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Teacher Perceptions of Principals' Confidence, Humility, and Effectiveness

Implications for Educational Leadership

ABSTRACT: Humility in leadership has received growing scholarly attention in recent years. However, the literature is devoid of empirical studies of the relationship among humility, confidence (an attribute consistently linked to effective leadership), and leader effectiveness. This quantitative study examined the understudied relationships among these three constructs. In this study, 137 teachers from K–12 educational settings completed a survey measuring teachers' perceptions of their principals' confidence, humility, and leader effectiveness. Results showed that humility and confidence were strongly and positively related to each other and to leader effectiveness. The findings provide support for the importance of humility and confidence as attributes of effective leadership and have potentially important implications for educational leadership.

Among leadership scholars and practitioners, self-confidence is a characteristic widely believed to be necessary for effective leadership, and empirical research has repeatedly validated this belief. Locke (1991) asserted that there is no dispute that self-confidence is a necessary trait for successful leadership. More recently, McCormick (2001) found that every major review of the leadership literature includes self-confidence as an essential characteristic for effective leadership. What's more, self-confidence has been described as the first and perhaps foremost basic characteristic of transformational leaders (Sashkin, 2004).

Self-confidence, however, can become inflated, resulting in overconfidence and arrogance, which contributes to leader failure and ineffective-

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ness (Collins, 2009; Irwin, 2009; Sala, 2003). Arrogant leaders have a poor capacity for listening and learning (Ready, 2005); fail to see their flaws and weaknesses (Kanter, 2004); refuse to acknowledge failures, errors, or mistakes; and blame others when things go wrong (Hogan & Hogan, 2001). Arrogance also contributes to unethical leader behaviors, such as manipulation of followers (Hollander, 1998) and misuse of power (Mayeroff, 1995). Such unethical behaviors can undermine the leader's integrity and credibility and the followers' trust, which are essential elements of leader effectiveness (Daly & Chrispeels, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Sankar, 2003). Not surprising, then, arrogant leaders may be expected to have difficulty building effective interpersonal relationships and teams (Najar, Holland, & Van Landuyt, 2004; Tiberius & Walker, 1998).

The most well-known examples of leaders whose downfall has been attributed to arrogance are those found in politics (e.g., Richard Nixon, Rod Blagojevich [former Illinois governor now in federal prison]) and big business (e.g., Kenneth Lay [former CEO of Enron]). Yet arrogance is a potential pitfall for all leaders, including those in educational settings. The danger of arrogance for school leaders can be seen in studies of school principals who have either fallen from their leadership positions or been criticized as being ineffective—principals whose behaviors reflect the aforementioned characteristics of arrogance. Three studies illustrate this point. First, in describing the dark side of school leadership, Blase and Blase (2004) discussed principals' misuse of power and mistreatment of teachers as an element of ineffective and unethical school leadership. Second, in a discussion of how one principal negatively affected his school's teachers and climate, Brooks (2006) similarly cited abuse of authority and use of power for manipulation, as well as behaviors such as blaming others and failing to see one's shortcomings. Third, Davis (1998) found that the most frequent reason why school principals involuntarily left their jobs was failure to build and maintain positive interpersonal relationships. These principals were described as intimidating and manipulative, lacking integrity, and failing to listen.

On the basis of the premise that arrogance is an exaggerated sense of self-confidence, one might logically be led to question the difference between confident leaders and arrogant leaders. The difference, according to some authors, is this: humility. Humility has been described as the dividing line between confidence and arrogance (Hader, 2008) and as the midpoint between the two negative extremes of arrogance and lack of self-esteem, enabling leaders to distinguish the delicate line between healthy self-confidence and overconfidence (Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez, 2004). It appears, then, that self-confidence can become arrogance if it is not balanced with humility.

A number of highly respected leadership experts have asserted that humility is essential to leader effectiveness. For example, Collins (2001) identified humility as an essential characteristic of what he calls Level 5 leadership—the highest level of leadership possible according to his model of great companies. Senge (2005) called humility an attribute of real leadership because it is necessary for discovering biases in the leader's thinking. Kouzes and Posner (2002) viewed humility as being so important that they asserted, "Perhaps the very best advice we can give all aspiring leaders is to remain humble and unassuming" (p. 398).

In recent years, a growing number of scholars have discussed the importance of humility in leadership (see, e.g., Morris, Brotheridge, & Urbanski, 2005; Sandelands, 2008; Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez, 2004). Yet, despite the apparent need for humility in leaders, there is a paucity of empirical research examining the relationship between leader humility and leader effectiveness. In fact, no quantitative studies have examined the statistical relationship between these two constructs. Moreover, no studies have examined the relationship between leader humility and leader self-confidence, despite the apparent association of both constructs with leader effectiveness and despite claims that humility is needed to prevent self-confidence from escalating into arrogance. Furthermore, no studies have examined the relationship among all three of these constructs, particularly the combined impact of leader self-confidence and leader humility on leader effectiveness. The purpose of the present study, therefore, was to empirically examine the understudied relationship among leader confidence, humility, and effectiveness, as measured by teachers' perceptions of their principals.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Leadership is "a process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task" (Chemers, 2000, p. 27). Based on this definition of leadership, leader effectiveness may be defined as the extent to which the leader influences others to engage in activities that result in the achievement of mutual goals. Effective leadership, then, involves both a process of influencing followers and the achievement of desired outcomes.

A vast amount of research has been conducted to identify and better understand the factors contributing to leader effectiveness. Pierce and Newstrom (2003) presented a compilation of articles from the literature identifying factors that have an impact on effective leadership.

They also provided a broad analysis of factors contributing to effective leadership and proposed that, broadly speaking, the process and outcomes of leadership are affected, either directly or indirectly, by three key components: the leader, the follower, and the context. The present study's conceptual framework is based on a modified version of Pierce and Newstrom's model of leadership. Specifically, the present study divides the leader component into three categories, consistent with the studies found in Pierce and Newstrom's work and based on a broad review of the leadership literature. Consequently, this study views leader effectiveness as resulting from a dynamic interaction of factors in five overarching categories, as illustrated in Figure 1: characteristics of the leader (including personal traits and attributes as well as demographics), characteristics of the followers, characteristics of the organizational context or situation, leadership skills and competencies, and leadership style. Within this framework, the present study examined two personal attributes of leaders that contribute toward their effectiveness: confidence[1] (highly similar to leadership self-efficacy) and humility. The present study also examined

