' level of affective commitment, and the LDI was used to measure the extent of distributed leadership in the participants' schools. The instrument was divided into two sections, one containing the six items of the ACS and the other containing the 16 items of the LDI.

The researcher gained permission from the University of Western Ontario to use the academic version of Allen's and Meyer's revised Affective Commitment Scale. Included in the first section were six items on a seven-point Likert scale to which participants responded regarding their affective commitment to their organization. Three of the items were reverse-keyed. The seven-point Likert scale ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The validity and reliability of the Affective Commitment Scale were reported in a study by Allen and Meyer (1990).

The researcher gained permission from Dr. Roy Wade Smith to use the Leadership Density Inventory. The LDI was developed by Smith, Ross, & Robichaux (2004) to measure levels of distributed leadership in schools. Leadership density according to Smith et al. was the purposeful role taking on the part of organizational members, either individually or collectively, which moved the organization towards accomplishment of stated goals. The validity and reliability were established through expert panel review, a pilot study, and internal reliability calculations. The original LDI was condensed from 31 items to 16 items.

The second section of the research instrument included 16 items from the revised LDI. Participants responded on the seven-point Likert scale to the items regarding the practice of distributed leadership in their schools. According to Smith, Ross, & Robichaux (2004) the seven-point Likert scale ranged from never (1) to always (7). Three factors emerged in the LDI including teacher leadership density (7 items), student leadership density (5 items), and leadership opportunity (4 items). An average score for the sixteen items was calculated to represent the level of distributed leadership practiced from the perception of each teacher.

### *Data Collection*

After the approval of Georgia Southern's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained by the researcher, data for the study was collected. The researcher gained permission from district superintendents to select schools from within a district to make up the sample. The researcher provided the survey instrument to the superintendents for review. Upon approval from the superintendent the researcher contacted school principals asking for permission to survey teachers and asking the principals for a point of contact to administer the surveys to teachers. All principals contacted agreed to participate in the study. Points of contact were asked to distribute the surveys in a grade level or faculty meeting. The teachers completed the surveys and returned the completed surveys to the points of contact in sealed envelopes that were provided by the researcher. The researcher collected the completed surveys from the points of contact. There were no follow-ups due to the high response rate.

### *Data Analysis*

To determine the degree of the relationship that existed between the practice of distributed leadership and the affective commitment of teachers, the Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was used. Spearman *rho* was considered a special case of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) which was the most used measure of relationships in correlational research (Harris, 1998). Pearson  $r$  was used to determine relationships when the variables were continuous and the data was collected on an interval or ratio scale (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Spearman *rho* was used to compute relationships with ordinal data (Harris).

The Spearman *rho* was used to determine the degree of the relationship between distributed leadership as practiced by principals and the affective commitment of teachers since Likert responses were used to gather data. Likert responses were described as ordinal data (Coladarci, Cobb, Minium, & Clarke, 2008) thus a nonparametric test had to be used to compute the relationship. Pearson *r* was a parametric test which assumed a number of characteristics about the parameters of the population. Nonparametric tests were used when fewer assumptions about the population were made (Harris). Convenience sampling, such as was used in this study, required a nonparametric test; therefore, Spearman *rho* was used in this study.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to calculate and report the Spearman *rho* for this study. To interpret the Spearman *rho*, the researcher first decided whether or not it was statistically significant by using the two-tailed values of significance (Harris, 1998). Significance was determined at the .001 level. Once significance was established, a positive *rho* meant that higher ranks on one variable were associated with higher ranks on the other variable, and larger absolute values of *rho* indicated a stronger relationship between the variable (Harris).

#### Limitations/ Delimitations

##### *Limitations*

The researcher encountered several limitations while conducting this study. Since the sample for this study was drawn from schools located in a rural, South Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) district, the study may not be generalizable to schools found outside the RESA district. Secondly, taking the time to read and respond honestly to each item on the survey may not have been a high priority

for respondents due to the numerous tasks and responsibilities that teachers had throughout the school day. In addition, due to the number of schools represented in the sample, the researcher was not able to administer the surveys at each site. A point of contact was identified and was responsible for distributing and collecting surveys from the respondents. As a result, questions from the respondents regarding the survey may not have been addressed correctly by the point of contact. Finally, results could have been influenced by responses from teachers who had been at a school for less than one year.

### *Delimitations*

The researcher defined distributed leadership based on one of many definitions from the literature. Numerous researchers had attempted to define distributed leadership; however, a single definition was needed to focus the study and align survey items. In order to efficiently manage the collected data, the survey only included Likert responses, and open-ended responses were not included. In addition, the scope of the study was narrowed through the selection of a sample that only included teachers from schools in a rural, South Georgia RESA district. Finally, convenience sampling was used, and participating schools were chosen based on the closeness of the schools to the researcher.

### Definition of Terms

The terms that needed to be defined for the purpose of this study were defined through the work of previous researchers, or through operational definitions derived by this researcher.

*Affective commitment.* The emotional attachment of an individual to an organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990).



*Distributed leadership.* Distributed leadership occurs when multiple individuals and groups substitute or share the leadership responsibilities that have traditionally been in the hands of one person (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

*Formal school leaders.* Formal school leaders are individuals in schools who hold recognized leadership positions such as principal, assistant principal, department chair, or instructional coach.

*Informal school leaders.* Informal school leaders are individuals in school who do not hold specified leadership positions but do exert influence in the decision-making processes of the school, such as teachers.

*Organizational commitment.* Organizational commitment refers to the degree of commitment that workers have for their organization.

### Summary

Distributed leadership is a means by which principals ensure continuous school improvement. With effective principals leaving their positions for a variety of reasons, school leaders have to increase the leadership capacity from within the ranks of their teachers to ensure a continuous supply of candidates for vacated formal leadership positions. The teachers' commitment to their schools is vital to the maintenance of the supply of aspiring leaders within a school. The purpose of this study was to determine if distributed leadership as practiced by principals influenced the affective commitment of teachers working in schools in rural, South Georgia. A correlational study was the vehicle by which a questionnaire was presented that addressed the two variables, distributed leadership as practiced by principals and organizational commitment of teachers. Convenience sampling was employed to gather data from a sample of teachers in a rural,

South Georgia RESA district. The statistical software that was used by the researcher to calculate the Spearman *rho* correlational coefficient was SPSS. The results and findings from the analysis of the responses to the questionnaires determined the degree of the relationship as perceived by teachers between the distributed leadership practices in their building and the affective commitment of the teachers.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

Increased demands on principals' time and attention have led the most effective principals to create learning communities where tasks are distributed between the various stakeholders in the building (Professional Association of Georgia Educators [PAGE], 2006). Distributed leadership is practiced in schools throughout the world, and the results of the distributed practices are driving school improvement initiatives (PricewaterhouseCoopers [PwC], 2007). Maintaining a supply of formal school leaders is essential to sustaining school improvement (Fullan, 2005). Since formal school leaders often come from the ranks of teachers it is essential that teachers are committed to their schools. A committed supply of potential leaders ensures the continued momentum of effective school improvement practices. Chapter II examines the research relating to the beliefs and practice of distributed leadership and the concept of organizational commitment. Selected literature includes (a) emergence of distributed leadership (b) distributed leadership (c) distributed leadership, roles and responsibilities (d) organizational commitment (e) affective commitment, antecedents and outcomes. A summary of the research relating to distributed leadership and organizational commitment concludes the chapter.

#### *Emergence of Distributed Leadership*

Several studies have indicated that distributed leadership is not new to the world of education. In fact Storey (2004) suggested that distributed leadership may simply reflect a re-labeling of established concepts such as self-managing, autonomous work groups, empowerment, and democracy. Storey further stated that distributed leadership

and shared leadership tend to be used interchangeably. Shared leadership was found in the early school systems as principals faced the intense challenges of financial accountability as a result of the efficiency movement (Callahan, 1962). As principals worked to manage the resources of the school to ensure financial efficiency, teachers worked together to make instructional decisions. Storey also referred to Bryman's explanation that lateral leadership occurred when organizational participants acted as equals. However, most of the research regarding distributed leadership has originated in the late 1990s and beyond.

Reasons for the recent emergence of distributed leadership have varied, but according to Hartley (2007) two reasons stood out in the literature: the failure of the charismatic hero and the increasing and complex demands placed on principals. Evidence in the literature indicated the two aforementioned reasons were not independent of one another (Harris & Spillane, 2008; Hartley, 2007; PAGE, 2006; Specialist Schools Trust [SST], 2005). These studies revealed that the increasing number and complexity of demands on principals have resulted in the failure of school leaders who displayed the characteristics of a charismatic hero.

Transformational leadership has been defined as the process by which a leader engaged others and created a connection that increased the motivation and morality of both the leader and the followers (Northouse, 2008). Northouse traced the origin of the concept of transformational leadership back to the 1970s when James Burns attempted to link the roles of leadership and followership. Idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration were the four I's that comprised transformational leadership (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Transformational

leadership has helped followers achieve unusually high performance outcomes. Burns identified Ghandi as a classical example of a transformational leader who raised the hopes of millions and in the process was changed himself.

Northouse (2007) also identified several criticisms of transformational leadership that potentially contributed to less than hoped for results in schools. Critics have argued that transformational leaders were elitist and antidemocratic. The transformational leader played a direct role in the change process and was viewed as acting independently without the input of followers. The needs of the followers were perceived to be subordinate to the needs of the leader. This has led to an associated criticism that the work of the followers of heroic, charismatic leaders was ignored by the stakeholders and the influence of the followers on the leader was not recognized. Finally, transformational leadership has been subject to abuse. Since values were a key influence in transformational leadership the determination of good and appropriate change and direction was subjective to the leader.

Around the same time that Burns published his ideas on transformational leadership, House published a theory of charismatic leadership (Northouse, 2007). Northouse noted that charismatic leadership was described by House in such a way that it was considered similar to transformational leadership. According to Northouse (p. 178), charisma was defined by Weber as “a special personality characteristic that gives a person superhuman or exceptional powers and is reserved for a few, is of divine nature, and results in the person being treated as a leader.” Northouse summarized House’s description of charismatic leaders’ characteristics, behaviors, and effects on followers. Characteristics of charismatic leaders included dominant, confident, and strong values.

Acting as a strong role model, showing competence, articulating goals, communicating high expectations, and expressing confidence were reported behaviors indicative of charismatic leaders. Finally, charismatic leaders evoked the following effects on followers: trust in leader's ideology, unquestioning acceptance, affection toward leader, obedience, emotional involvement, heightened goals, and increased confidence. The characteristics of charismatic leaders have implied a heroic quality embodied by real-life school leaders.

In the 1980s, Joe Louis Clark transformed Eastside High School in New Jersey from a toxic learning environment to a school that became a source of pride for the community. Joe Clark joined the ranks of charismatic, heroic school leaders who have turned around failing schools by setting new expectations for staff and students (SST, 2005). Oduro (2004) argued that traditionally the idea of school leadership has rested in the hands of a single individual. Oduro further explained that the perfect leader in this setting was a headmaster who demonstrated heroic features such as authority, courage, confidence, and the capacity to make things right. The actions of heroic school leaders have captured the attention of the media, researchers, and policy makers which in turn reinforced the idea that leadership was primarily a singular activity (Harris, 2007). According to Harris the accomplishments of charismatic educational leaders were well documented and reported; however, the rest of the story indicated that for every successful story of the superhero leader there were stories of failure.

Jim Collins (2001, p. 72) wrote "the moment a leader allows himself to become the primary reality people worry about, rather than reality being the primary reality, you have a recipe for mediocrity, or worse." This was one of the failings of charismatic

leadership. Collins further explained that it was for this reason that less charismatic leaders often produced better long-term results than more charismatic leaders. Single, heroic leaders have failed to develop leadership at all levels thus condemning the school to return to a past state of poor performance when the charismatic leader left. SST (2005) also identified the return to a previous state for transformed schools as a result of the lack of succession planning and over-reliance on the individual's leadership. The limitations of the heroic, charismatic leader to secure sustainable change for continuous school improvement was a major weakness of charismatic leadership and resulted in interests of an alternative form of leadership that ensures sustainability. Thus Michael Fullan (2005) concluded that a critical mass of leaders at all levels of the system was needed to ensure sustainability, particularly leaders who were working on developing leaders beyond themselves.

