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The Process of How Teachers Become Teacher Leaders and How Teacher Leadership Becomes Distributed Within a School: A Grounded Theory Research Study

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THE PROCESS OF HOW TEACHERS BECOME TEACHER LEADERS AND HOW TEACHER LEADERSHIP BECOMES DISTRIBUTED WITHIN A SCHOOL: A GROUNDED THEORY RESEARCH STUDY

by

Steven J. Sanocki

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THE PROCESS OF HOW TEACHERS BECOME TEACHER LEADERS AND HOW TEACHER LEADERSHIP BECOMES DISTRIBUTED WITHIN A SCHOOL: A GROUNDED THEORY RESEARCH STUDY

Steven J. Sanocki, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2013

It is undeniable that leadership is necessary for any organization to succeed. However, educational leadership is often compartmentalized and relegated to the hierarchical leadership found in schools such as principals, superintendents, and those with a formal title. The concept of teacher leadership has begun to surface in progressive schools and districts throughout the country, as is evidenced throughout both the professional and scholarly (research) literature. Teacher leadership is occurring in practice, yet it lacks a clear definition and/or a consistent employment in K-12 education. Teachers have historically stepped out of their traditional role as a teacher and into formalized roles within the school hierarchy in order to lead. Teachers also have begun, in recent years, to lead without leaving the role of classroom teacher.

Sanocki’s (2013) study provides an understanding of the process of becoming a teacher leader and how teacher leadership is distributed within a school vis-à-vis grounded theory methodology. The study was conducted in a Midwest state, using face-to-face interviews and multiple e-mail correspondences with eight teacher leaders who were selected by their respective principal as possessing the characteristics of a teacher leader as operationally defined in the study. The study’s duration was three months time. The constant comparative method of qualitative research was employed whereby
continuous memoing occurs throughout the open, axial, and theoretical coding phases of data collection and analysis.

Sanocki’s (2013) grounded theory provides a detailed graphical model and is supported by the study participant’s experiences, resulting themes and subthemes, and the relevant research literature. The major findings of this study are as follows: (1) Teacher leaders are classroom teachers first, who are primarily focused on positively impacting students; (2) teacher leaders are introspective about their roles; (3) teacher leaders overcome their fears; (4) teacher leaders successfully navigate egalitarianism, seniority, and administrative gatekeeping on their path to action and agency; (5) teacher leaders positively build, maintain, function and communicate in a learning community; and (6) teacher leaders engage themselves and others in positive change within the school.
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Steven J. Sanocki
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND JUSTIFICATION

Not too long ago, a teacher colleague of mine saw a copy of ASCD’s *Educational Leadership* lying on the table in the teacher's lounge. As she pointed at the title of the magazine she scoffed to me, “Boy, if that isn’t an oxymoron, huh?” She smirked, and my facial expression must have indicated that our usual jovial banter was somehow now inappropriate. She sheepishly muttered, “I’m just kidding,” and quickly went off to her classroom. I was not offended as an administrator, as my embarrassed colleague probably assumed; instead, I was simply struck by her comment. As the wheels in my head turned, I could not help but wonder about the lack of confidence that some teachers have in administrators as educational leaders, and made me further wonder if my colleague had ever thought of herself as an educational leader. It seems as though many teachers, and many educators and policymakers for that matter, think that the concept of educational leadership lies strictly in an administrator’s office. How would my colleague become a teacher leader if she wished to become one, or at least engender the notion that she could effect change?

**Overview and Key Concepts of Teacher Leadership**

It is undeniable that leadership is necessary for any organization to succeed. However, educational leadership is often compartmentalized and relegated to the
hierarchical leadership found in schools such as principals, superintendents, and those with a formal title. While these positions are integral in the leadership structure of schools, administrators, policymakers, and teachers alike often overlook the leadership capacity and actual influence of teachers. Nevertheless, state and federal public policies, such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top (RTTT), are not only forcing the accountability issues so prevalent in today’s politics, but they can also be catalysts for leadership development and paradigm shifts in K-12 schools (Henning, Trent, Engelbrecht, Robinson, & Reed, 2004, pp. 400-401). In an examination of principals engaged in changing underperforming schools as directed by the regulations contained in NCLB, Finnigan and Stewart (2010) point to transformational and shared leadership as key factors in principals’ ability to increase students’ academic performance. Thus, in order to respond effectively to the achievement standards embedded in NCLB and RTTT, principals are well advised to enlist teachers as leaders in the transformative work of the school. In short, teachers need to become part of a wider leadership network that helps to transform schools to produce positive results.