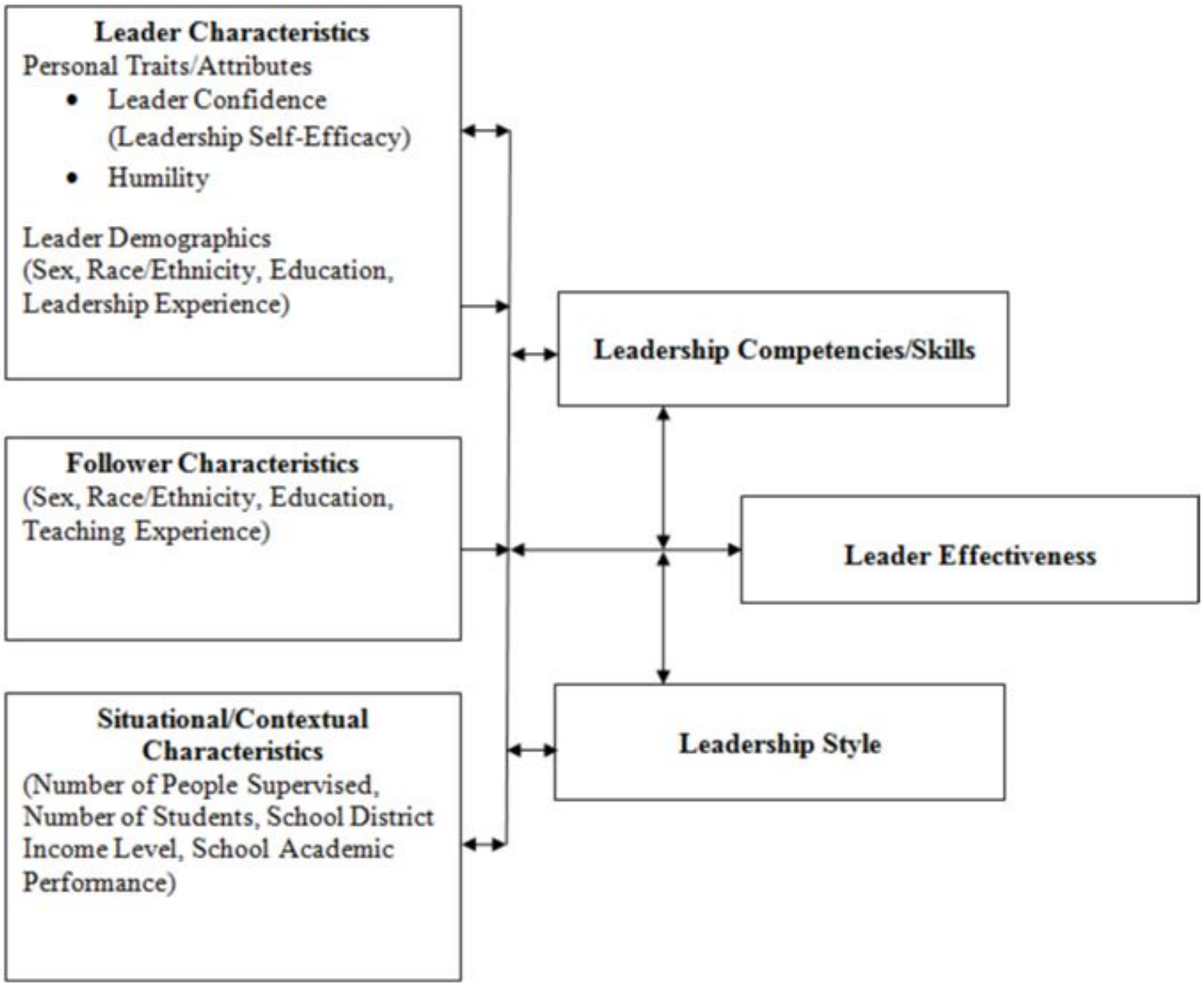

Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

and controlled for other factors potentially influencing the relationship among confidence, humility, and leader effectiveness—including the demographic characteristics of followers and leaders and contextual factors, such as the number of people supervised by the principals, the number of students attending the schools, the income levels of the school districts, and the schools' academic performance.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Much of the previous research that has examined leaders' confidence and/or humility in relationship to their effectiveness is not specific to educational leadership but rather more generic, encompassing a broad range of leadership situations and contexts. Therefore, this section reviews the literature that is relevant to these relationships, both outside of and within educational settings.

LEADER CONFIDENCE, SELF-EFFICACY, AND EFFECTIVENESS

Self-confidence is conceptually similar to the construct of self-efficacy. In fact, *leader self-confidence* and *leadership self-efficacy* have been treated as interchangeable terms in the literature (see, e.g., Chemers, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Sashkin, 2004). *Leadership self-efficacy* refers to one's confidence in his or her capacity or ability to successfully lead a group (McCormick, 2001; Murphy, 2002). According to McCormick (2001), self-confidence and self-efficacy are not identical concepts but are closely associated in that self-confidence is a trait that "impacts leadership performance through the mediating mechanism of leadership self-efficacy" (p. 24). In other words, whereas self-confidence is a personal trait that is often displayed by leaders in a variety of roles and situations, leadership self-efficacy reflects leaders' confidence specific to the leadership role and situation. Thus, self-confidence appears to indirectly influence leadership practices and effectiveness through its impact on leadership self-efficacy.

McCormick (2001) asserted that because the construct of self-confidence is not embedded in a validated theoretical system, researchers have appropriately used the construct of self-efficacy to explain how self-confidence influences performance. Similar to self-confidence, self-efficacy is the expectation that one can perform a behavior successfully to produce a desired outcome (Bandura, 1977). Efficacy beliefs influence one's expectations of success, and these expectations influence the initiation of an individual's coping behavior, how much task-related effort will be expended,

and how long that effort will be sustained in the face of obstacles. Furthermore, individuals who perceive themselves as efficacious are likely to engage in sufficient levels of effort that, if well executed, produce successful outcomes, whereas those with low self-efficacy are likely to prematurely discontinue their efforts and fail on the task (Bandura & Wood, 1989).

Self-efficacy has been widely studied in numerous academic fields and professional contexts, including education and organizational management. While some scholars view self-efficacy as a general disposition (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001; Scherbaum, Cohen-Charash, & Kern, 2006), others view it as domain specific, based on studies showing that a high level of self-efficacy in one domain does not necessarily correlate with high levels of self-efficacy in other domains (Chesney, Neilands, Chambers, Taylor, & Folkman, 2006). According to this view, to understand self-efficacy in the domain of leadership, one must examine the construct of leadership self-efficacy. Because it is a relatively new construct in the leadership studies arena (McCormick, Tanguma, & Lopez-Forment, 2002), formal inquiry about leadership self-efficacy is in a relatively infant stage (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

McCormick (2001) presented a model for leadership in which leadership efficacy is critical to leader effectiveness "because it affects the goals a leader selects, leader motivation, development of functional leadership strategies, and the skillful execution of those strategies" (p. 30). Specifically, the model "posits that high self-efficacy will lead individuals [leaders] to set challenging goals, persist in the face of obstacles, work harder on tasks, direct cognitive and behavioral resources toward goal relevant actions, and actively search for effective task strategies" (p. 26).

Chemers (2002) and Murphy (2002) also provided persuasive arguments and evidence supporting a strong relationship between leadership self-efficacy/confidence and leader effectiveness. Chemers concluded his analysis by stating that confidence plays a key role in outstanding levels of leadership, because "highly confident leaders are able to project an image of competence, have lower levels of personal anxiety and defensiveness allowing for more effective interpersonal communication and judgment, and possess a calmer demeanor, which facilities complex and effective decision making" (p. 152).

Numerous studies (e.g., Alston, 2005; Anderson, Krajewski, Goffin, & Jackson, 2008; Chemers, Watson, & May, 2000; Hoyt, Murphy, Halverson, & Watson, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Ng, Ang, & Chan, 2008) have found empirical support for a direct or indirect link between leadership self-efficacy/confidence and effectiveness. Taken together, these studies provide robust evidence of the importance of leadership self-efficacy/

confidence for effective leadership. Of these, however, only Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) examined the link between leadership self-efficacy and effectiveness in educational settings.

In spite of the strong theoretical and empirical support for the positive relationship between leadership self-efficacy/confidence and leader effectiveness, some scholars (Miller, 1997; Whyte, Saks, & Hook, 1997) have cautioned that self-efficacy or self-confidence can serve as a potential danger that could eventually undermine leader success. Accordingly, high levels of self-efficacy may not necessarily correlate with leader success or effectiveness in some situations. Perhaps it is in such situations where leader humility is lacking.

LEADER HUMILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Owens (2009) defined humility as a willingness to view oneself accurately, characterized by self-awareness of one's strengths and limitations, teachability, and an appreciation of others' strengths and contributions. Humility involves the realistic appraisal of one's strengths and weaknesses, talents and accomplishments, successes and failures, and the ability to see the self with modesty and without exaggeration (Exline & Geyer, 2004; Morris et al., 2005; Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez, 2004). It is characterized by the acknowledgment of mistakes and limitations; by openness to new ideas, contradictory information, and advice; and by keeping one's abilities and accomplishments in perspective (Tangney, 2000). Humility is also characterized by listening and learning (Hader, 2008; Schein, Kahane, & Scharmer, 2001) and by mutuality and care (Mayeroff, 1995; Morris et al., 2005).

The relationship between humility and personal effectiveness, as described by Covey (1989), would seem to have implications for leaders:

> The person [leader] who is truly effective has the humility and reverence to recognize his own perceptual limitations and to appreciate the rich resources available through interaction with the hearts and minds of other human beings. That person [leader] values the differences because those differences add to his knowledge, to his understanding of reality. When we're left to our own experiences, we constantly suffer from a shortage of data. (p. 277)

The role of humility in leadership has been given little attention until recent years. Within the past decade, a number of authors have begun to examine humility in the context of leadership—perhaps due to highly publicized cases of leader arrogance, unethical behaviors, and downfall. Some of the most-well-known authors who have advocated for the need for hu-

mility in leadership include Collins (2001, 2009), Covey (2006), Kouzes and Posner (2002), Schein (Schein et al., 2001), and Senge (2005).