New and increasingly complex demands on principals have contributed not only to the failure of the charismatic hero school leader, but also to the emergence of distributed leadership practices in schools (Hartley, 2007). Conforming to the charismatic hero model of school leadership has contributed to excessive workloads and pressures on individuals (PwC, 2007). According to Gale Hulme, the demands on principals were simply too large and too complex to do alone (PAGE, 2006). Harris and Spillane (2008) concurred in that the work of leadership in today's schools required diverse types of expertise to meet the new challenges and demands. Old school structures were found to inadequately support the new requirements of learning in the twenty-first century.

The signing of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 ushered in the age of high stakes accountability, and changed everything for principals (Southern Regional

Education Board [SREB], 2001). Academic accountability measures have been to principals in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century what financial accountability measures were to principals in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. According to Callahan (1962) the scientific management movement of the early 1900s first brought financial efficiency concerns to the forefront of business and then education. Principals with no financial expertise were suddenly expected to run schools in an efficient manner that required new and increasing demands on their time. During the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, legislation has forced principals to take on new, complex tasks that focus on student achievement and the instruction that supports student learning.

The job descriptions of principals have changed every year as a result of new workplace demands. Principals have continued to execute the managerial tasks of running schools, but now they must also become instructional leaders, data analysts, community relations experts, and change agents (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2008). The NEA (2008) also reported that principals were also expected to be educational visionaries in their spare time. Similarly, Fullan (2002) argued that principals are cultural change agents in their building. As a conceptual thinker who defined the big picture for the school, the principal ensured that the vision for the school was set.

*The Metlife Survey of the American Teacher, 2003* provided a comprehensive examination of school leadership in America (Metlife, 2003). The study included responses from 1, 017 public school teachers, 800 public school principals, and 1, 107 parents. Students also participated in the study. The focus of the study was to determine the priorities and responsibilities of principals from the perspective of teachers, parents, students, and teachers. An interesting finding from the study indicated that there was a



disconnect between teachers and principals in terms of how principals spent their day and the priorities of principals. According to the Metlife survey, teachers believed that test scores were the highest priority for principals while principals indicated that motivating students and teachers was their highest priority. Teachers believed that principals spent 37% of their time reporting and complying with federal, state, and local accountability issues, but principals indicated that 35% of their time was spent on motivating teachers and only 24% of their time reporting and complying with federal, state, and local accountability issues. Motivating teachers and complying with accountability requirements occupied more than 50% of a principal's work day. These tasks were very different from the traditional operational and managerial tasks that not so long ago dominated a principal's day to day responsibilities (Callahan, 1962).

Similar to *The Metlife Survey of the American Teacher, 2003*, results from a comprehensive study of school leadership in England and Wales verified the increasing and more complex demands facing the leaders of schools throughout the world (PwC, 2007). The extensive leadership study which was conducted in the summer and fall of 2006 used qualitative and quantitative research methods. Stakeholder interviews, fifty schools visits which included interviews of headteachers and teachers on the leadership team, and focus groups made up the qualitative component of the study. The study team distributed questionnaires to 3,750 schools in England and Wales. The combined data from the interviews, focus groups, school visits, and questionnaires provided an in depth exploration into the roles, responsibilities, structures, and reward systems for school leaders in England and Wales.

The executive summary from the study of school leadership in England and Wales revealed that school leaders reported that their jobs have become more challenging due to the complexity and range of tasks that are required (PwC, 2007). Headteachers identified the key roles and responsibilities that they were expected to fulfill as setting the strategic direction of the school, managing teaching and learning, developing and managing people, managing operational tasks, and meeting accountability requirements. Interviews with headteachers and teachers comprising the senior leadership team conclusively revealed that headteachers were struggling to meet all the demands currently placed on them. According to the PwC study, headteachers' frustration over insufficient time to address strategic direction and teaching and learning were evident. As in American schools, accountability joined operational and managerial tasks in dominating the attention of the lead administrator. In an interview from the PwC study (p. 10), one headteacher from a small, rural primary school, revealed "I spend time unblocking the loo...that sort of thing."

The leadership study in England and Wales provided multiple quantitative measures to support the assertion of increasing demands and changing roles of the school leader (PwC, 2007). Accountability issues occupied most of the headteachers' time (88% of secondary headteachers to 81% of primary headteachers). The Children Act 2004 has served as the legislation that supported England's Every Child Matters (ECM) program. ECM involved school reform and accountability initiatives designed to support multiple facets of student growth (PwC). As a result of ECM and the Children Act 2004, it was not a surprise that accountability demands linked to government initiatives have increased in the last five years. Compared to five years ago, primary headteachers and secondary

headteachers have reported dealing more with bureaucracy (92% / 82%), implementation of government initiatives (87% / 83%), and business management (75% / 66%). The average work week of headteachers also reflected the increasing demands on school leaders. Primary heads reported working an average of 54 hours per week and secondary heads 65 hours per week. Researchers in the PwC study argued that the long work week was linked to the increasing number and complexity of administrative tasks.

As a result of the exhaustive study of school leadership in England and Wales, PwC researchers provided numerous recommendations to enhance school leadership. Recommendations regarding accountability suggested that policy and practice need to be reviewed to facilitate greater distributed leadership. This recommendation was not unexpected as distributed leadership was officially endorsed by the British government (Hartley, 2007). The PwC survey of school leaders indicated a strong use of distributed leadership in the areas of special education needs and curriculum with primary and secondary headteachers managing only 48% and 18% respectively of curriculum tasks and 23% and 4% respectively of special education needs. Distributing responsibilities regarding accountability practices was a suggestion to reduce the increasing demands on a school leaders' time.

Increasing and more complex demands on principals as well as the failure of the charismatic hero school leader have contributed to the emergence of distributed leadership in schools (Hartley, 2007). Distributed leadership was not a new concept, but the heavy demands on principals and the lack of sustainability associated with charismatic, heroic leadership have catalyzed the popularity of distributed leadership. Accountability tasks were reported to be present in today's schools as a result of legislation, and these new,

complex responsibilities were demanding significant attention from school leaders (Metlife, 2003; PwC, 2007). As the new tasks have been added to principals' responsibilities, operational and managerial tasks have continued to occupy a great deal of school leaders' time. Distributed leadership has been suggested as a medium for principals to distribute leadership tasks among teachers and staff depending on the nature of the task and the expertise of the staff members.

### *Distributed Leadership*

Defining distributed leadership was an essential task due to its close affiliation with other leadership models. Democratic leadership, dispersed leadership, collaborative leadership, and shared leadership were proximate terms linked to distributed leadership (Oduro, 2004; Storey, 2004). According to Hartley (2007, p. 203) James Spillane, the founder of the Distributed Leadership Study, noted that "the appeal of distributed leadership lies in the ease with which it can become all things to all people." Harris and Spillane (2008) indicated that using terms interchangeably with distributed leadership was a limitation and resulted in conceptual confusion and conceptual overlap. There was fear that distributed leadership may become a "catch all" term for any form of devolved, shared, or dispersed leadership practice.

To isolate distributed leadership from a synonymous term such as shared leadership, distributed leadership first had to be defined and then the theory and practice supporting the definition had to be analyzed. Defining distributed leadership was a logical start. There were several definitions found in the literature ranging from simple to complex; however there were some common features within the definitions which

included multiple individuals and leadership tasks (Albert Shanker Institute [ASI], 2000; Hoy & Miskel, 2008; PAGE, 2006; Spillane & Sherer, 2004; SST, 2005).

Distributed leadership was defined as simply engaging many people in leadership activity (SST, 2005). Distributed leadership existed when multiple individuals substituted or shared the leadership responsibilities that have traditionally rested in the hands of a single individual (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). ASI (2000) emphasized that distributed leadership was organizing diverse competencies of the staff into a coherent whole to complete the work of the school. PAGE (2006) defined distributed leadership as the engagement of teams of teachers with their own expertise in addressing shared improvement goals. Leadership activity was distributed in the interactive web of leaders, followers, and situation that gave form to the leadership activity (Spillane & Sherer, 2004). A summary report by the National College for School Leadership (2003) echoed the essential characteristics found in the preceding definitions (1). Distributed leadership is a group activity working through and within relationships (2). Many people are involved in the leadership activity than might traditionally be assumed (3). Distributed leadership draws on the variety of expertise in the organization to complete ongoing, diverse organizational tasks.

Based on the definitions of distributed leadership, how was distributed leadership differentiated from shared leadership or any of the other proximate leadership terms? Shared leadership existed as a social process built around trust, openness, and concern (Miller, 2008; Oduro, 2004). Miller's mixed methods study on shared leadership in a school district examined the effect of trust and openness on the shared leadership initiative in the school district. Findings from the study indicated that trust was a major

component to the success of shared leadership initiatives. Like distributed leadership, shared leadership also encompassed the completion of tasks by organizational members other than formal leaders (PAGE, 2006). However, PAGE asserted that distributed leadership differed from shared leadership in that the practice of distributed leadership matched expertise with leadership work that made a difference in student achievement and organizational effectiveness. The degree of engagement of faculty differentiated distributed leadership from shared leadership. PAGE reported shared leadership involved responsibilities simply being shared with others in the building where distributed leadership involved leaders creating an environment for professionals to work and learn together to create a synergy greater than the sum of individual efforts (as cited in Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003).

The focus of distributed leadership on the expertise of others in completing tasks for the organization was a key difference in distributed leadership and democratic leadership (ASI, 2000; PAGE, 2006). Oduro (2004) summarized the characteristics of democratic leadership: leader interacts and encourages others to participate in leadership tasks, wide-spread sharing of information and power, enhancement of the self-worth of others, and energizing others for the tasks. These characteristics did not separate democratic leadership from distributed leadership, but the focus on the expertise of the individuals and their assignment to specific tasks based on their expertise did clearly mark a difference in democratic leadership and distributed leadership (ASI). Dispersed leadership and collaborative leadership, much like democratic leadership, shared leadership, and distributed leadership emphasized that leadership is not a monopoly of one person (Oduro). But these concepts also differed from distributed leadership in the

dynamic interactions of individuals with specific expertise to complete specific tasks (Timperley, 2005). Formal leadership was not a key component of dispersed or collaborative leadership whereas in distributed leadership, formal leaders were an integral part of the leadership process (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). The subtle differences in the defining characteristics of distributed leadership and other leadership models led to the blurring of concepts. Analyzing the theory and practice of distributed leadership as described by various researchers has provided additional support for the delineation of distributed leadership from other proximate leadership terms.

As SST (2005) noted, distributed leadership was not new. The National College for School Leadership introduced distributed leadership on its website by stating “Distributed leadership is not a new idea. It has been around for a long time, either as delegated or as shared leadership” (Hartley, 2007, p. 203). Though arguments have existed that distributed leadership has been around for quite some time in one form or another, it was certain that distributed leadership has come to the forefront of school leadership over the last decade (ASI, 2000; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001; SST, 2005). Spillane’s definition and theory of distributed leadership have formed the foundation of much of the practice and research of distributed leadership since 1998 when he began the Distributed Leadership Study (ASI, 2000; Hartley, 2007; PAGE, 2006; Penlington, Kington, & Day, 2008; Sherer, 2008; SST, 2005). Spillane’s theoretical underpinnings of distributed leadership focused on three fundamental components: the leaders, the followers, and the situation (Penlington et al.).