It is no surprise, then, that in recent years the concept of teacher leadership has begun to surface in progressive schools and districts throughout the country, as is evidenced throughout both the professional and scholarly (research) literature. Teacher leadership is certainly not a new or recently discovered concept following in the wake of NCLB sanctions or RTTT competitive grants, although ties to funding have precipitated the processes, if not the need, for such reform. As a result, the reframing of leadership in both elementary and secondary schools can be aptly linked to and described in the
concepts of distributed leadership, as proffered by the likes of Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) and Spillane (2006). These researchers offer school leaders a frame for transformative leadership that is distributed throughout the school and shared by teachers (and other stakeholders, including students) in ways that increase collegiality and professionalism. Distributed forms of teacher leadership will allow educational institutions to look beyond traditional hierarchies and leadership structures that have existed since the industrial age (Lambert, 2003), resulting in a culture or paradigm shift from leadership by position and permission to leadership by initiative and purpose. In response to this educational leadership paradigm shift, there has been a growing body of both scholarly and mainstream literature concerning the principles of the movement and how traditional school leaders might begin to implement programs that encourage and distribute teacher leadership throughout the school.

Unfortunately, the definition, strategies and employment of the concept of teacher leadership in K-12 education still vary widely, and lack a consistently agreed upon conceptualization that solidifies “common or complementary theoretical underpinnings” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 287). On one extreme, some definitions rely heavily on verbosity and/or a litany of undefined descriptors, such as this example from Leithwood, et al. (1999):

The composite teacher leader is warm, dependable, and self-effacing with a genuine commitment to the work of colleagues and the school. She has well honed interpersonal skills which are exercised with individuals and groups of colleagues, as well as with students. In addition, the teacher leader possesses the technical skills required for program improvement and uses them in concert with a broad knowledge base about education policy, subject matter, the local community and the school’s students. (pp. 23-24)
On the other end of the spectrum, researchers studying and defining teacher leadership leave almost all of the details to the participant’s and/or reader’s imagination or lived experience. Such an example is found in Anderson (2004):

> The respondents’ perceptions as to the nature of teacher leadership in these schools had many answers. These answers produced some interesting insights and in particular highlighted the reciprocal relationships between principals and teacher leaders as they exercised leadership in each of the schools studied. (p. 98)

The point here is not to criticize the researchers and practitioners that have been bringing the concept of teacher leadership to the forefront. Instead, my analysis of the literature on teacher leadership is pointing to the need for even more study of the concept in order to define, qualify, and eventually quantify its meaning in the field of education.

Given the wide variations in definition of teacher leadership, Fullan (1994) attempted early on to encapsulate teacher leadership functions by identifying six domains of teacher leadership: “knowledge of teaching and learning, knowledge of collegiality, knowledge of educational context, opportunities for continual learning, management of the change process and a sense of moral purpose” (p. 246).

In addition, Yendol Silva, Gimbert and Nolan (2000, p. 780) describe three waves of teacher leadership that have presented themselves over the last two decades. The first wave was focused on the educational system itself and provided hierarchical roles for teachers to fulfill such as a department head, head teacher, master teacher, or union representative. The second wave acknowledged the role of instructional leader, thus continuing the hierarchical positioning of teachers in roles such as team leader, curriculum developer, or staff developer. The third wave of teacher leadership introduces the idea that teacher leadership is a process within the transformational realm of
leadership (Pounder, 2006, p. 533). In this third wave, teachers help other teachers to improve their professional practice by stretching them to lead at the school level, such as: redesigning the school, mentoring colleagues, problem-solving, and engaging colleagues in professional growth activities. Pounder (2006) further postulates that a defining quality may exist in a fourth wave of teacher leadership in that of “transformational classroom leadership,” whereby students are involved with their teacher in creating and maintaining a shared culture of responsibility for learning and leadership within the classroom (p. 533). It is abundantly clear that teacher leadership is a broad concept that has been and continues to be implemented, practiced, and studied in a wide variety of ways.

As noted in the waves of teacher leadership that Yendol Silva et al. (2000) have identified, teacher leadership has grown out of the tradition of hierarchical leadership and has been utilized to build a capacity for shared leadership in order to improve schools. A body of literature also attempts to quantify and order processes for creating distributed leadership from the standpoint of the institutionalized hierarchy (e.g., Anderson, 2004; Bauer, Haydel, & Cody, 2005; Frost & Harris, 2003; Mangin, 2007; Spillane, Hallett, & Diamond, 2003; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The resulting effect of this historically top-down distributed leadership and shared capacity-making paradigm is often characterized in the manner that Matt Malcore, a teacher who responded to Educational Leadership’s November 2007 blog question regarding teacher leadership, describes:

We all know the pressure is on. Leadership means sticking your neck out. If my initiative fails, it comes back to haunt me. However, given solid modeling by administration (like when they stick their necks out for me), I realize that the extra effort and risk are worth it if my ideas are well-founded. During my few years’
teaching experience, I have seen administration wholeheartedly back my sometimes wacky ideas to get kids to learn. This drive to enhance learning with novel methods trickles down. Now I have a great desire to get off the sidelines and take on leadership roles. (p. 96)

According to Lieberman and Friedrich (2010), who studied teachers engaged in the work and role descriptions as contained in the National Writing Project, teachers engage in teacher leadership agency in the following ways: “advocating what’s right for students; opening the classroom door and going public with teaching; working “alongside” teachers and leading collaboratively; taking a stand, and learning and reflecting on practice as a teacher leader” (p. 95). Could this be the type of teacher leadership work that Malcore (2007) is alluding to? Does it begin with the safety and permission to take risks; then, transcend to assuming formal or informal leadership roles? Where does it go from there, and how does it become so distributed that the connection to hierarchy and official leadership roles all but disappear? These are issues requiring further and deeper study.