Yet, despite the recent attention given to humility in leadership, the scientific study of humility in leadership remains in a stage of relative infancy. Accordingly, Tangney (2000) called for greater attention to the construct of humility in the social and psychological sciences. This call has been answered by psychologists who have studied humility, paired with honesty, as a dimension of the human personality. High scores on the personality trait of honesty–humility indicate an unwillingness to manipulate or exploit others, avoidance of fraud and corruption, and a tendency to be unassuming (Lee & Ashton, 2004). Although Lee, Ashton, and colleagues have not directly examined honesty–humility in the leadership context, their research nevertheless has implications for leaders. For example, honesty–humility is closely related to personal integrity (Lee, Ashton, Morrison, Cordery, & Dunlop, 2008). It has also been found to correlate negatively with Machiavellianism and narcissism (Lee & Ashton, 2005)—traits theoretically associated with unethical leader behavior (Blair, Hoffman, & Helland, 2008; Brown & Trevino, 2006; Morris et al., 2005).

Tangney's (2000) call has also been answered by a growing body of scholarly studies that have discussed humility as an attribute of successful or effective leadership (see, e.g., Chang & Diddams, 2009; Lawrence, 2008; Nielsen, Marrone, & Slay, 2010; Morris et al., 2005; Owens, Rowatt, & Wilkins, 2012; Rego, Clegg, & Cunha, 2012; Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez, 2004). Morris and colleagues (2005) provided an extensive exploration of the theoretical nexus between humility and leadership. On the basis of a thorough review of the literature, they argued convincingly that humility should be included on the list of critical competencies or traits required for successful organizational leadership:

> Authentically humble leaders . . . appreciate that they do not have all the answers and, as a result, actively seek out the contributions of others as a means of overcoming their individual limitations. Simply put, they demonstrate acceptance as well as resolve: acceptance of personal strengths and limitations coupled with a willingness to ask and utilize help from others. (p. 1332)

Morris and colleagues (2005) further discussed the theoretical linkages between humility and emotional intelligence, authentic leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership, all of which have been found to contribute to effective leadership. Other studies have discussed the role of humility in servant leadership (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005; Sandelands, 2008). Still others (Fry, 2003; Fry & Slocum, 2008; Reave, 2005) have posited a theoretical connection among humility, spiritual leadership,

and leader effectiveness. Other researchers have asserted that humility is necessary for ethical leadership, which contributes to leader effectiveness (Brown & Trevino, 2006; Caldwell, Dixon, Atkins, & Dowdell, 2011; Chan, McBey, & Scott-Ladd, 2011).

Although the aforementioned theoretical studies reflect a growing consensus regarding the importance of humility as an attribute of effective leaders, a review of the literature reveals a dearth of empirical research linking humility and leader effectiveness. A handful of qualitative studies have identified humility as an attribute of effective leaders (Alston, 2005; Collins, 2001; Harrison & Clough, 2006; Smith, Plowman, Duchon, & Quinn, 2009; Theoharis, 2008). Of these, Collins (2001) provided the most convincing evidence supporting a direct link between leader humility—as an element of Level 5 leadership—and leader effectiveness. However, an extensive review of the literature reveals only one quantitative study (Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson, & Jinks, 2007) implying a relationship between leader humility (as a component of servant leadership) and school leader effectiveness.

EXAMINING FOLLOWER PERCEPTIONS

To provide a rationale for the instruments used in this study, a brief discussion of follower perceptions is in order. Follower perceptions of leaders intuitively seem important because of the logical connection among such perceptions, the quality of the leader–follower relationship, and the follower's willingness to be led by the leader. As Kouzes and Posner (1990) asserted, "successful leadership depends far more upon the follower's perceptions of the leader's abilities than upon the leader's own perceptions. Leadership is in the eye of the follower" (p. 29). Researchers such as Hollander (1992) have also discussed the importance of follower perceptions and expectations of leaders for the leader–follower relationship.

One reason why follower perceptions are important is that, according to implicit leadership theories, leaders may or may not fit the leadership prototypes held by followers—that is, their conceptions and expectations of the ideal leader, in terms of what leadership is, looks like, or should be (Chemers, 2002; Nielsen et al., 2010). In educational leadership, for example, research has shown that teachers tend to prefer leaders who are honest, competent, and flexible and who demonstrate trust in teachers, listen to their ideas and feelings, increase their autonomy, and adopt democratic decision-making processes (Oplatka & Tako, 2009). When school leaders do not live up to these expectations, we might expect that they will be judged by teachers as ineffective. The effectiveness of school leaders has been assessed via teacher perspectives in a number of studies (see, e.g.,

Blase, 1993; Blase & Blase, 2000). Similarly, the present study examined school leader effectiveness from the perspective of teachers.

PRESENT STUDY

Several authors have called for the empirical study of humility in leadership. For example, Tangney (2000) listed numerous research questions about humility that have implications for leadership. Owens (2009) said that although scholars have argued for the importance of humility within leadership and organizational contexts, these relationships have not been yet been tested. Rowatt and colleagues (2006) recommended that future research investigate the link between measures of humility and observable behaviors such as leadership and examine whether measures of humility predict meaningful outcomes such as educational or corporate success. Exline and Geyer (2004) proposed that future research might examine whether humble people are more or less likely to be good leaders. Morris and colleagues (2005) suggested that future research is needed to better understand humility's specific contingencies in the leadership process. Moreover, Nielsen and colleagues (2010) proposed that future research be directed toward humility's interaction with general charismatic leader qualities, including that of self-confidence.

To summarize, additional empirical research is needed of the relationship among leader confidence, humility, and effectiveness—not only in the organizational and management sciences but also in the study of educational leadership. Although humility has been mentioned as a trait of successful principals (Paredes Scribner, Crow, Lopez, & Murtadha, 2011), little attention has been given to the role of humility in educational leadership. Of the aforementioned qualitative studies that have found humility as an attribute of effective leaders, only two (Alston, 2005; Theoharis, 2008) examined leaders in school settings. Moreover, no studies have examined the statistical relationship among confidence, humility, and leader effectiveness, in either educational or noneducational settings.

The present study therefore begins to address a gap in the literature through an initial examination of these relationships, within the context of K–12 education. It examined the understudied relationship among leader confidence, humility, and effectiveness, as measured by teachers' perceptions of their principals. In accordance with this purpose and within this context, the following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: What is the relationship among leader confidence, humility, and effectiveness?

Research Question 2: Does leader effectiveness differ by the level of leader confidence and humility, while controlling for relevant demographic variables?

Research Question 3: Do leader confidence and humility significantly predict leader effectiveness?

METHOD

Although humility in leadership has received growing scholarly attention in recent years, the majority of studies examining and supporting the relationship between humility and leader effectiveness have been conceptual or theoretical in nature. Of the few empirical studies that have found humility to be an attribute of effective leaders (Alston, 2005; Collins, 2001; Harrison & Clough, 2006; Smith et al., 2009; Theoharis, 2008), qualitative methods were used in each case to discover that connection. No quantitative studies have directly examined the relationship between humility and leader effectiveness or between humility and confidence. Although scholars have argued for the importance of humility within leadership and although a handful of qualitative studies support these arguments, the relationship between humility and leader effectiveness has not yet been statistically tested. For these reasons, an examination of the relationship between humility and leader effectiveness using quantitative methods is warranted. Moreover, because no studies have examined the statistical relationship among leader confidence, humility, and effectiveness, the present study uses quantitative methods to examine these relationships.

Accordingly, this study used a correlational research design to examine the relationship among three quantitative variables: leader confidence, leader humility, and leader effectiveness (as measured by follower perceptions). The design was intended to reveal the degree to which leader confidence and leader humility—separately and in combination—were related to or predictive of leader effectiveness in the present study. The correlational research design was appropriate for this study because it examined the relationship between two or more variables to "describe relationships that may exist among naturally occurring phenomena, without trying in any way to alter these phenomena" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008, p. 11) and because the study's primary independent and dependent variables were quantitative.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants in this study were 137 teachers from K–12 educational settings taking graduate-level education courses at a midsized public university in

the Midwest. I was given permission by the instructors of these courses to administer a survey to their students, who were assured that their participation was completely voluntary. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the survey did not ask participants to provide their names, their principals' names, or the names of their school districts and buildings.

Of the 137 participants, the majority (66.4%) were female. Most (61.3%) had a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education, while more than a third (33.7%) had completed a master's degree; only 1.5% had completed a specialist degree. The sample was overwhelmingly White: 92.7% of participants identified themselves as Caucasian, 3.6% ($n = 5$) as African Americans, 2.9% ($n = 4$) as Hispanic or Latino, and 0.7% ($n = 1$) as other. Most participants had from 3 to 10 years of teaching experience (46.7% with 3 to 5 years; 23.4% with 6 to 10 years), while 13.9% had 11 to 15 years of teaching experience, 8.8% had 2 or fewer years, and 7.3% had 16 or more years of experience.