Spillane’s distributed leadership theory was derived from distributed cognition and activity theory (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Spillane et al. asserted that

distributed cognition and activity theory underscore the importance of social context as a key component of intelligent activity. The interdependence of the individual and the environment revealed how human activity was distributed in the web of actors, artifacts, and the situation. Spillane and Sherer (2004) argued that the work in distributed cognition and sociocultural activity theories have been key to understanding human actions in complex and emergent situations. Spillane and associates leaned to Vygotsky's work that the practice or activity, not the individual, was the basic unit of analysis. Therefore, the basis for Spillane's distributed leadership theory has evolved from the idea that leadership was stretched over people and place with the situation of the leadership practice influenced by the sociocultural context. The interactive web of leaders, followers, and situation formed the foundation of Spillane's distributed leadership theory (Spillane & Sherer). Spillane and Sherer asserted that each element of the distributed leadership theory -leaders, followers, and situation- was a prerequisite for leadership activity.

Spillane's distributed leadership theory was supported through the ongoing research initiative, the Distributed Leadership Study that began in 1998 in Chicago (Spillane & Sherer, 2004). The longitudinal study included observations, interviews, and videotaping of leadership practices in eight Chicago elementary schools. The researchers analyzed the massive amount of data to determine if patterns existed in leadership practice.

A clear distinction was found to exist between leaders and followers in distributed leadership practice (Spillane & Sherer, 2004). The empirical data collected through the Distributed Leadership Study indicated that both teachers and administrators constructed others as leaders in various leadership activities. Spillane and Sherer noted (as cited by



Gronn, 1994) that some scholars question the distinction of leaders-followers when leadership was defined as a social influence relationship. Individuals with formal leadership positions such as principals, assistant principals, coordinators, or grade level chairs were often seen as leaders in certain situations. But situations also existed where those in formal leadership positions were followers, and individuals in informal leader roles such as teachers and staff members were taking the lead. Spillane and Sherer revealed that individuals moved between the roles of leaders and followers making it necessary to distinguish between the two.

Spillane (2004) explained that leadership was typically portrayed as something that was done to followers. From the distributed leadership perspective this was a problem since followers co-produced leadership practice with their interactions with leaders. Spillane identified the interactions of formal leaders (principal, literacy coordinator) and teachers in a literacy instruction meeting at Adams Elementary School. The principal and literacy coordinator presented goals, standards, and issues revealing to the staff the big picture of literacy instruction at Adams Elementary School. The teachers then provided specific literacy teaching strategies to meet the goals, standards, and issues. The plan for literacy instruction was constructed through the interactions of the leaders and followers in the school. Spillane noted that this was an example of leadership practice stretched over leaders and followers. The leaders and followers played off of each other to produce results. Spillane related the interactions of leaders and followers to the interdependency of partners doing the Texas Two-Step, or if there were larger numbers of people, square dancing.

Results from the Distributed Leadership Study revealed that leadership practice may be stretched over two or more individuals in three ways: collaborated distribution, collective distribution, and coordinated distribution (Spillane, 2004; Spillane & Sherer, 2004). Collaborated distribution referred to one leader's practice becoming the basis of another leader's practice. An interaction among leaders resulted in the reciprocal interdependency of the actions. Collective distribution denoted the stretching of leadership practices over the practice of two or more leaders working separately but interdependently toward a shared goal. The interdependent activities generated the leadership practice. Spillane noted that the evaluation of teachers by a principal and assistant principal at Ellis Elementary was an observed practice of collective distribution. The assistant principal made daily rounds informally evaluating teachers, and the principal completed the summative evaluation through formal observations and input from the assistant principals. Finally, coordinated distribution identified leadership practice resulting when different leadership tasks had to be completed in a particular order to execute a leadership function. Spillane explained that a five-week assessment cycle to identify instructional problems and establish instructional priorities was an example of coordinated distribution. Test data had to be analyzed before instructional needs and priorities were established. There was a sequential arrangement of activities over which the leadership practice was stretched.

The third component of Spillane's distributed leadership theory targeted the situation (Spillane & Sherer, 2004). The situation was dictated by the organizational routines and structures, material artifacts, and tools. School leadership depended on the tools, routines, and structures to shape leadership practice. Spillane and Sherer noted that

the situation was the medium and the outcome of the leadership activity. The five-week assessment was evidence of a routine that was the medium for instructional changes and the outcome of the prioritization of instructional needs was an outcome of the situation. Writing folders were kept by teachers in an elementary school to monitor writing instruction. The principal used the folders as well as communicated with teachers to lead instructional changes in writing. Observations from the Distributed Leadership Study were full of examples like these where the leadership activities were stretched over the tools, routines, materials and people.

Spillane's distributed leadership theory focused on instruction and the leadership practices that were stretched over the leaders, followers, and situation in the school. Leadership practices were not a function of an individual with superior leadership skills, abilities, or charisma. Though such leaders existed in schools and were valuable to the organization, it was the interaction of these leaders with other school leaders and followers that mattered. Also, the situation that surrounded the leaders' and followers' practice constituted an element of their leadership practice, not an appendage. Leadership practice was therefore a product of the interactions of the leaders, followers, and situations in the school.

Spillane was not alone in providing theoretical underpinnings of distributed leadership (ASI, 2000; SST, 2005; Timperley, 2005). Most of the present-day work on distributed leadership paralleled the theory developed by Spillane through the Distributed Leadership Study. Harris (SST) declared that leadership was primarily focused on leadership practice which resulted from the interactions between all those who contributed to the life of the school including parents and students. Harris, recognizing the work of

Spillane, supported the idea of the interdependence of the individual and the environment. Similarly to Spillane, Harris related that human activity was distributed in the interactive web of actors, artifacts, and situations. Joseph Murphy, Professor of Education and Associate Dean at Peabody College of Education at Vanderbilt, described the emerging role of leadership “as interactive, web-like, collective, and vested in many as opposed to a few” (PAGE, 2006, p. 2). Harris argued that it was the actions of the various stakeholders in schools that actively engaged them in leadership practices.

MacBeath (2005) proposed a model of distributed leadership as a developing process in which distribution was described under six headings formally, pragmatically, strategically, incrementally, opportunistically, and culturally. These processes were not mutually exclusive nor were they fixed. MacBeath noted that schools evolved through different stages and utilized different approaches in response to external events. The ideal case for a school was one in which all of the forms of distribution were used to meet the tasks at hand.

A brief summary of the distribution categories revealed the characteristics of MacBeath’s developmental process. Distribution formally occurred through designated roles. Headteachers in MacBeath’s study of 11 English schools indicated that the formal process of distribution provided security to staff, parents, and students as they knew who to talk to with concerns. Distribution as pragmatic referred to leadership tasks being delegated through necessity whether it was a reaction to external events such as governmental accountability demands or parental pressures. In MacBeath’ study (2005, p. 358) a primary school nurse revealed in an interview that “I think only one person can take on so much. So, therefore distributing it to the right people helps everybody.”

Distribution as strategic was based on planned appointment of individuals to leadership roles in order to meet goals of the school. School improvement was the focus of strategic distribution. Incremental distribution devolved greater responsibility as people demonstrate increased capacity to lead. Incremental distribution was marked by professional development which generated growth in leadership abilities and confidence in teachers. Opportunistic distribution occurred when teachers willingly took on school-wide leadership responsibilities because they were predisposed to taking initiative to lead. The blurring of leaders and followers was evident in opportunistic distribution. All members of the organization had the freedom to take on leadership tasks as opportunities presented. Cultural distribution was the practice of distributed leadership as a reflection of a school's culture. Activities were the expression of leadership in cultural distribution not people. Distribution was no longer a conscious process as people took initiative spontaneously to address issues and solve problems.

Richard Elmore asserted that distributed leadership was not complicated (ASI, 2000). Distributed leadership was simply organizing individuals with diverse competencies due to their interests, aptitudes, skills, knowledge, or specialized roles to address school issues. The common task, school improvement, and common frame of values, culture, kept distributed leadership from becoming another version of loose coupling. ASI revealed that loose coupling was a term coined in the 1960s and 1970s to describe the notion that the technical core resided in the classrooms, not in the organization around them. In other words, all educational decisions regarding instruction and learning belonged to classroom teachers.

Elmore proposed five principles to serve as the foundation for a model of distributed leadership focused on large scale improvement ASI (2000). First, the purpose of leadership was the improvement of instructional practice and performance, regardless of role. Leaders had to create environments that were conducive to improving teaching practice and performance. Second, instructional improvement required continuous learning. Leadership had to create conditions that valued learning as an individual and a collective. Professional learning provided the opportunities to increase knowledge and skills about instruction in individual as well as social activities. Next, learning required modeling. Leaders had to model the behaviors and values expected of followers. The roles and activities of leadership flowed from the expertise required for learning and improvement, not from the formal dictates of the institution. Learning grew from the differences in expertise not in the differences from formal authority. Finally, the exercise of authority required reciprocity of accountability and capacity. Everyone was accountable, and the leader had to ensure that each member of the organization had the capacity to do what was expected. Similar to Spillane, ASI noted the importance of the interactions of stakeholders in the leadership process as well as the distinction of leaders and followers.

Distributed leadership theory was developed through the work of Spillane, Harris, MacBeath, and Elmore. Spillane developed the idea of distributed leadership as the interactions of leaders, followers, and situation. Harris paralleled Spillane's theory and included a broader range of followers. MacBeath identified six categories of distributed leadership that developed within a school as teachers gained confidence in their leadership abilities. Finally, Elmore presented five principles that encapsulated his view that

distributed leadership involved organizing individuals based on their competencies to handle various situations.

*Distributed Leadership, Roles and Responsibilities*

Distributed leadership theory provided a framework for understanding the key elements of distributed leadership practices which included the people and the situations. However, analyzing the actual practice of distributed leadership in real-world settings presented a more practical view of the concept and provided evidence of distributed leadership's impact on leadership in schools. Distributed leadership studies primarily focused on the practical application of distributed leadership principles in terms of the roles and responsibilities of the leaders and followers (Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2007; MacBeath, 2005; Moller & Eggen, 2005; Sherer, 2008; Spillane, Penlington, Kington, & Day, 2008).

PAGE (2006) argued that it was a mistake to assume that distributed leadership could operate without a strong principal. Formal leaders such as principals were a key element of Spillane's (2004) distributed leadership theory as well as Elmore's (ASI, 2000) model of distributed leadership. The roles that principals took in distributed leadership processes varied depending on the school staff and situation which included organizational structures and routines, tools, materials (Spillane). Moller and Eggen (2005) reported that the local and historical contexts of the schools influenced the methods and tools of distributed leadership that leaders employed. A few core practices that were used by principals who used distributed leadership included setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization to strengthen culture and build collaborative processes that facilitated distributed leadership (PAGE, 2006). A review of

distributed leadership studies provided evidence of how leaders and followers interacted in distributed leadership practices.

Key findings from a four-year study by Sherer (2008) of a K-8 public school in Chicago indicated that formal leaders designed structures that enabled teachers to take on leadership roles. The principal established organizational routines that supported teacher involvement in leadership practices. The organizational routines aligned with the principal's vision of the school. The principal in the study led the leadership team to design a series of interconnected routines such as a breakfast club to promote a book study, a five week assessment routine to analyze assessments and prioritize instructional needs, and grade level meetings to coordinate grade activities. Penlington, Kington, and Day (2008) also revealed that case-study data indicated that establishing a success culture for distributed leadership in schools depended upon the headteacher's vision being clearly communicated, positive, and optimistic in tone. Headteachers in England and Wales communicated in the school leadership study carried out by PwC (2007) that 59% believed that creating a strategic vision was the most important task of school leaders.