INSTRUMENTS

Participants (teachers) completed a survey composed of four sections: demographics, a scale measuring perceptions of principal's humility, a scale measuring perceptions of principal's confidence, and a scale measuring perceptions of principal's effectiveness.

Demographic items. To assess and control for the impact of demographic and contextual variables on leader effectiveness, teachers were asked to answer 16 questions concerning the following: teacher demographics (sex, race/ethnicity, highest level of education, teaching experience, current occupation), principal demographics (sex, race/ethnicity, highest level of education, experience as a principal), and school demographics (Ohio Department of Education–designated district typology and school report card grade, number of students in the school, and number of teachers supervised by the principal). The survey also included 1 question concerning the number of years that participants had worked with their principals. The four school demographic variables were included because of previous research suggesting that these may influence leader confidence, humility, or effectiveness. Please refer to the appendix for a description of these variables and the rationale for including them in this study.

Leader humility. To measure teachers' perceptions of their principals' humility, this study used the Owens Humility Scale (other-report form) developed by Owens (2009), who provided initial evidence for the scale's validity. Originally a 9-item scale, the version used for this study contains 11 items, with a reported alpha reliability coefficient of .90 (B. P. Owens,

personal communication, July 12–13, 2010). The scale consists of three subscales: Self-Awareness, Teachability, and Appreciation. Based on a Likert scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), this section asked teachers to rate their levels of agreement with statements about their principals' humility-related behaviors. Teachers' responses to these 11 items were averaged to compute individual humility scores reflecting each teacher's perception of his or her principal's humility. Mean scores could range from 1.00 to 5.00. High scores on this scale indicate high perceived humility, while low scores indicate low perceived humility. Examples of items included "My principal is willing to learn from others" (teachability), "My principal shows appreciation for the unique contributions of others" (appreciation), and "My principal admits it when he or she makes mistakes" (self-awareness).

Leader confidence. As previously mentioned, the constructs of leader confidence and leadership self-efficacy (i.e., how confident one feels in his or her ability to lead a group) are highly similar. However, *leadership self-efficacy* typically refers to the self-reported efficacy beliefs of leaders in their leadership role and is therefore typically measured via the self-report of leaders. Because the present study examined teachers' perceptions of their principals, rather than principals' self-reported efficacy beliefs, the label *confidence* was used rather than *leadership self-efficacy* for this variable. However, the instrument created to measure perceptions of leader confidence was heavily based on the self-efficacy literature, because the construct of self-confidence is not embedded in a validated theoretical system (McCormick, 2001).

To measure teachers' perceptions of principals' confidence, I developed a 21-item scale with two subscales: Leader Efficacy and Task Confidence. This scale also included 1 question asking teachers to rate their principals' overall level of leadership confidence. Based on a Likert scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), this section of the survey asked teachers to rate their levels of agreement with statements concerning their principals' demonstration of confident leadership behaviors. Teachers' responses to these 21 items were averaged to compute individual confidence scores reflecting each teacher's perception of his or her principal's leadership-related confidence. Mean scores could range from 1.00 to 5.00. High scores on this scale indicate high perceived leader confidence, while low scores indicate low perceived leader confidence.

The Leader Efficacy subscale consisted of eight items designed to measure perceptions of principals' general confidence in their leadership abilities. This subscale was constructed to reflect dimensions of self-efficacy

found in the literature (e.g., Bandura, 1982; Bandura & Wood, 1989), including effort expenditure and persistence, goal setting, activity selection, and emotional stability, as well as the leader's belief in his or her general leadership capabilities. Items in this subscale included the following examples: "My principal works hard to achieve his/her goals even when faced with adversity or obstacles," "My principal is willing to take on difficult tasks and situations," and "My principal is calm under pressure."

The Task Confidence subscale comprised 12 items designed to measure perceptions of principals' confidence related to several leadership tasks that are common to leaders across a broad spectrum of organizational types (i.e., not specific to leaders in K–12 educational settings). However, items were worded to reflect the school context, and six items drew from the literature on school leaders' efficacy (McCollum & Kajs, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The Task Confidence subscale began with the statement "My principal displays/demonstrates confidence that he she can . . . ," which was then followed by items reflecting various leadership tasks, such as "Influence staff to pursue a desired course of direction," "Motivate staff," and "Lead change initiatives in the school."

To develop the confidence scale, I first drafted 30 items drawn from a thorough review of the literature on leadership self-efficacy and from instruments used to measure leadership self-efficacy and similar constructs in other studies. To establish content validity, I obtained feedback on the initial 30 items from 25 educators, including 3 university professors (1 of whom is a former school superintendent), 7 principals, 1 assistant principal, a former principal, and 13 teachers. Based on the feedback obtained, several items were eliminated or revised. The final 21 items were those judged to reflect (a) principal behaviors that represent the dimensions of leadership self-efficacy that were found in the literature and were observable by teachers and (b) principal qualities with which most teachers were familiar enough to have formed impressions.

Leader effectiveness. To measure teachers' perceptions of principals' effectiveness, this study used the rater form of two subscales from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire 5x–Short (Avolio & Bass, 1995): the Transformational Leadership subscale (20 items) and the Outcomes of Leadership subscale (9 items). The instrument asked teachers to rate how frequently their principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors, using a Likert scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*frequently, if not always*). Teachers' responses to these 29 items were averaged to compute individual leader effectiveness scores reflecting each teacher's perception of his or her principal's leader effectiveness. Mean scores could range from 1.00 to

5.00. High scores on this scale indicated high perceived leader effectiveness, while low scores indicated low perceived leader effectiveness.

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire has been widely used by researchers as a valid measure of leader effectiveness (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The Transformational Leadership subscale comprises five subscales and identifies leaders who influence their followers by building trust and acting with integrity; who inspire and motivate their followers through articulating shared goals and mutual understanding of what is right and important; who provide intellectual stimulation for followers by encouraging innovative thinking; and who demonstrate individualized consideration by coaching followers, understanding and sharing in their concerns and developmental needs, and treating each individual uniquely (Avolio & Bass, 2007). Examples of items from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire 5x-Short (Avolio & Bass, 1995) included "Emphasizes the importance of having a collective sense of mission," "Talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished," "Suggests new ways of looking at how to complete assignments," and "Considers me as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others." The Outcomes of Leadership subscale measures the leader's impact on followers and comprised subscales for extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction (Avolio & Bass, 1995). An example of an item from this subscale includes "Increases my willingness to try harder."[2]

Descriptive statistics and reliabilities for the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire 5x are presented in the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire manual (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Reliability coefficients for the five transformational leadership subscales range from .70 to .83 (based on ratings given by those at a lower level than the focal leader, in studies in the United States). All three subscales for outcomes of leadership have reliability coefficients of .84. These reliabilities exceed standard cutoffs for internal consistency recommended in the literature.

RESULTS

SCALE RELIABILITY AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Survey data were analyzed using SPSS 17.0.[3] All scales and subscales had a high level of reliability, with reliability coefficients ranging from .87 to .98. Table 1 presents reliability coefficients and descriptive statistics for each scale and subscale.

Table 1. Subscale Reliability Coefficients and Descriptive Statistics

Scale: Subscale	*Items, n*	*Cronbach α*	*M*	*SD*
Humility	11	.96	3.48	0.96
Teachability	4	.92	3.46	1.04
Appreciation	3	.90	3.61	1.06
Self-Awareness	4	.87	3.40	0.96
Confidence[a]	21	.97	3.57	0.80
Leader Efficacy	8	.93	3.63	0.85
Task Confidence	12	.95	3.52	0.86
Leader Effectiveness	29	.98	3.31	0.92
Transformational Leadership	20	.97	3.28	0.90
Outcomes of Leadership	9	.96	3.38	1.05

[a]Includes one item that was not included in the Leader Efficacy or Task Confidence subscales. The additional item was designed to assess teachers' perceptions of their principals' overall level of leadership.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

The relationship among leader confidence, humility, and effectiveness. To examine the relationship among leader confidence, humility, and effectiveness (as perceived by followers), Pearson r correlation coefficients were computed for the three primary variables and their subscales, as presented in Table 2. All correlations were statistically significant at $p \leq .001$ and ranged between .52 and .75 (excluding correlations between each variable's scale and its subscales). A strong positive relationship was found between leader effectiveness and confidence ($r = .64$) and between leader effectiveness and humility ($r = .69$). Interestingly, humility had a slightly stronger relationship than confidence with leader effectiveness. A strong positive relationship was also found between confidence and humil-

Table 2. Pearson *r* Correlations Between Primary Variables and Subscales

Measure	*1*	*1A*	*1B*	*1C*	*2*	*2A*	*2B*	*3*	*3A*
1. Humility	—								
A. Teachability	.97	—							
B. Appreciation	.93	.86	—						
C. Self-Awareness	.95	.89	.80	—					
2. Confidence	.73	.69	.69	.70	—				
A. Leader Efficacy	.75	.71	.72	.72	.92	—			
B. Task Confidence	.67	.63	.62	.65	.97	.81	—		
3. Leader Effectiveness	.69	.64	.68	.67	.64	.62	.59	—	
A. Transformational Leadership	.68	.63	.67	.65	.65	.61	.61	.99	—
B. Outcomes of Leadership	.67	.62	.65	.64	.59	.60	.52	.96	.90

Note. $n = 137$. All correlation coefficients significant at $p \leq .001$.

ity (r = .73). These results indicate that teachers perceived their principals' humility-related behaviors as being compatible with both confident leadership and effective leadership.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

Mean differences in leader effectiveness by confidence level and humility level. The second research question examined if leader effectiveness differed by the level of leader confidence and humility, while controlling for relevant demographic variables related to the principal, teacher, or school district. To assess the impact of demographic variables on leader effectiveness, a series of univariate analyses of variance were conducted, with leader effectiveness as the dependent variable. For each analysis, one demographic variable was entered as the independent variable (i.e., participant sex, level of education, race, teaching experience; principal sex, level of education, race, experience; years worked together; district typology, report card grade, number supervised, number of students). No differences were found in perceived leader effectiveness based on the sex, level of education, or race of either the principal or the teacher.[4] Significant differences in leader effectiveness were found for only two demographic variables: participant teaching experience, $F(4, 132) = 2.718$, $p = .032$, and school report card grade, $F(4, 107) = 3.452$, $p = .011$. Therefore, these two variables were controlled for in subsequent analyses conducted for the second research question.

To examine if leader effectiveness differed by the level of leader confidence and humility, data for both confidence and humility were divided into categories of *low* (mean scores of 0 to 2.99), *medium* (mean scores of 3 to 3.99), and *high* (mean scores of 4 to 5). Mean differences in leader effectiveness were then examined by leader confidence level (categorical confidence) and by leader humility level (categorical humility). Analysis was then conducted to determine if there was a significant interaction on leader effectiveness between categorical confidence and categorical humility.

To examine mean differences in leader effectiveness by confidence level, a univariate analysis of covariance was conducted, with leader effectiveness as the dependent variable, categorical confidence as the independent variable, and teaching experience and report card grade as covariates. Because a significant interaction between report card grade and teaching experience was found, a Report Card Grade × Teaching Experience interaction variable was created to control for this interaction. Results showed that categorical confidence had a main effect on leader effectiveness, $F(2, 108) = 42.757$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .442$, with leader effectiveness being

lowest for low confidence and highest for high confidence, while controlling for Report Card Grade × Teaching Experience. In addition, the interaction of Report Card Grade × Teaching Experience significantly adjusted the means, $F(1, 108) = 9.571$, $p = .047$, partial $\eta^2 = .081$.

To examine mean differences in leader effectiveness by humility level, a second analysis of covariance was conducted, with leader effectiveness as the dependent variable, categorical humility as the independent variable, and teaching experience and report card grade as covariates. A Report Card Grade × Teaching Experience interaction variable was again used to control for a significant interaction found between these two variables. Results showed that categorical humility also had a main effect on leader effectiveness, $F(2, 105) = 52.576$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .493$, with leader effectiveness being lowest for low humility and highest for high humility, while controlling for Report Card Grade × Teaching Experience. Again, the interaction of Report Card Grade × Teaching Experience significantly adjusted the means, $F(1, 108) = 6.888$, $p = .010$, partial $\eta^2 = .060$.

To examine if there was a significant interaction on leader effectiveness between confidence level and humility level, a factorial analysis of covariance was conducted, with leader effectiveness as the dependent variable, categorical confidence and categorical humility as the independent variables, and Report Card Grade × Teaching Experience as a covariate. A significant interaction between categorical confidence and categorical humility on leader effectiveness was found, $F(3, 99) = 5.442$, $p = .002$. Table 3 presents the mean leader effectiveness scores for each group. Additionally, the line chart in Figure 2 illustrates this interaction.

A review of the line chart and the mean scores of high, medium, and low groups for categorical confidence and categorical humility reveals that within the medium and high humility groups, leader effectiveness ratings increased with increasing levels of categorical confidence. Within the low humility group, however, leader effectiveness ratings decreased with increasing levels of categorical confidence. Similarly, within the medium and high confidence groups, leader effectiveness ratings increased with

Table 3. Mean Scores for Leader Effectiveness by Levels of Categorical Confidence and Categorical Humility

	Confidence					
	Low		*Medium*		*High*	
Humility	*n*	*M*	*n*	*M*	*n*	*M*
Low	14	2.39	10	2.28	2	2.17
Medium	7	2.39	31	3.33	5	3.99
High	0	—	15	3.56	28	4.25

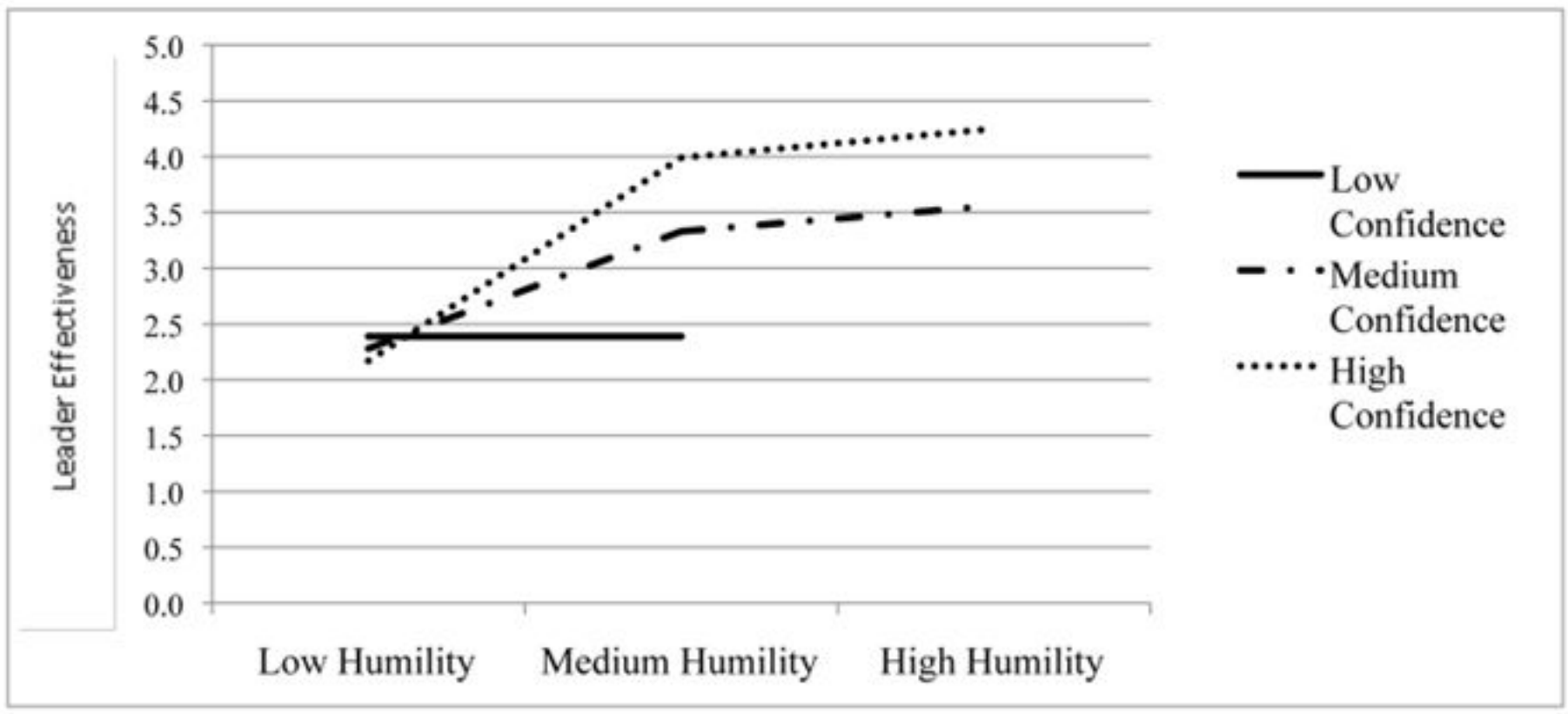

Figure 2. Line chart of interaction between categorical confidence and categorical humility on leader effectiveness.

increasing levels of categorical humility. However, within the low confidence group, leader effectiveness ratings remained the same as categorical humility increased from low to medium.