Principals developed leadership skills and guided professional development for everyone in their building. A case study from Arden School in England revealed that a headteacher focused on developing the leadership skills of the school staff to promote distributed leadership practices (SST, 2005). The headteacher of the Arden school first implemented a coaching and mentoring program to provide senior leadership team members training in leadership skills, but later extended the training to all staff. Penlington, Kington, and Day (2008) also indicated that developing the leadership capacity of the staff was attained through professional development opportunities aligned



with the schools' teaching and learning goals. The model of distributed leadership practice as described by ASI (2000) had as one of its principles, instructional improvement through continuous learning. Opportunities that principals created for teachers to network in teams contributed to the professional growth of teachers' leadership skills (de Lima, 2008). The PwC (2007) study of school leadership in England and Wales identified characteristics of effective school leaders with developing staff, nurturing talent, and distributing leadership tasks throughout the organizations. Primary school headteachers were responsible for 90% of the tasks associated with the performance and development of teachers while secondary headteachers accounted for 33% of the same tasks. However, formal leaders such as deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers were responsible for a combined 63% of the tasks associated with performance and development of teachers.

Elmore also placed an emphasis on a leader modeling desired behaviors and values ASI (2000). Presthus (2006) found through a qualitative study of three schools in Norway that principals often participated as team members. In interviews with the researcher, the staff indicated that the principal was missed if there were long periods of time that the principal did not participate in team meetings. Teachers missed the principal because of the principal's valuable thoughts, reflections, and competent reasoning. ASI noted that the principal's participation as an equal was valued by staff.

Principals that established distributed leadership practices in their schools created an environment of trust as they relinquished positional power (MacBeath, 2005; Moller & Eggen, 2005; Sherer, 2008; SST, 2005). Distributed leadership necessitated those in formal leadership positions to surrender power to others (Harris, 2003). Teacher

interviews at the Adams School revealed that trust between leaders and followers was cultivated when the principal, Dr. Williams, gave over the power to her teachers (Sherer). A teacher specifically noted that “Dr. Williams is the principal, but she is not the boss. So- which means that you go to her with ideas that you feel will benefit your students, she has no problem with it...” (p. 16). MacBeath concurred in that distribution implied an ability to relinquish one’s role as the ultimate decision-maker, trusting others to make the right decisions. According to MacBeath trust grew from a belief in the potential and authority of others and listening with the intent to understand. Leaders’ trust allowed the leadership to be assumed and shared with others. In response to the thought that headteachers were not needed, Harris explained that a significant role of leaders was to engage others in the work of building collaborative, trusting relationships. An aspect of distributed leadership that was demonstrated in the study of Moller and Eggen was how principals and school leadership teams developed trust through the trustworthy use of power.

Letting go of formal decision-making power was not as easy as it sounded. One of the most difficult things for principals to do in distributed leadership environments was to let go. MacBeath (2005) reported that headteachers professed their need to be in control and solve problems for the staff. Anxiety was reported among headteachers in regard to not being in charge. Principals reported feeling vulnerable due to the lack of direct control (Harris, 2003).

Principals took on other roles to promote and support distributed leadership practices. Spillane, Camburn, and Pareja (2007) revealed that principals in the Cloverville school district coperformed 47% of the activities for which they reported having

responsibility. Cloverville principals also indicated that they take responsibility for over 75% of all administration tasks in which they participate while taking responsibility for just over 50% of the curriculum and instruction tasks. Spillane et al. documented that classroom teachers played a significant role in taking responsibility for administration and curriculum and instruction activities in which Cloverville principals participated in during the six school days of the study. Principals supported the development and sustainability of leadership teams (Penlington, Kington, & Day, 2008). Principals created a close and collaborative environment within the leadership team where teachers and administrators interacted in the web of leadership.

Teachers have offered the greatest, often untapped, leadership resource in schools (SST, 2005). Unfortunately, teachers have not always seen themselves as leaders unless they held formal leadership positions such as instructional coaches or grade level chairs. However, when distributed leadership was practiced, teachers often took on multiple roles, leader or follower, depending on the situation. Spillane and Sherer (2004) found that individuals moved between the roles of leader and follower. In fact there was frequently a blurring of the leader-follower distinction for teachers in schools that practiced distributed leadership. Whether taking on leader roles or follower roles, teachers contributed significantly to the practice of distributed leadership in schools by demonstrating and conveying trust and participating in teams or groups (de Lima, 2008; MacBeath, 2005; Moller & Eggen, 2005).

MacBeath (2005) noted that distributed leadership was founded on trust. Mutual trust relationships were a necessity where distributed leadership was practiced because results depended on the interactions of many, leaders and followers. Leaders placed trust

in followers to complete distributed tasks. Followers placed trust in the leader's vision and distribution of tasks. Teachers, playing the roles of leaders and followers, had to trust their peers and mutually accept one another's leadership potential (MacBeath). Many headteachers viewed the mutual acceptance by teachers of each other's leadership potential as a precondition of distributed leadership. From MacBeath's study (p. 353), a middle school headteacher was quoted "Others must accept the leadership capabilities of others. I've no problem asking a newly appointed staff to lead but their colleagues need to accept him/her."

Mangin (2005) in a study of teacher leaders revealed that the culture of schools proved resistant to peer leadership among teachers. To overcome the tension surrounding peer leadership in distributed environments, the teacher leaders in the study utilized three strategies: developing relationships, engaging in nonthreatening leadership, and targeting subsets of teachers. The first two strategies relied on establishing trust with their teachers. Gaining the acceptance of teachers cleared the path for improving instruction.

In a study of teacher leadership in three upper secondary schools in Norway, Moller and Eggen (2005) revealed that the relationship between power and trust was very important in an environment where leading and following were fluid, interactive and reciprocal processes. Teachers had to be trusted by leaders to provide accurate information for actions in the school. Teachers had to trust the routines established by leaders to communicate information within the school. Teachers were entrusted with the power as leaders to develop programs according to student needs. Teachers in three schools revealed that building relationships of mutual trust between students, between students and teachers, and between teachers and leaders were very important to the

schools' success. Moller and Eggen identified the most significant factor in establishing successful sharing of leadership tasks as open and honest communication within the leadership team and between the leadership team and staff.

In distributed leadership, teachers interacted and participated in leadership activities as leaders or followers (de Lima, 2008). Regardless of their role as a leader or follower, teachers often interacted through collaborative teams or groups in distributed leadership tasks (Spillane & Sherer, 2004). A common example of a collaborative school team that addressed issues was the school leadership team. School leadership teams were most often comprised of a mixture of formal school leaders and informal leaders. Presthus (2006) noted the importance of teams distributing responsibilities within the team and cooperating together to meet team goals. De Lima as a result of studying the networking and distributed leadership within departments in two schools in Portugal, found that teacher leaders did not create a culture of collaboration in regard to professional activities such as jointly developing materials or lesson plans. The result was weakly distributed leadership.

Teachers could be on a team and not participate in the team's work. Sherer (2008) documented the participation of teachers in two different content teams' meetings. Language arts teachers at Adams School were found to participate in team meetings more so than their math counterparts. The teachers (followers) in the math meetings rarely contributed (20% of the time) while the language arts teachers (followers) contributed 42% of the time. Sherer took this to indicate that the language arts teachers felt confident about sharing their practice with peers, while math teachers did not. Sherer also found

that followers frequently went to other followers for advice. Teachers seeking help from other teachers was a significant finding that related back to teachers trusting each other.

Distributed leadership was defined through the interactions of leaders, followers, and situation (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Spillane's theory of distributed leadership focused on the leadership activities that resulted from the interactions of leaders, followers, and situation. Elmore noted the importance of teachers participating in leadership activities in which they possessed a certain expertise (ASI, 2000). The practices of principals revealed that in distributed leadership environments principals created routines that promoted their vision for the school, developed the staff, and relinquished authority in a trusting environment. The importance of teachers in distributed leadership practice has proven to be essential since teachers continuously participated as leaders and followers. Teachers placed trust in their peers' abilities to lead, as well as required the trust of their leaders when they completed tasks as followers. Teachers interacted and participated in teams to complete tasks in distributed leadership environments. Distributed leadership was found to place a great deal of responsibility for the success of the school in the hands of teachers which makes them an invaluable long-term asset to the organization.

#### *Organizational Commitment*

Organizational commitment has continued to be the focus of many researchers as they have added to the voluminous body of literature from the past 30 years that focused on the attachments between employees and their employing organization (Mowday, 1998). The concept of organizational commitment has evolved over the last three decades. Several researchers have made significant contributions to the conceptualization of

organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Dubin, Champoux, & Porter, 1975; Reichers, 1985; Wiener, 1982). A review of groundbreaking studies and current literature provided insight into the development of the concept of organizational commitment, the measurement of organizational commitment, and the predictors and outcomes associated with organizational commitment.

The beginning of the modern view of organizational commitment was traced back to the early 1970s when Lyman Porter developed an interest in the relationship of employees to their work organizations (Mowday, 1998). Prior to Porter's interest in organizational commitment, the commitment of employees was investigated as contributing factors to other constructs such as central life interest (CLI) (Dubin, Champoux, & Porter, 1975). Porter focused on commitment and identified commitment as a one-dimensional construct that was defined in terms of the overall strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in an organization. Mowday referred to the identification with and involvement in an organization as an affective attachment to the organization. The affective attachment described by Porter had three components: a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and, a definite desire to maintain organizational membership (Mowday, p. 389). Similarly, Reichers (1985) suggested that organizational commitment was the process of identification with the goals of an organization's multiple constituencies. Additional contributions to the concept of organizational commitment included: organizational commitment reflected one's persistence in making sacrifices to the good of the organization (Wiener, 1982); and organizational commitment was an individual's psychological bond to the organization

that comprised an affect for and attachment to the organization (Still 1983 as cited in Liou, 2008).

Following the work of Porter and his colleagues, Allen and Meyer proposed the next major advancement in defining organizational commitment (Liou, 2008). Allen and Meyer distinguished between three forms of commitment: affective, continuance, and normative (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Liou; Mowday, 1998). Affective commitment referred to the emotional attachment of an individual to the organization (Allen & Meyer). According to Liou, Mowday and his colleagues defined affective commitment as an individual's attachment to, identification with, and involvement in an organization. Affective commitment was described by Mowday in the 1970s, and Allen and Meyer in an analysis of the instrument developed by Porter to measure organizational commitment revealed that the score from the instrument can be interpreted to reflect affective commitment (Mowday). Continuance commitment referred to an individual's intention to remain with the organization due to the costs of leaving or the rewards for staying with the organization (Mowday). Becker and Kanter were cited by Allen and Meyer as making significant contributions to the idea of perceived costs aligned with cognitive-continuance commitment in the 1960s. Normative commitment reflected an individual's feelings of obligation to stay with the organization. Allen and Meyer tied normative commitment to Wiener's belief that workers in the organization exhibited behaviors because it was the right thing to do. Other researchers have defined and measured continuance commitment and normative commitment in previous studies as far back as the early 1960s, but integrating the three types of commitment into three components of organizational commitment that can be expressed by workers in various degrees at any time was the



contribution of Allen and Meyer to the conceptualization of organizational commitment (Allen and Meyer). The net sum of a person's commitment to the organization reflected each of these separable psychological states: affective, continuance, and normative. Allen and Meyer's three component view of organizational commitment exists as the working model for research involving organizational commitment (Liou; Mowday).

Three measures of organizational commitment included the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), the British Organizational Commitment Scale (BOCS), and Allen's and Meyer's Affective Commitment Scale (ACS), Normative Commitment Scale (NCS), and Continuance Commitment Scale (CCS). Each of these measurement instruments was designed to assess the organizational commitment of employees in various work environments. The development of each measure paralleled the evolution of the concept of organizational commitment from the work of Porter and colleagues to Allen and Meyer.

To measure the three-component model of organizational commitment an instrument other than the OCQ or the BOCS was required. Measurements from the OCQ and the BOCS reflected only the affective component. The Affective Commitment Scale (ACS), Normative Commitment Scale (NCS), and the Continuance Commitment Scale (CCS) designed by Allen and Meyer in 1990, addressed the tripartite nature of organizational commitment. Eight items were included for each component of organizational commitment. Allen and Meyer reported the alpha reliabilities for each component to be: ACS, .87; NCS, .79; and CCS, .75. The items were reported to load highest on the factor representing the appropriate construct. Overall results indicated that

each of the psychological states of affective, normative, and continuance were reliably measured with the instrument of 24 items (Allen & Meyer).