In general, leader effectiveness was lowest for the low humility group (regardless of confidence level). The highest level of leader effectiveness was found in the high humility–high confidence group, whereas the lowest level was found in the low humility–high confidence group. Interestingly, within the high humility group, no cases were categorized as having low confidence.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Primary variable predictions of leader effectiveness. To examine if leader confidence and humility significantly predicted leader effectiveness, a standard regression analysis (using the Enter method) was conducted, with leader effectiveness as the dependent variable and confidence and humility as the independent variables. In standard multiple regression, the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable is evaluated in terms of what it uniquely adds to the prediction of the dependent variable (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). Multivariate outliers (four cases) were eliminated for purposes of this analysis. Tolerance statistics indicated that no collinearity was present. Regression results indicated that the overall model of confidence and humility significantly predicted leader effectiveness, $R^2 = .607$, $R^2_{adj} = .601$, $F(2, 130) = 100.401$, $p < .001$. These results indicate that humility and confidence jointly explained 60.7% of the variance

Table 4. Standard Regression Coefficients for Confidence and Humility Predicting Leader Effectiveness (n = 133)

					r		
	B	*SE B*	β	*t*	*Bivariate*	*Partial*	*Semipartial*
Humility	.413	.088	.410	4.679*	.734	.380	.257
Confidence	.483	.102	.416	4.751*	.735	.385	.261

*$p \leq .001$.

in leader effectiveness and that both variables had significant independent effects on leader effectiveness (i.e., they both contributed significantly to the model). Table 4 reports the regression coefficients for this analysis.

To further address the third research question, a second multiple regression analysis was conducted, this time entering demographic variables into the analysis. The purpose of this step was to examine if any demographic variables significantly predicted leader effectiveness and/or influenced the degree to which confidence and humility predicted leader effectiveness. With the Forward method, leader effectiveness was entered as the dependent variable; confidence, humility, and all demographic variables (participant sex, education, race, teaching experience; principal sex, education, race, and experience; years worked together; district typology, report card grade, number supervised, and number of students) were entered as independent variables. The Forward selection method of multiple regression is often used in studies that are exploratory in nature (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). With this method, SPSS identifies and selects the independent variables that significantly contribute to the dependent variable, in descending levels of contribution. Multivariate outliers were again eliminated for purposes of this analysis. Tolerance statistics again indicated that no collinearity was present. Results generated a significant model with three variables, indicating that humility, district typology (a measure of school district income level), and confidence significantly predicted leader effectiveness, $R^2 = .594$, $R^2_{adj} = .576$, $F(3, 67) = 32.669$, $p < .001$. These three variables accounted for 59.4% of the variance in leader effectiveness. Table 5 reports the regression coefficients for this analysis. The regression coefficients shown are from the final step of the forward regression analysis and represent unique effects of each predictor. Based on the calculations involved in Forward regression, humility, district typology, and confidence represent the variables that had the highest correlations with leader effectiveness and accounted for the most unique variance. Interestingly, this analysis indicates that leader effectiveness was more strongly predicted by humility than by confidence.

Table 5. Forward Regression Coefficients for Confidence, Humility, and Demographic Variables Predicting Leader Effectiveness (n = 71)

					r		
	B	*SE B*	β	*t*	*Bivariate*	*Partial*	*Semipartial*
Humility	.481	.129	.488	3.741***	.713	.416	.291
District type (income)	.284	.095	.234	2.976**	.123	.342	.232
Confidence	.385	.157	.320	2.457*	.679	.288	.191

*$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$. ***$p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

Findings from this study provide empirical support for a strong positive relationship between humility and leader effectiveness; they also support previous studies finding that self-confidence is an attribute of effective leaders. Moreover, this study provides empirical evidence that leaders can be perceived as both humble and self-confident, indicating that humility is highly compatible with leader self-confidence. Results shed light on the understudied relationship between humility and leader effectiveness, by finding that high levels of humility were associated with high levels of leader effectiveness, while low levels of humility were associated with low levels of leader effectiveness. Results also showed that humility (as well as confidence) significantly predicted leader effectiveness, and when demographic variables were entered into the analysis, humility (as well as confidence) continued to significantly predict leader effectiveness. By demonstrating that both leader humility and leader self-confidence are strongly related to leader effectiveness, this study enhances our understanding of the relative importance of these two characteristics for leaders and has potentially important implications for educational leadership practice.

One possible explanation for finding a connection between humility and leader effectiveness is this: Humility appears to be necessary for leader integrity and for building trust with followers—both of which are key ingredients to successful leadership (Brown & Trevino, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Sankar, 2003). Because humility is characterized by honesty (Lee & Ashton, 2004) and is necessary for ethical leadership (Brown & Trevino, 2006; Caldwell et al., 2011), humble leaders are likely to be perceived as credible and trustworthy. The importance of honesty, credibility, and trustworthiness of leaders can hardly be overstated. As Kouzes and Posner (2002) found in their extensive study of characteristics of admired leaders, honesty was "the single most important ingredient in the leader-constituent relationship" (p. 27). Moreover, they found that "more than

anything, *people want leaders who are credible. Credibility is the foundation of leadership*" (p. 32, emphasis in original). This three-way connection among humility, integrity and trust, and leader effectiveness can be seen in the present study. Importantly, one measure of leader effectiveness in this study was transformational leadership, which included items designed to measure the extent to which leaders build trust and act with integrity (Avolio & Bass, 2007). As defined in this study, humility involves a willingness to view oneself accurately, characterized by self-awareness of one's strengths and limitations, teachability, and an appreciation of others' strengths and contributions. When leaders are willing to admit their limitations and mistakes, are willing to learn from others, and recognize the value of others' strengths and contributions, we might expect that followers perceive them as being credible and trustworthy, and these perceptions influence evaluations of the leaders' effectiveness.

A second possible explanation for the relationship between leader humility and effectiveness addresses the link between humility and the second measure of leader effectiveness, outcomes of leadership. The Outcomes of Leadership subscale measured the extent to which leaders are able to generate extra effort in their followers, effectively meet the professional needs of followers, and generate satisfaction in their followers (Avolio & Bass, 2007). As described by Nielsen and colleagues (2010), humility "prevents excessive self-focus and allows leaders to understand themselves and develop perspective in their relationship with followers" (p. 41). They proposed that humility indirectly influences leader effectiveness, defined in terms of positive follower outcomes, through socialized charismatic leader behaviors and follower attributions of leader humility. Specifically, according to their model, humility helps leaders (a) understand followers' values, seek out their perspectives, and see themselves in relation to others; (b) serve as a positive role model by working with followers and tying their self-concepts to the group's vision; and (c) recognize the importance of equitable relationships with followers, demonstrated by requesting and responding to their viewpoints. As a result of these behaviors, humble leaders are able to generate and implement a vision for the group and communicate effectively with followers, which ultimately results in positive follower outcomes, such as identification with the leader, trust in the leader, self-efficacy, motivation, and willingness to sacrifice. This model is reproduced in Figure 3. Two of the outcomes in this model of motivation and willingness to sacrifice are conceptually similar to the present study's outcome measure of extra effort. It also seems reasonable to expect that principals who demonstrate the socialized charismatic leader behaviors described by Neilsen and colleagues and whose followers identify with