*Affective Commitment, Antecedents and Outcomes*

Affective commitment referred to the emotional attachment of an individual to an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Allen and Meyer asserted that organizational commitment as defined by earlier researchers was in fact a reflection of affective commitment. The items on measurement instruments of organizational commitment in the 1970s measured the affective commitment of organizational members (Mowday, 1998). Mowday defined organizational commitment as an individual's attachment to, identification with, and involvement in an organization. Liou argued that this was affective commitment. According to Liou (2008) the affective component of organizational commitment described a worker's desire to be with the organization because the worker liked the organization and wanted to work in the organization.

The affective commitment component of Allen and Meyer's tripartite model of organizational commitment was found to correlate with a number of organizational and employee antecedents or outcomes. Allen and Meyer (1990) identified multiple antecedents of affective commitment in their groundbreaking research into the tripartite nature of organizational commitment. Organizational factors including attendance, performance, and organizational citizenship behavior were associated with affective commitment, and employee relevant factors such as stress and work-family conflict were also identified by Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) as factors influencing affective commitment. Other constructs linked to affective commitment included employee retention (Freund & Drach-Zahavy, 2007; Langkamer & Ervin, 2008;

Mohamed, Taylor, & Hassan, 2006; Nehmeh, 2009; Vandenberghe & Tremblay, 2008), employee performance (Abbott, White, & Charles, 2005; Nehmeh), leader behavior (Erben & Guneser, 2007; Karrasch, 2003), and job satisfaction (Tsai & Huang, 2008).

In a landmark study which included employees from a retail department store, a hospital, and a university library, Allen and Meyer (1990) measured the correlation of various work experience variables including job challenge, role clarity and goal clarity, goal difficulty, management receptiveness, peer cohesion, organizational dependability, employee equity, personal importance, employee performance feedback, and employee participation in decisions. These experiences were grouped into two major categories, experiences that satisfied employees' needs to feel comfortable in their relationship with the organization and experiences that satisfied employees' needs to feel competent in the work role. Findings from Allen's and Meyer's study revealed that employees who did feel comfortable in their roles and who felt competent in their job expressed greater affective attachment to their organization. Similarly Meyer, Irving, and Allen (1998) revealed that values and work experiences did interact in the prediction of affective commitment. Results indicated that competence-related work experiences contributed significantly to the prediction of affective commitment. However, contrary to their prediction that a positive interaction between work experiences and affective commitment would be moderated by employees' work values, a negative relationship was found between competence-related values and experiences. Regression analysis revealed that a positive relation existed between competence-related experiences and affective commitment, but the strength of the association increased only when the value placed on the experiences

decreased. Meyer et al. noted the findings may indicate that workers with little experience underestimated the importance of competence-related experiences.

Highly committed employees who tended to remain with an organization and advance organizational goals were less likely to leave the organization (Nehmeh, 2009). The costs of selecting, training, and developing employees were high; therefore, organizational commitment was a focus of numerous studies as they related to employee retention. Affective commitment was found to be very strongly related to turnover intentions according to Vandenberghe and Tremblay (2008). Further, Vandenberghe and Tremblay revealed that affective commitment was influenced by pay satisfaction which in turn impacted turnover intentions. A study by Mohamed, Taylor, and Hassan (2006) revealed that a negative relationship existed between affective commitment and an employee's intent to quit. The United States Army made tremendous investments in developing officers and was not immune from early departures by its officers. Langkamer and Ervin (2008) noted that affective commitment, along with psychological climate, and morale collectively contributed to a 25% variance in Army captains' intent to leave the Army before retirement. Negative correlations with all forms of organizational commitment were reported in a meta-analysis conducted by Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolntsky, (2002). Affective commitment was reported to have the strongest negative correlation with employee turnover. Abbott, White, and Charles, (2005) reported similar findings from their study. Higher levels of affective commitment were associated with lower turnover intentions.

Committed employees tended to work harder and outperform employees with weaker commitments. Nehmeh (2009) reported that workers with strong affective

commitment outperformed workers with low commitment. Similarly, Liou (2008) identified increased job performance as an outcome of highly committed employees; thus improving the operational aspects of an organization. Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolntsky (2002) confirmed the positive relationship between affective commitment and employee job performance. In fact, supervisor ratings of employees' job performance correlated more strongly to affective commitment than employees' self-ratings of performance.

Varying degrees of affective commitment in employees influenced job performance. A study by Sinclair, Tucker, and Cullen (2005) classified employees into one of nine categories based on the strength of affective and continuance commitment found in the employees. Sinclair et al. defined devoted employees as those with the strongest degree of emotional attachment to the organization, thus having the strongest degree of affective commitment. Findings from the study indicated that performance differences were associated with the different configurations resulting from varying levels of affective and continuance commitment found in employees. Performance gains in employees were possible if commitment-based strategies were employed to move those with weak affective commitments to higher levels of affective commitment.

Leadership was found to influence the organizational commitment of employees. Analyses of results from a study on the effects of transformational and transactional leadership on the organizational commitment of teachers in Tanzania indicated that dimensions of transformational leadership had strong effects on the organizational commitment of teachers (Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen, 2006). The effects that transformational leaders had on the organizational commitment of teachers exceeded the

effects of transactional leaders. The researchers used the OCQ to measure organizational commitment; therefore, they were essentially measuring the affective component of Allen and Meyer's tripartite conceptualization of organizational commitment.

Other leadership styles were associated with affective commitment. Benevolent paternalistic leadership was reported to have a moderate effect on affective commitment of workers of various trades in Istanbul (Erben & Guneser, 2008). Faculty members of a Christian University indicated that administration and policy were predictors of affective commitment (Schroder, 2008). Similarly, Tsai and Huang (2008) in their study of nurses indicated that affective commitment was increased when nurses were more satisfied with their supervisors and the work itself. Army captains revealed that leadership ability was predicted by high levels of affective commitment (Karrasch, 2003).

Factors that were closely linked to leadership including work environment, organizational trust, and ethics were associated with affective commitment. A caring and supportive work environment that was nurtured by organizational leaders was positively related to affective commitment (Mohamed, Taylor, & Hassan, 2006). Nehmeh (2009) related that a positive work environment resulting from high affective commitment reduced stress levels for employees. Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolntsky (2002) supported this thought with results indicating that affective commitment correlated negatively with employee stress. When leaders provided structure within the organization, role stress was reduced in employees and organizational commitment was enhanced (Dale & Fox, 2008). Structure implied that leaders provided employees the needed resources of time, space, and materials as well as performance expectations and organizational goals. Leaders had to paint the big picture of the organization so that everyone knew where they

fit in the organizational framework. Also, a work environment that supported and promoted strong ethics had a positive and strong effect on affective commitment (Erben & Guneser, 2007).

Numerous researchers reported that job satisfaction has a long history of association as an antecedent of organizational commitment (Liou, 2008; Ma & MacMillan, 2001; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolntsky, 2002; Sikorska-Simmons, 2005; Tsai & Huang, 2007). However a recent study by Huang and Hsiao (2007) countered that the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment was more of a reciprocal relation rather than an antecedent or outcome relationship. Meyer et al. (2002) indicated that job satisfaction had the highest correlation with affective commitment ( $p = .65$ ) when compared to other variables such as job involvement, pay satisfaction, or promotion satisfaction. Higher levels of affective commitment of assisted living staff were linked to more favorable perceptions of job satisfaction (Sikorska-Simmons). Another noteworthy finding from this study indicated that the more educated the staff members, the higher the levels of organizational commitment as measured by Cook and Wall's nine-item affective commitment scale.

Job satisfaction proved to be such an important factor because it can be used to enhance teachers' organizational commitment (Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen, 2006). When so much in terms of student achievement and accountability has been placed in the hands of teachers, it has become very important to retain high quality teachers. Teachers who were highly committed to their school not only sustained high levels of student achievement, but they also served as potential candidates for school leadership positions (PAGE, 2006). Opportunities for teachers to develop leadership skills and practice

leadership skills paralleled the selection, training, and development of skilled workers in industry and officers in the armed forces. The investment of time, materials, and money to train and develop workers has proven to be high, and it has become essential to consider organizational commitment as a means to ensure a return on the organization's investment.

The practice of distributed leadership by principals is a potential mechanism to enhance the affective commitment of teachers by building on their emotional attachment to the organization. Distributed leadership has allowed formal school leaders to not only involve teachers in decision-making processes of the organization, but to actually take responsibility for various decisions made in the organization. Wu and Short (1996) reported that teacher organizational commitment and job satisfaction were positively related to empowerment. Wu and Short argued that school environments that created the opportunities for teachers to gain competence and expand their professional stature may impact organizational commitment. Distributed leadership has proven to have a positive effect on school leaders' job satisfaction, an antecedent of organizational commitment (Hulpia & Devos, 2009).

### *Summary*

New and increasing demands on principals have contributed to the emergence of the practice of distributed leadership in schools. Defining distributed leadership has proven difficult as it is many things to different people. Some researchers have referred to the chameleon-like quality of distributed leadership. However, James Spillane who has been at the forefront of researching the construct of distributed leadership has described distributed leadership as the practice of stretching leadership over leaders, followers, and



situations. Distributed leadership allowed teachers and leaders to solve problems that tap into their particular strengths or expertise. The demands on the principal have spread over the entire organization to ensure high quality decision making. The role of the principal in a distributed environment has attempted to focus on setting direction for the school, guiding the professional development of staff members, modeling and communicating desired behaviors, and establishing an environment of trust within the school. Teachers have been encouraged to develop trust in their peers as participants in the decision-making processes of distributed practice. Teachers have worked in teams and relied on the interactions of their peers in solving school problems.

The construct of organizational commitment has continued to evolve as researchers persisted in investigating different relationships that existed as a result of workers' commitment to their organizations. Porter, Mowday, and Allen and Meyer were key researchers who have made significant contributions to the study of organizational commitment. The work of Porter and Mowday focused on a one-dimensional view of organizational commitment. The degree of a worker's identification with and involvement in an organization reflected the organizational commitment of the worker. However, Allen and Meyer suggested that organizational commitment consisted of three components that related to a worker's emotional attachment to the organization, a worker's desire to stay with the organization due to perceived costs of leaving, and a worker's feelings of obligation to stay with the organization. Allen and Meyer referred to the tripartite components of organizational commitments as affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Most of the current research regarding organizational commitment has

recognized the tripartite nature of organizational commitment as described by Allen and Meyer.

Organizational commitment has been linked to many other constructs that impact an organization such as employee retention, employee performance, leader behavior, and employee job satisfaction. Specifically, the affective component of organizational commitment was found to have a positive impact on employee retention, performance, and job satisfaction. Further investigation may reveal the relationship between the affective commitment of teachers and the practice of distributed leadership.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

Though much work has been done in defining and investigating various aspects of distributed leadership and organizational commitment, there appear to be few studies linking the two constructs together. The importance of determining the relationship between distributed leadership and organizational commitment is necessitated by the fact that formal leaders of schools are often chosen from the ranks of teachers within the school. Teachers are part of the farm team for administrative positions. Research indicates that opportunities for teachers to gain leadership experiences are present in schools in which the principal practices distributed leadership.

Distributed leadership is a popular topic in today's educational climate. With principals facing increasing and diverse demands on their time, the era of the charismatic, superhero principal has passed. Effective principals are leading teams of teachers in meeting the new demands of school leadership such as instruction, assessment, data analysis, and community planning. The teachers possess the skills and expertise in these areas to solve problems and meet school goals. The leadership experiences that teachers gain when school decisions are spread over multiple people assist in the development of leadership skills and promote leadership aspirations in teachers for future roles as formal leaders within their schools. As a result of practicing distributed leadership, principals ensure an environment of continuous improvement due to the sustainability of leadership within these schools.

Succession planning for school leadership positions is feasible if teachers within the schools are committed to the school, interested in formal leadership positions, and prepared for such leadership roles by experiencing leadership opportunities through distributed leadership. Organizational commitment is found to have three dimensions with the affective component addressing an individual's desire to stay with the organization because they want to be there. The fact that teachers want to stay and be a part of a school's decision-making process may lead to sustainable leadership and increase the leadership capacity within schools. Future leader vacancies are able to be filled from within the school, and districts do not have to fear a shortage of school leaders.

Affective commitment and distributed leadership affect many aspects of an organization. Both constructs have been tied to job satisfaction for employees in multiple fields, including education. Studies have shown job satisfaction to be a predictor of affective commitment and an outcome of distributed leadership. However, the literature fails to provide evidence of affective commitment of teachers being related to distributed leadership practiced by school principals. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the degree of the relationship as perceived by teachers between distributed leadership as practiced by principals and the affective commitment of teachers.

#### Research Question

Many school districts seek to fill leadership positions from within their own organization. For school districts to maintain a supply of aspiring school leaders, teachers within the schools must be committed to staying in the organization until formal leadership positions become available. Distributed leadership may provide teachers with

valuable leadership experiences, and increase their commitment to their organization. To complete this research study, the following overarching research question was answered. What is the degree of the relationship as perceived by teachers between distributed leadership as practiced by principals and the affective commitment of teachers?

### Research Design

To determine the degree of the relationship between distributed leadership as practiced by principals and the affective commitment of teachers, the researcher employed a correlational research design. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), correlational research is used to discover relationships between variables by using correlational statistics. The relationship to be determined in this study focused on two variables: the practice of distributed leadership by principals and the affective commitment of teachers. Operational definitions of distributed leadership and affective commitment were included in the study. Distributed leadership was noted to occur when multiple individuals and groups substitute or share the leadership responsibilities that have traditionally been in the hands of one person (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Affective commitment referred to the emotional attachment of an individual to an organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990).

A survey was used to gather data regarding distributed leadership and affective commitment. Survey research was defined by Creswell (2003) as a non-experimental design providing quantitative description of trends, attitudes, behaviors, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. According to Creswell, economy of design and rapid turnaround time were advantages of survey research. The survey was cross-sectional in that the data will be collected at one point in time (Creswell).

### Population

The population for this study included approximately 2,000 teachers in a rural, South Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) district. According to Harris (1998) a population referred to the group of people in whom the researcher was interested. For the purposes of this study, the population was identified through the school districts that were members of the RESA district. Of interest was the affective commitment of teachers in rural South Georgia and the relationship between their affective commitment and the practice of distributed leadership in their schools.

### Participants

Participants in the study included teachers from selected schools within the Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) district. The researcher selected eight elementary schools, four middle schools, and four high schools from four school districts within the RESA to participate in the study. Participation in the study afforded teachers an opportunity to assess their affective commitment to their organization as well as assess the practice of distributed leadership in their schools. District and school administrators were encouraged to allow their teachers to participate due to the opportunity to gather information regarding the practice of distributed leadership in their schools as well as gain insight into the commitment of their teachers to their organization.

### Sample

The sample for this correlational study was drawn from a population of teachers in a rural, South Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) district. Teachers included in the population had a Georgia Teaching Certificate with varying levels of experience and certificate levels. The sample for this study included 595

teachers from four school districts in a rural, South Georgia RESA district. Teachers from elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school made up the sample from each district. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) recommended a minimum sample size of 30 for correlational research.

Convenience sampling was used to select the sample from the population. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) defined convenience sampling as a means to select a sample that suited the purpose of the study and that was convenient. Convenience referred to a variety of reasons: the sample was located close to the researcher; the researcher was familiar with the sites; or, the researcher had access to the sample through individuals who were known to the researcher. Schools from which participants were selected were chosen based on the closeness of the schools to the researcher and the access that was granted to the researcher from school district leaders. Though random sampling was ideal for choosing a sample that was representative of a population, researchers often employed the convenience sampling technique to gain access to participants who were reasonably representative of a population (Harris, 1998). The use of convenience sampling required the researcher and readers of the research to infer a population to which the results might generalize (Gall et al.).

#### Instrumentation

Participants in this study were administered an instrument containing two surveys: the revised Affective Commitment Scale (ACS) (Allen & Meyer, 1990) and the Leadership Density Inventory (LDI) (Smith, Ross, & Robichaux, 2004). The ACS was used to assess the participants' level of affective commitment, and the LDI was used to measure the extent of distributed leadership in the participants' schools. The instrument

was divided into two sections, one containing the six items of the ACS and the other containing the 16 items of the LDI.

The researcher gained permission from the University of Western Ontario to use the academic version of Allen's and Meyer's revised Affective Commitment Scale. Included in the first section are six items on a seven-point Likert scale to which participants responded regarding their affective commitment to their organization. Three of the items were reverse-keyed. The seven-point Likert scale ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). For scoring purposes, teachers' responses to all of the items within the affective commitment scale were averaged to yield an overall score for the affective commitment component of organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 2004). Although it was also possible to sum the item scores rather than averaging, this could create some problems if employees failed to respond to some items. Meyer and Allen asserted that the existence of missing data would have a much greater impact on total scores than on average scores. The validity and reliability of the Affective Commitment Scale were reported in a research study by Allen and Meyer (1990).

The researcher gained permission from Dr. Roy Wade Smith to use the Leadership Density Inventory. The LDI was developed by Smith et al. (2004) to measure levels of distributed leadership in schools. Leadership density according to Smith et al. was the purposeful role taking on the part of organizational members, either individually or collectively, which moved the organization towards accomplishment of stated goals. The validity and reliability was established through expert panel review, a pilot study, and internal reliability calculations. The original LDI was condensed from 31 items to 16 items.



The second section of the research instrument included 16 items from the revised LDI. Participants responded on the seven-point Likert scale to the items regarding the practice of distributed leadership in their schools. According to Smith et al. the seven-point Likert scale ranged from never (1) to always (7). Three factors emerged in the LDI including teacher leadership density (7 items), student leadership density (5 items), and leadership opportunity (4 items). An average score for the sixteen items was calculated to represent the level of distributed leadership practiced as perceived by teachers.

#### Data Collection

After the approval of Georgia Southern's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained by the researcher, data for the study was collected using a one page instrument containing the Affective Commitment Survey (ACS) and Leadership Density Inventory (LDI). Sixteen items from the LDI addressed the degree of distributed leadership practice, and six items from the ACS addressed the affective commitment of teachers.

The researcher gained permission from district superintendents to select schools from within a district to make up the sample. The researcher provided the survey instrument to the superintendents for review. Upon approval from the superintendent, the researcher contacted school principals asking for permission to survey teachers and asking the principals to identify a point of contact in the building to administer the surveys to teachers. Points of contact were asked to distribute the surveys in a grade level or faculty meeting. The teachers completed the surveys and returned the completed surveys to the points of contact in sealed envelopes that were provided by the researcher. The researcher collected the completed surveys from the points of contact. There were no follow-ups due to the high response rate.

### Response Rate

The reported response rates reflected the percentage of returned surveys from the sample. The response rate for this study was 84.2%. Baruch and Holtom (2008) reported that the average response rate for questionnaires used as the basis for published academic studies was significantly less than 100 percent. They continued by noting that from 1975 to 1995 the average response rate declined from 64.4 percent to 48.4 percent. Baruch and Holtom noted that published research suggested a response rate benchmark of approximately 50 percent for individual survey research.

### Data Analysis

To determine if a relationship existed between the practice of distributed leadership and the affective commitment of teachers, the Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was used. Spearman *rho* was considered a special case of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (*r*) which was the most used measure of relationships in correlational research (Harris, 1998). Pearson *r* was used to determine relationships when the variables were continuous and the data was collected on an interval or ratio scale (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Spearman *rho* was used to compute relationships with ordinal data (Harris).

The Spearman *rho* was used to determine the degree of the relationship between distributed leadership and affective commitment since Likert responses were used to gather data. Likert responses were defined as ordinal data (Coladarci, Cobb, Minium, & Clarke, 2008) thus a nonparametric test was used to compute the relationship. Pearson *r* was categorized as a parametric test which assumed a number of characteristics about the parameters of the population. Nonparametric tests were used when fewer assumptions

about the population were made (Harris). Convenience sampling as used in this study required a nonparametric test; therefore, Spearman *rho* was used in this study.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to calculate and report the Spearman *rho* for this study. To interpret the Spearman *rho*, the researcher decided whether or not the calculation was statistically significant by using the two-tailed values of significance (Harris, 1998). Significance was determined at the .001 level. Once significance was established, a positive *rho* meant that higher ranks on one variable were associated with higher ranks on the other variable, and larger absolute values of *rho* indicated a stronger relationship between the variables (Harris).

#### Reporting the Data

Findings from the study were reported in text and tables. A table of the correlational matrix was included as well as an interpretational section of the results as they pertained to the research question.

#### Summary

A correlational research method was used to determine the relationship between distributed leadership as practiced by principals and the affective commitment of teachers. A survey was provided to a sample of 595 teachers from elementary, middle, and high school teachers from four school districts in a rural, South Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) district. Six items from Allen's and Meyer's revised Affective Commitment Scale were included in the research instrument to measure teachers' affective commitment toward their school. For scoring purposes, teachers' responses to all of the items within the affective commitment scale were averaged to yield an overall score for the affective commitment component of organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen,

2004). Sixteen items from Smith, Ross, and Robichaux's Leadership Density Inventory were used to measure the level of distributed leadership in the sampled schools. An average score for the sixteen items was calculated to represent the level of distributed leadership practiced from the perception of each teacher. Data was entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software and a Spearman *rho* correlational coefficient was calculated to determine the degree of the relationship between the practice of distributed leadership and affective commitment of teachers. The findings from the study were interpreted and presented in a correlational table.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the practice of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers. Teachers' perceptions of the practice of distributed leadership in their buildings were examined, and the relationship with the teachers' commitment to their school was investigated. This chapter begins with a description of the instrumentation, data collection procedures, respondents, and data analysis and findings. The findings are structured according to the following research question: What is the degree of the relationship as perceived by teachers between distributed leadership as practiced by principals and the affective commitment of teachers? Chapter four concludes with a summary of the findings.

#### Instrumentation

Participants in this study were administered an instrument containing two surveys, the revised Affective Commitment Scale (ACS) (Allen & Meyer, 1990) and the Leadership Density Inventory (LDI) (Smith, Ross, & Robichaux, 2004) in order to assess the participants' level of affective commitment and the practice of distributed leadership in the participants' schools. Included in the first section were six items on a seven-point Likert scale to which participants responded regarding their affective commitment to their organization. Three of the items were reverse-keyed. The seven-point Likert scale ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The second section of the research instrument included 16 items from the LDI. Participants responded on the seven-point Likert scale to the items regarding the perceived practice of distributed leadership in their

schools. According to Smith et al. the seven-point Likert scale ranged from never (1) to always (7). Three factors emerged in the LDI including teacher leadership density (seven items), student leadership density (five items), and leadership opportunity (four items). An average score for the 16 items was calculated to represent the level of distributed leadership practiced from the perception of each teacher.

#### Data Collection Procedures

Surveys, along with a cover letter of explanation, were distributed in envelopes to a point of contact at each school. The point of contact distributed the surveys to teachers who completed the surveys and returned the surveys to the point of contact in a sealed envelope provided by the researcher. All surveys were received by mid-January 2010 and the collected data were analyzed.

#### Respondents

The sample for this correlational study was drawn from a population of teachers in a rural, South Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) district. Eight elementary schools, four middle schools, and four high schools were surveyed. Of the 595 surveys distributed in the 16 schools representing four school districts, 501 were returned. The response rate was 84.2%.