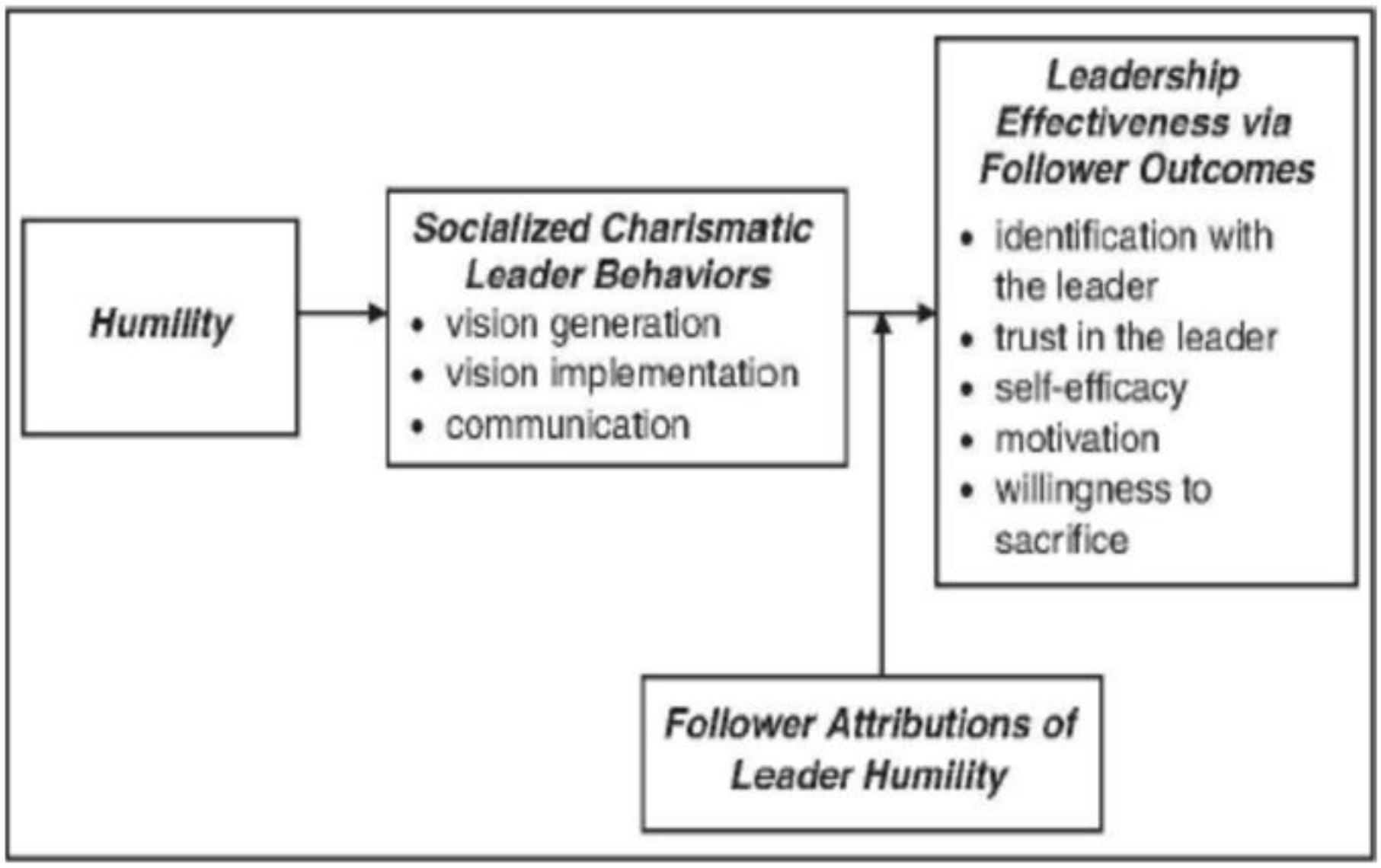

Figure 3. Model of the link between humility and outcomes of leadership (Nielsen, Marrone, & Slay, 2010).

and trust them are likely to be perceived as meeting their followers' professional needs and to generate satisfaction in their followers.

A third possible explanation for the connection found between humility and leader effectiveness is that, consistent with implicit leadership theories, humility (as operationalized in this study) may to some extent fit the prototypes held by followers—that is, their conceptions and expectations of the ideal leader, in terms of what leadership is, looks like, or should be (Chemers, 2002; Nielsen et al., 2010). As mentioned earlier, research has shown that teachers tend to prefer leaders who are honest, competent, and flexible and who demonstrate trust in teachers, listen to their ideas and feelings, increase their autonomy, and adopt democratic decision-making processes (Oplatka & Tako, 2009). Humility is clearly consistent with these preferences because it is characterized by honesty (Lee & Ashton, 2004) as well as listening and learning (Hader, 2008; Schein et al., 2001). Accordingly, the Teachability subscale used as a measure of humility in this study assessed the extent to which teachers perceived their principals as engaging in behaviors that involve listening to and learning from others (e.g., being open to others' advice and ideas and seeking feedback even if it is critical), and the Self-Awareness subscale items assessed the extent to which teachers perceived their principals as engaging in behaviors that require honesty (e.g., admitting when they do not know how to do something,

when they make mistakes, or when others have more knowledge and skills than themselves). Thus, it appears that humility may contribute to leader effectiveness by helping satisfy teachers' expectations that principals should be honest and should listen to their teachers' ideas and feelings.

The results of the present study also provide strong support for the view that humility is highly compatible with self-confidence. This view was expressed by Irwin (2009), who stated that "self-confident competence in our jobs and humility go hand-in-hand" (p. 137), and by Janney (1952), who asserted that leaders who build the most enduring organizations paradoxically possess both great humility and great self-confidence. Similarly, Nielsen and colleagues (2010) referred to "the bridled confidence that characterizes humility" (p. 41) and implied that it is desirable for followers to perceive leaders as being both confident and humble. The present study provides support for the idea that humility can coexist with confidence and may in fact be necessary to prevent confidence from escalating into arrogance.

The analysis of the interaction between categorical confidence and categorical humility provides perhaps the most intriguing findings of this study (see Table 3 and Figure 2). First, the low humility–high confidence group had the lowest levels of leader effectiveness. If we assume that low humility–high confidence leaders are perceived as arrogant, these findings provide further evidence in support of previous studies finding or asserting that arrogance contributes to leader ineffectiveness (Collins, 2009; Irwin, 2009; Sala, 2003). Second, within the low confidence category, an increase in humility was not accompanied by an increase in leader effectiveness. For leaders with low levels of confidence, perhaps increased levels of humility only serve to magnify their lack of confidence; consequently, followers perceive these leaders as being doubtful, indecisive, and insecure. Third, not a single case (principal) was categorized as having low confidence–high humility. This finding appears to indicate that high levels of humility require at least a moderate level of self-confidence. Perhaps individuals with low levels of confidence in their leadership abilities and moderate levels of humility are acutely aware of their weaknesses, finding it difficult to overcome obstacles, eventually losing their motivation to lead, and therefore tending to leave their leadership positions. Alternatively, perhaps individuals with low levels of confidence in their leadership abilities, combined with high levels of humility, are not attracted to positions of leadership (e.g., the principalship) in the first place.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

The results of this study support the view that humility is an important attribute of effective leaders. Accordingly, it provides school leaders

with ample reason to reflect on their leadership practices as they seek to become more effective and to evaluate the extent to which they demonstrate humility in their leadership role. Specifically, in accordance with this study's definition of humility, school leaders would do well to evaluate the extent to which they are willing to admit their limitations and mistakes, to learn from others, and to recognize the value of others' strengths and contributions. School leaders would also be well advised to actively seek feedback from others concerning their strengths and weaknesses, thereby indicating a desire to view themselves accurately and increasing their self-awareness.

This study also has implications for leadership development programs. Results suggest that principal development programs might develop more effective principals by seeking to build principals' leadership confidence and develop their humility. Participants in such programs might benefit from discussing the dangers of arrogance and the importance of maintaining a humble attitude as a leader, as well as reviewing specific behaviors that reflect such an attitude. It would also seem advisable for principal development programs to provide participants with opportunities to experience not only success, to build their confidence,[5] but also some degree of failure, to encourage them to be teachable and humble. Furthermore, to promote development of an accurate self-awareness among principals, such programs might involve 360-degree feedback, in which participants' self-reports of their leadership behaviors are compared to others' assessments of their leadership.

The present study also has implications for selecting individuals for leadership positions—specifically, school principals. While this study is only one of many that confirm the importance of confidence as an attribute of leadership, there is a danger of selecting principals who are self-confident, without also giving consideration to their humility: the selection of school leaders who are prone to overconfidence and arrogance. The results of this study suggest that schools would be well advised to include humility as a desired or required characteristic of applicants for leadership positions, to consider leadership candidates' humility as part of the selection process (e.g., by assessing the extent to which they are perceived as being humble, by others who know them well), and to select leaders who demonstrate both confidence and humility.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to a number of limitations of the present study, caution should be exercised in generalizing its results and drawing firm conclusions about

modifying school leadership practice based solely on these findings. In fact, this study may be viewed as a pilot study in that it provides the basis for a larger and more in-depth study of the same subject matter. By design, this study was based on a convenience sample composed only of teachers taking on-campus graduate-level education courses at one Midwestern public university. The majority (nearly 93%) of teachers surveyed in this study were Caucasian. Future studies of this type should include a sample of teachers that is representative of more racial diversity and more urban school settings. Future studies of this type should also include a larger sample size. Based on the limits of the sample used in this study, results cannot necessarily be generalized to other organizational contexts or cultures.