Of the 501 returned surveys, 38 surveys were discarded due to the fact that they were incomplete. Respondents either intentionally or unintentionally failed to respond to a particular item or items on the two surveys, or they failed to turn the page and respond to the second survey. Therefore, to ensure the purity of the data, all surveys that contained at least one omitted item were discarded. The number of completed surveys, 463 surveys, provided an acceptable representation of the population for analysis.

## Data Analysis and Findings

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze the data from the collected surveys. Surveys were grouped by school level, elementary, middle, and high. Since the surveys were returned anonymously, confidentiality of the participants and the schools was ensured. To examine the relationship between distributed leadership and affective commitment, responses to the survey items were analyzed by school level (elementary, middle, and high) and then by total responses of all schools surveyed. Finally, statistical analysis was used to examine the relationship of the three factors of distributed leadership as defined by Smith, Ross, and Robichaux (2004), teacher leadership, student leadership, and opportunities for leadership, with the affective commitment of all teachers surveyed.

Statistical analyses were conducted after all surveys were received and data were entered. A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was used to examine the research question and additional intriguing relationships that emerged from the study. Spearman *rho* correlations are reported with values between -1.0 and +1.0. Spearman *rho* correlations greater than 0.7 are considered strong. Values between 0.3 - 0.7 are considered moderate, and values less than 0.3 are considered weak (Cronk, 2008). An alpha level of .001 was used to determine the significance for all statistical relationships. Results and data analysis are reported for the research question and other salient findings.

### *Research Question*

What is the degree of the relationship as perceived by teachers between distributed leadership as practiced by principals and the affective commitment of teachers? A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was used to analyze the relationship

between the perceived practice of distributed leadership and the affective commitment of teachers. A total of 463 survey responses from teachers in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools were analyzed to derive the Spearman *rho*. Table 1 summarizes the findings.

Table 1

*Correlations for Perceived Distributed Leadership Practice and Affective Commitment of Teachers in Elementary, Middle, and High Schools*

	1	2
1. Distributed Leadership Practice	---	
2. Affective Commitment	.56*	---

*Note.* n = 463.

\* p < .001.

A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between distributed leadership practice and affective commitment of teachers. A moderate positive correlation was found ( $rho(461) = .56, p < .001$ ), indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. Teachers who work in schools where distributed leadership is practiced tend to have higher affective commitment toward their organization.

*Analysis of Elementary Schools*

What is the degree of the relationship between the practice of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers in elementary schools and the affective commitment of elementary school teachers? A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between the perceived practice of distributed leadership and the affective commitment of elementary school teachers. A total of 180 survey responses from teachers in elementary schools were analyzed to derive the Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient. Table 2 summarizes the findings.



Table 2

*Correlations for Perceived Distributed Leadership Practice and Affective Commitment of Elementary School Teachers*

	1	2
1. Distributed Leadership Practice	---	
2. Affective Commitment	.53*	---

*Note.* n = 180.

\* p < .001.

A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between distributed leadership practice and affective commitment of elementary school teachers. A moderate positive correlation was found ( $rho(178) = .53, p < .001$ ), indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. Teachers who work in elementary schools where distributed leadership is practiced tend to have higher affective commitment toward their organization.

*Analysis of Middle Schools*

What is the degree of the relationship between the practice of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers in middle schools and the affective commitment of middle school teachers? A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between the perceived practice of distributed leadership and the affective commitment of middle school teachers. A total of 117 survey responses from teachers in middle schools were analyzed to derive the Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient. Table 3 summarizes the findings.

Table 3

*Correlations for Perceived Distributed Leadership Practice and Affective Commitment of Middle School Teachers*

	1	2
1. Distributed Leadership Practice	---	
2. Affective Commitment	.49*	---

Note. n = 117.

\* p < .001.

A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between distributed leadership practice and affective commitment of middle school teachers. A moderate positive correlation was found ( $rho(115) = .49, p < .001$ ), indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. Teachers who work in middle schools where distributed leadership is practiced tend to have higher affective commitment toward their organization.

*Analysis of High Schools*

What is the degree of the relationship between the practice of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers in high schools and the affective commitment of high school teachers? A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between the perceived practice of distributed leadership and the affective commitment of high school teachers. A total of 166 survey responses from teachers in high schools were analyzed to derive the Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient. Table 4 summarizes the findings.

Table 4

*Correlations for Perceived Distributed Leadership Practice and Affective Commitment of High School Teachers*

	1	2
1. Distributed Leadership Practice	---	
2. Affective Commitment	.46*	---

*Note.* n = 166.

\* p < .001.

A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between distributed leadership practice and affective commitment of high school teachers. A moderate positive correlation was found ( $rho(164) = .46, p < .001$ ), indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. Teachers who work in high schools where distributed leadership is practiced tend to have higher affective commitment toward their organization.

*Analysis of Teacher Leadership to Affective Commitment*

What is the degree of the relationship between the teacher leadership component of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers? The teacher leadership component of distributed leadership was addressed in questions one through seven of the Leadership Density Inventory (LDI) (Smith, Ross, & Robichaux, 2004). The participants' average scores of these seven questions were analyzed with the participants' affective commitment scores. A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between the teacher leadership component of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers. A total of 463 survey responses from teachers were analyzed to derive the Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient. Table 5 summarizes the findings.

Table 5

*Correlations for Teacher Leadership Component of Perceived Distributed Leadership Practice and Affective Commitment of Teachers*

	1	2
1. Teacher Leadership within Distributed Leadership Practice	---	
2. Affective Commitment	.52*	---

*Note.* n = 463.

\* p < .001.

A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the teacher leadership component of distributed leadership practice and affective commitment of teachers. A moderate positive correlation was found ( $rho(461) = .52, p < .001$ ), indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. Teachers who work in schools where teacher leadership is practiced tend to have higher affective commitment toward their organization.

*Analysis of Student Leadership to Affective Commitment*

What is the degree of the relationship between the student leadership component of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers? The student leadership component of distributed leadership was addressed in questions eight through twelve of the Leadership Density Inventory (LDI) (Smith, Ross, & Robichaux, 2004). The participants' average scores from these five questions were analyzed with the participants' average scores from the Affective Commitment Scale (ACS). A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between the student leadership component of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers. A total of 463 survey responses from

teachers were analyzed to derive the Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient. Table 6 summarizes the findings.

Table 6

*Correlations for Student Leadership Component of Perceived Distributed Leadership Practice and Affective Commitment of Teachers*

	1	2
1. Student Leadership within Distributed Leadership Practice	---	
2. Affective Commitment	.46*	---

*Note.* n = 463.

\* p < .001.

A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the student leadership component of distributed leadership practice and affective commitment of teachers. A moderate positive correlation was found ( $rho(461) = .46, p < .001$ ), indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. Teachers who work in schools where student leadership is practiced tend to have higher affective commitment toward their organization.

*Analysis of Opportunities for Leadership to Affective Commitment*

What is the degree of the relationship between the opportunities for leadership component of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers? The opportunities for leadership component of distributed leadership were addressed in questions thirteen through sixteen of the Leadership Density Inventory (LDI) (Smith, Ross, & Robichaux, 2004). The participants' average scores from these four questions were analyzed with the participants' affective commitment scores. A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between the opportunities for leadership component of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers

and the affective commitment of teachers. A total of 463 survey responses from teachers were analyzed to derive the Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient. Table 7 summarizes the findings.

Table 7

*Correlations for Opportunities for Leadership Component of Perceived Distributed Leadership Practice and Affective Commitment of Teachers*

	1	2
1. Opportunities for Leadership within Distributed Leadership Practice	---	
2. Affective Commitment	.43*	---

*Note.* n = 463.

\* p < .001.

A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the opportunities for leadership component of distributed leadership practice and affective commitment of teachers. A moderate positive correlation was found ( $rho(461) = .43, p < .001$ ), indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. Teachers who work in schools where opportunities for leadership exist tend to have higher affective commitment toward their organization.

### Summary

Analyses of the collected data were used to examine the relationship between the practice of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers. A Spearman *rho* correlation was conducted to determine the degree of the relationship for all respondents in elementary, middle, and high schools. A Spearman *rho* correlation also was conducted to determine the degree of the relationship between the practice of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers in the different grade levels of schools, elementary schools, middle schools,

and high schools. Finally, a Spearman *rho* correlation also was conducted to determine the degree of the relationship between each of the three components of distributed leadership practice, teacher leadership, student leadership, and opportunities for leadership and the affective commitment of all teachers surveyed.

Analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant, moderate positive relationship between the practice of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers. Findings also indicated that a statistically significant, moderate positive relationship existed between the practice of distributed leadership and affective commitment for each of the different groups of teachers, elementary, middle, and high. Finally, a statistically significant, moderate positive relationship was found to exist between each of the three components of distributed leadership, teacher leadership, student leadership, and opportunities for leadership, and affective commitment of teachers. Chapter V will provide a discussion of the findings and recommendations from the study.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Chapter V includes an overview of the study and a summary of the findings to previously conducted research. Conclusions, implications and recommendations of the findings from the study are also discussed. The first section of this chapter provides a brief description of the study. The following sections focus on the findings and their impact on educational administration.

#### Overview of the Study

Principals in today's schools are facing new demands that include such diverse educational areas as instruction, curriculum, assessment, public relations, and professional development (National Education Association [NEA], 2008). It is virtually impossible to find a single individual who possesses the expertise, let alone time, to direct a school in so many essential areas. As a result, school principals are engaging in the practice of distributed leadership (Hartley, 2007).

Distributed leadership is a means by which principals can utilize the expertise and efforts of teachers and other administrative personnel to improve schools through shared decision making. Hoy and Miskel (2008) have explained that distributed leadership occurs as "multiple individuals and groups substitute or share the responsibilities that have traditionally been attributed to a single individual." (p. 438). According to Hoy and Miskel, distributed leadership is necessary due to the complexity of school organizations and the numerous tasks that are so comprehensive that no single individual has the energy or skills to handle all of the leadership functions. Generally, principals that try to do it all are unable to fully address the many diverse tasks that are expected of them. The school



suffers, and the principal's tenure is greatly decreased due to exhaustion, stress, and poor performance.

By allowing teachers and other school leaders to lead faculty teams in decision-making settings, principals are able to provide the future leaders of the school with valuable leadership experiences. Distributed leadership allows the teachers with expertise in specific areas of need to have input in the decision-making processes of the school. The affective commitment of teachers in schools that practice distributed leadership is expected to be high since they have ownership of decisions in their schools. Affective commitment is a component of organizational commitment that refers to an employee's emotional attachment to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). This fact greatly benefits the schools since the investment of time, money, and personnel in developing future leaders is secured by the desire of teachers to stay in the organization. To complete this research study, the following overarching research question was posed. What is the degree of the relationship between distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers?

Participants in this study were administered an instrument containing two surveys, the revised Affective Commitment Scale (ACS) (Allen & Meyer, 1990) and the Leadership Density Inventory (LDI) (Smith, Ross, & Robichaux, 2004). The surveys were used to assess the participants' level of affective commitment and the perceived practice of distributed leadership in the participants' schools. The surveys were combined to form a 22-item instrument, six items addressed affective commitment and sixteen items addressed distributed leadership. Potential participants in the study included all teachers in a rural, South Georgia Rural Educational Service Agency (RESA). Fifteen schools

representing four school districts were selected to participate in the study. Of the 595 surveys distributed, 501 surveys were returned. A total of 38 surveys were discarded due to omitted items, which left a total of 463 surveys that were used to analyze the data. Survey responses were analyzed using a Spearman *rho* correlation.

### Summary of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study focused on the degree of the relationship between distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers. Analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant, moderate positive relationship ( $rho(461) = .56, p < .001$ ) between the practice of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers. Additional findings indicated that a statistically significant, moderate positive relationship existed between the practice of distributed leadership and affective commitment for each of the different groups of teachers, elementary ( $rho(178) = .53, p < .001$ ), middle ( $rho(115) = .49, p < .001$ ), and high ( $rho(164) = .46, p < .001$ ). Finally, a statistically significant, moderate positive relationship was found to exist between each of the three components of distributed leadership and the affective commitment of teachers, teacher leadership ( $rho(461) = .52, p < .001$ ), student leadership ( $rho(461) = .46, p < .001$ ), and opportunities for leadership ( $rho(461) = .43, p < .001$ ).