Because this study examined teachers' perceptions of their principals only in K–12 educational settings and, by design, did not examine the research questions in noneducational settings, the results do not necessarily generalize to other organizational contexts. Although organizational context certainly influences leader effectiveness (Pierce & Newstrom, 2003), there is a lack of empirical study examining how the relationship among follower perceptions of leader confidence, humility, and effectiveness might vary according to contextual factors such as the nature of the work (of the organization, the leader, or the followers) or the position of the followers relative to the leader. Therefore, similar studies are needed to examine follower perceptions of leaders in other settings, both educational and noneducational, such as higher education, for-profit business and industry, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. Within K–12 educational settings, future research of this type might also examine potential differences between the perceptions of teachers in public versus private schools or charter versus noncharter schools. Future studies might also examine teachers' and principals' perceptions of school superintendents' humility, confidence, and leader effectiveness.

Similarly, because the study was conducted in the Midwest of the United States, results do not necessarily generalize to more urban areas or to other (e.g., non-Western) cultures.[6] Because humility and confidence are complex social constructs, the broader culture in which organizations operate can reasonably be expected to influence perceptions of leader humility and/or confidence—even the extent to which these attributes are desirable in leaders. Accordingly, future research should examine the possible moderating or mediating effects that culture may have on the relationship between humility and the leadership process (Morris et al., 2005) and on perceptions of leader confidence/self-efficacy and leader effectiveness (Turetgen, Unsal, & Erdem, 2008).

Measurement limitations present another reason for caution in drawing firm conclusions based on the results of this study. Because leader effectiveness, confidence, and humility are complex subjective social constructs, they are not easily measured via quantitative methods. The instrument used to measure leader effectiveness in this study, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire 5x–Short (Avolio & Bass, 1995), is an abbreviated version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, which has been widely validated in a variety of organizational contexts and cultures (Avolio & Bass, 2004). However, the scales used to measure humility and confidence still need to be validated in a broad range of contexts, including those in non-Western cultures. Because these scales have not been widely validated, further study is needed to assess the validity of these instruments.

On the basis of previous research (see, e.g., Ayman, Korabik, & Morris, 2009; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Furnham, Hosoe, & Tang, 2002; Lee & Ashton, 2004; McCormick, Tanguma, & Lopez-Forment, 2003; Prime, Jonsen, Carter, & Maznevski, 2008), one might have expected this study to find differences in perceptions of leader effectiveness, confidence, and/or humility according to the sex of the principal and/or teacher. Somewhat surprising, such differences were not found. Future research of this type, with a larger sample size, should continue to examine possible sex differences in these variables.

Finally, this study suggests a number of additional intriguing directions for future research—including factors that contribute to the development of humility in leaders; how to best assess the humility of candidates for leadership positions; the relationship among principals' humility, confidence, and objective measures of principal effectiveness, such as student performance on standardized tests; and the relationship among follower perceptions of leader humility, leaders' self-reported leadership efficacy, and leader effectiveness. Accordingly, future studies conducted in K–12 educational settings might use measures of self-reported leadership efficacy designed specifically for principals (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004) or for school administrators (McCollum & Kajs, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The present study joins the call of other scholars cited herein for more scholarly attention to the role of humility in leadership. Two decades ago, Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) identified six core leadership traits: drive, leadership motivation, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, and knowledge of the business. Noticeably absent from this list

is the trait of humility—yet, as discussed earlier, humility appears to be integrally related to one of those six core traits: honesty and integrity. The lack of attention given to humility in the leadership literature (at least until recently) may be indicative of a commonly held view that humility simply is not important enough to be considered worthy of much attention. Alternatively, perhaps it reflects an assumption that humility is incompatible with confident, effective leadership. The findings of the present study appear to refute both of those views.

Although humility is viewed as a virtue by various religious traditions (Morris et al., 2005) and as a favorable quality of religious seekers, it is viewed less favorably as a quality of leaders, perhaps even as a sign of weakness (Exline & Geyer, 2004). Yet humility has also been identified as a character strength and virtue necessary for global leaders (Rego et al., 2012) and has been described as a virtue of supreme strength needed for the proper exercise of power and authority by leaders (Sandelands, 2008). In consideration of Wagner's (1999) assertion that humility is a lost virtue in leadership, the present study calls for further study of that virtue.

While it appears that humility remains a largely undervalued leadership quality in much of Western culture, the present study adds to the growing chorus of voices calling attention to the need for humility in leadership. Certainly Collins's (2001) conceptualization of Level 5 leadership reflects an emerging new view of leadership in Western culture, one with a greater acknowledgment of the value of humility as an important leadership attribute. Perhaps the attention given to humility by Collins and others who have recognized the value of humility in leadership, along with the present study and future studies of this type, will ultimately give rise to the widespread acceptance of humility as a valued attribute of effective leaders.

APPENDIX: LITERATURE SUPPORTING THE INCLUSION OF SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Four school demographic variables were included in this study because of previous research suggesting that they may influence leader confidence, humility, or effectiveness.

DISTRICT TYPOLOGY

In the state of Ohio, the Ohio Department of Education (2007) classifies all public school districts according to one of nine typologies, which are based largely on the district's socioeconomic status. Thus, this variable

served as a proxy measure of the district's socioeconomic status. The relationship between a school district's socioeconomic status and student achievement is well documented in the educational research literature. Assuming that the effectiveness of school leaders is judged to some degree by student achievement levels, it follows that district socioeconomic status may indirectly contribute to perceptions of leader effectiveness.

SCHOOL REPORT CARD GRADE

The Ohio Department of Education (2008–2009) also assigns all public school districts in the state a report card grade, ranging from *excellent with distinction* to *academic emergency*, as an indicator of the school's performance based on various measures of student achievement. Thus, this variable served as a measure of the school's academic performance. If we assume that the effectiveness of school leaders is judged to some degree by student achievement levels, it follows that a school's report card grade is likely to contribute to perceptions of leader effectiveness. It also seems reasonable to expect that leaders in schools with high report card grades may feel more confident in their leadership abilities than those in schools with low report card grades.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL

This variable served as a measure of the size of the school. In a study of leadership self-efficacy and student learning (a measure of leader effectiveness in schools), Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) measured organizational characteristics that they believed were plausibly related to leadership self-efficacy, including school size, based on their review of the literature. They found that school size was a significant moderator of the relationship between leadership self-efficacy and student achievement. Because confidence is a construct highly similar to leadership self-efficacy, it seemed reasonable to examine school size, operationalized as the number of students who attend the school, in the present study.

NUMBER OF TEACHERS SUPERVISED BY THE PRINCIPAL

In a study of personality and transformational leadership, Judge and Bono (2000) controlled for the number of individuals who directly reported to the leader. One of the components of transformational leadership is individualized consideration, which is displayed when leaders pay attention to the followers' developmental needs and when they support and coach

followers' development (Bass, 1999). One might reasonably expect that leaders' ability to display individualized consideration is influenced by the number of people they directly supervise. Because the present study used transformational leadership as a measure of leader effectiveness, one might therefore expect leader effectiveness scores to vary somewhat as a function of the number of people supervised. Additionally, one might reasonably expect that leaders who supervise a large number of followers may be perceived by followers as being more distant than leaders who supervise fewer followers. According to Brown and Trevino (2006, citing Antonakis & Atwater, 2002), "the distance between leaders and followers . . . has an important impact on how leaders are perceived, as well as the outcomes with which they are associated" (p. 611).

NOTES

1. Please refer to the Method section (Instruments) for an explanation of why *confidence* was used as a label for one of the independent variables of this study rather than *leadership self-efficacy*.

2. Additional examples of items from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire 5x-Short (Avolio & Bass, 1995) cannot be given here due to copyright restrictions.

3. Prior to conducting all inferential statistical tests, I screened data and ensured that all test assumptions were met in accordance with procedures outlined in Mertler and Vannatta (2005).

4. Additionally, no differences in either humility or confidence were found on the basis of the sex, level of education, or race of either the principal or the teacher, according to the results of two additional analyses of variance conducted—one with humility as the dependent variable and one with confidence as the dependent variable.

5. For specific suggestions related to the development of principal self-efficacy, see Tschannen-Moran (2005).

6. Interestingly, however, no differences in perceptions of leader effectiveness, confidence, or humility were found according to school typology, a category partially based on whether the school is urban, suburban, or rural.

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