To date, few if any studies have sought to determine the degree of the relationship between distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers. The results of this study interject into the literature quantitative evidence that a positive relationship exists between distributed leadership and the affective commitment of teachers. These results are not unexpected. Wu and Short (1996) sought to determine

the relationships between teacher empowerment, job satisfaction and job commitment of teachers in a northeastern state. Findings from the study indicated that teachers' perceptions of their level of empowerment were significantly related to their perceptions of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Similarly, the positive relationship found to exist between affective commitment and the components of distributed leadership, teacher leadership, student leadership, and opportunities for leadership are foreshadowed in the literature. A summary report by the National College for School Leadership (2003) defined the essential characteristics of distributed leadership (1). Distributed leadership is a group activity working through and within relationships (2). Many people are involved in the leadership activity than might traditionally be assumed (3). Distributed leadership draws on the variety of expertise in the organization to complete ongoing, diverse organizational tasks. In distributed leadership, teachers interacted and participated in leadership activities as leaders or followers (de Lima, 2008). Regardless of their role as a leader or follower, teachers often interacted through collaborative teams or groups in distributed leadership tasks (Spillane & Sherer, 2004).

Affective commitment referred to the emotional attachment of an individual to an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The affective commitment component of Allen and Meyer's tripartite model of organizational commitment was found to correlate with a number of organizational and employee antecedents or outcomes. Allen and Meyer (1990) identified multiple antecedents of affective commitment in their groundbreaking research into the tripartite nature of organizational commitment. Organizational factors including attendance, performance, and organizational citizenship behavior were

associated with affective commitment. Findings from this study that associate affective commitment to another construct such as distributed leadership have precedent and are expected.

### Discussion of the Findings

Teachers from the rural, South Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) district who participated in the study indicated that distributed leadership practices were being used by principals in their schools. Teachers also revealed that they were committed to their schools. This was not unexpected because over the past five years principals in the RESA district have participated in numerous training opportunities that focused on distributed leadership practices. Also a considerable number of teachers and assistant principals representing the school districts within the RESA took part in a leadership development program at the RESA. Distributed leadership practices were emphasized and encouraged through the leadership development program. The aspiring school leaders returned to their schools where they practiced what they had learned in the leadership development program. As a result, teachers in their schools were exposed to distributed leadership terminology, and the teachers were provided opportunities to experience distributed leadership practices in their building.

Teachers' commitment to their schools in tough economic times was expected to be high. Teaching jobs were once plentiful and movement from school to school or district to district was fluid, but those days have passed. School budgets have shrunk due to decreasing revenues and teaching jobs have become hard to find. Teachers have dealt with less money for instruction and supplies, but now they face furloughs and reductions

in force. Teachers have expressed that the loss of salary hurts, but they are thankful for the jobs that they have.

Findings from the study also revealed that there was a moderate, positive relationship between the practice of distributed leadership and the affective commitment of teachers in all schools. However, a slight difference in the degree of the relationship between the practice of distributed leadership and affective commitment of teachers was found in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. The relationship between the practice of distributed leadership and affective commitment of teachers was slightly stronger for elementary schools than middle schools and high schools. Elementary school teachers often engage in collaborative work that stretches over a diverse variety of school issues. Middle school teachers and high school teachers tend to work in a more isolated environment that primarily focuses on departmental issues. Opportunities to practice distributed leadership are abundant in all schools, but elementary teachers and administrators take advantage of the opportunities because they generally have a broad, school-wide focus on improvement.

### Conclusions

The results from this study indicated that the affective commitment of teachers toward their schools increased as leadership responsibilities were distributed among stakeholders within the school, especially teachers. For schools located in this Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) district there was a moderate, positive relationship between the distributed leadership and affective commitment of teachers. The teacher leadership component of distributed leadership showed the greatest relationship to affective commitment when compared to the two other components, student leadership

and opportunities for leadership. This should come as no surprise as teachers were the participants in the study. The findings from the teacher leadership analysis revealed the value that teachers place in having a say in school decision-making processes.

The relationship between elementary teachers' affective commitment and the practice of distributed leadership was slightly greater than the relationship found for middle school teachers and high school teachers. Evidence indicated that the relationship was not as strong between the practice of distributed leadership and the affective commitment for middle school teachers and high school teachers. The findings from this study do not provide evidence as to why the differences exist between elementary school teachers, middle school teachers, and high schools teachers.

#### Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the practice of distributed leadership as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers. Implications for future practice resulted from an analysis of the findings and conclusion of the study. State and district leaders have encouraged principals to employ distributed leadership practices into their school's decision-making processes. Findings from this study indicate that distributed leadership practices increase the affective commitment of teachers. In the age of accountability where retaining effective teachers is vital to a school's success, any method that increases teachers' commitment to their school is greatly needed. The findings from this study also provide the impetus for schools in the rural, South Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) district to continue focusing on distributed leadership practices as part of their professional learning and leadership development programs. Continuing to invest time and money in the

development of future leaders is important to maintaining a continuous supply of leaders and sustained leadership.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

Distributed leadership has become an integral part of school improvement and leadership development in Georgia. School improvement plans and state standards for schools provide evidence of the emphasis on distributed leadership practices in Georgia schools. It is essential that future research be conducted to continue to investigate the influence that distributed leadership has on school processes and personnel. Because distributed leadership relates to the affective commitment of teachers, further investigation into the relationship is warranted. The following recommendations for future research should be considered:

1. Expand the study beyond the rural, South Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) district in which this study occurred. An investigation into the relationship of distributed leadership and the affective commitment of teachers in urban areas or throughout the state of Georgia would be a valuable contribution to the literature. Because the state of Georgia's standards for schools, the School Keys, set expectations for all schools in Georgia to practice distributed leadership, expanding the study beyond a single RESA district would gather data from a larger population of teachers.
2. Expand this study to include demographic data such as gender and years of teaching experience to investigate these variables impact on the relationship between distributed leadership and the affective commitment of teachers. Differences in gender and teaching experience have proven to influence other

variables in educational research, so adding a demographic section to the existing survey instrument would be beneficial.

3. As there were slight differences in the Spearman *rho* correlation coefficients for elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools, a more extensive examination of distributed leadership practices and affective commitment in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools could provide insight into the differences in the degree of the relationships found in this study. Determining if the differences in the degree of the relationship between distributed leadership and affective commitment at the various levels of K-12 education result from principal actions, teacher actions, or a combination of the two may benefit school leaders.

#### Distribution of Findings

The findings from this study were distributed in several ways. A bound copy of the dissertation was placed in the library at Georgia Southern University as well as the Department of Educational Leadership at Georgia Southern University. A summary of findings was distributed to school superintendents who participated in the study. Finally, the study is available via the worldwide web.



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## APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

## Distributed Leadership and Affective Commitment Assessment

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information regarding the practice of distributed leadership in schools as perceived by teachers and the affective commitment of teachers to their organization. The results of the survey will be used to determine the degree of the relationship between the practice of distributed leadership in schools and the affective commitment of teachers to their organization.

The questionnaire consists of 22 items, 6 items on the front page and 16 items on the back page.

Please return the completed questionnaire, sealed in an envelope, to the drop box or the designated contact. Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

\_\_\_\_\_ High School  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Middle School  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary School

Please respond to the following statements by circling the number that reflects your level of agreement with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Undecided	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE... PLEASE TURN TO THE BACK.

## SURVEY INSTRUMENT (continued)

Please respond to the following statements by circling the number that best represents your belief regarding each item.

In this school...	Never			Sometimes			Always
1. the principal guides instructional decisions much like a conductor guides an orchestra.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. the principal willingly allows and encourages teachers to assume leadership roles.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. teachers assume many leadership roles.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. the principal encourages experimentation and innovation in regards to teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. diverse solutions to problems are actively solicited by the principal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. teachers willingly take on leadership roles as they arise.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. active experimentation is encouraged in the pursuit of school goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. students voluntarily assume leadership roles when opportunities arise.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. students readily volunteer their experience and knowledge with the class.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. teachers encourage students to share their knowledge with other students in the class.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. students volunteer to help each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. teachers implement cross curricular activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. teachers recognize the contributions of other teachers to the overall accomplishment of school goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. a tight chain of command is followed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. students regularly engage in mastery demonstrations of acquired knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. teachers regularly share effective instructional strategies.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

## APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs		
<b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>		
Phone: 912-478-0843		Veazey Hall 2021
		P.O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

**To:** Gregory E. Jacobs  
2301 High Bluff Road  
Hoboken, GA 31542

**cc:** Charles E. Patterson  
Associate Vice President for Research

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** December 11, 2009

**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H10135**, and titled "**The Relationship Between Distributed Leadership as Practiced by Principals and the Organizational Commitment of Teachers**", it appears that your research involves activities that do not require full review by the Institutional Review Board according to federal guidelines.

According to the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46, your research protocol is determined to be exempt from full IRB review under the following exemption category(s):

- Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (I) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (II) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.


*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that your research is exempt from IRB approval. **You may proceed with the proposed research.***

Sincerely,




Eleanor Haynes  
Compliance Officer

## APPENDIX C: AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT SURVEY PERMISSION



where IP connects



Logout: gjacobs1

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## License Agreement

▸ **LICENSEE**

Name:	Gregory Jacobs
Organization:	Georgia Southern University
Department:	Educational Administration
Address:	2301 High Bluff Rd Hoboken, Georgia
Project:	TCM Employee Commitment Survey - Academic Package - Student License for Use of the Survey in a Single Student Research Project (Academic Users Guide - Dec 2004.pdf)
Date:	October 29, 2009 17:34:13 PST

▸ **TCM EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT SURVEY LICENSE AGREEMENT – FOR STUDENT USE**

**TCM EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT SURVEY LICENSE AGREEMENT – FOR STUDENT USE**

As posted on November 10, 2008

**IMPORTANT – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY:** This License Agreement is a legally binding agreement between you and your employer, educational institution or organization (collectively "YOU") and The University of Western Ontario ("WESTERN") for the "TCM Employee Commitment Survey" and all associated documentation (together, the "Product") developed by Dr. John Meyer and Dr. Natalie Allen in the Faculty of Social Science at WESTERN. Your use of the Product is subject to the terms and conditions set forth below. Please carefully read the terms and conditions of this license agreement.

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## APPENDIX D: LEADERSHIP DENSITY INVENTORY PERMISSION

**Re: Leadership Density Inventory**

---

From : Wade Smith <smithwa@lsu.edu> Sun, Sep 20, 2009 08:59 PM  
Subject : Re: Leadership Density Inventory  
To : greg jacobs <greg.jacobs@brantley.k12.ga.us>

Hello Greg

Feel free to use!

Contact me at 225 4451113 if you need to chat

Wade

----- Original Message -----

From: Greg Jacobs <greg.jacobs@brantley.k12.ga.us>

To: Wade Smith

Sent: Sun Sep 20 18:43:01 2009

Subject: Leadership Density Inventory

Dr.Smith,

My name is Greg Jacobs, and I am a student at Georgia Southern University where I am in the beginning phases of writing my dissertation entitled "The Relationship Between Distributed Leadership As Practiced By Principals And the Organizational Commitment of Teachers."

I recently discovered your inventory for measuring distributed leadership in schools. I have been looking for a valid and reliable instrument to measure the practice of distributed leadership in schools for my proposed study. May I use your instrument in my study? Of course, I will make the results from my study available to you.

I found the study in the article, "Creation and Validation of a Measure of Leadership Density in Elementary and Middle School." If you allow me to use the instrument , do you recommend the use of the 16-item version?

Thank you for your time and consideration.