**Focus of the Study and Research Questions**

How does a teacher like Malcore (2007) know how to get started? What is the path he should take to be a teacher leader? Is there just one path he could or should follow, or is there some sort of generalized process that budding teacher leaders encounter? How do hierarchical leaders in education, such as Malcore’s principal, know how to identify, much less foster, teacher leadership? How does public policy (at all levels of government) play into the process of teacher leadership, especially in light of the demands of accountability to student learning? Is true teacher leadership an
outgrowth of a teacher’s ability and willingness to lead (a *bottom-up* approach)? Is it a function of hierarchical leadership inviting and encouraging teachers to become leaders (a *top-down* approach)? Or, is it some sort of combination of factors that may or may not yet be clearly identified? Finally, how does teacher leadership become distributed throughout the school and link with other forms of distributed leadership; i.e., student, parent, and other stakeholders?

A clear roadmap to address these types of questions that speak to the processes integral to the development of teacher leaders is necessary, allowing teacher leadership to be fostered in a purposeful fashion to help improve K-12 education. Some teachers have a desire to lead, but often cannot or will not express that desire like Malcore (2007). Other teachers need a different culture in which to exercise leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

The mainstream and growing scholarly literature is replete with ideas, suggestions, enumerations, prognostications, and platitudes concerning teacher leadership. The dissertation of Sabatini (2002) examines teacher leadership, vis-à-vis grounded theory, to explore the perspectives of emergent teacher leaders in one elementary school. Comparatively, Ries’ (2003) dissertation called for research to be completed on the characteristics and manifestations of teacher leadership in districts other than her own. In addition, the dissertation work of Valentine (2006) specifically examined the Jacqueline B. Vaughn School of Teacher Leadership in order to qualitatively examine the phenomenon. Most recently, Lieberman and Friedrich (2010) studied how teachers involved in the National Writing Project became teacher leaders.
Yet, there is still a lack of a process, or a roadmap, for budding teacher leaders and/or their administrators to follow. The literature simply does not address the process of becoming a teacher leader or how leadership is distributed within a school to an extent that is usable by those in the field. The problem is that there is a void in the literature that details the process (progression/evolution) of teachers to teacher leaders in a public policy environment that demands more and varied accountability for teachers, administrators, and schools. The purpose of my grounded theory study, therefore, is to determine the process by which a teacher becomes a teacher leader and the process by which teacher leadership becomes distributed in a school. The void in the literature regarding the progression or evolution of a teacher to a teacher leader and of teachers collectively sharing leadership for the school represents a broader lack of understanding on the part of teachers, administrators, and public policy makers on how our teaching professionals’ expertise can fully be developed and utilized to improve student achievement.

My dissertation study combines the ideas contained in the works of Lieberman and Friedrich (2010), Valentine (2006), Reis (2003), and Sabatini (2002), among other experts in the research field, in order to examine teacher leaders who may or may not have the benefit of formal teacher leadership training, and who are called upon or simply desire to be teacher leaders. My specific focus, no matter where these teachers are in their journey toward teacher leadership, is on the process of how teachers become teacher leaders and the process by which teacher leadership becomes distributed within a school.
In order to frame my research, I utilized the following research questions and related sub-questions to guide my study. It should be noted that while the processes inherent in grounded theory research (e.g., axial coding) could change the questions that are in need of asking as the study unfolds, these questions remained the focus of my study.

1. What is the process (progression/evolution) by which a teacher becomes a teacher leader; specifically:
   a. what elements of the process of becoming a teacher leader indicate top-down and/or bottom-up teacher leadership development as is operationally defined in this study;
   b. what internal and/or external factors motivate and guide a teacher in the process of becoming a teacher leader; and
   c. what happens to a teacher’s interactions with other teachers, the principal, students, and parents as they emerge and form as a teacher leader?

2. How do teacher leaders make the connection between becoming a teacher leader and being a teacher leader?

3. How do teacher leaders view their role in impacting students' educational experiences and/or outcomes?

4. How do teacher leaders describe any changes in the culture or processes of leadership within the school as they evolved as a teacher leader?
The conceptual framework for this grounded theory study, as provided in Figure 1, represents a synthesis of the elements identified in the meta-analysis performed by York-Barr and Duke (2004) that pertain to teacher leadership. It should be noted that this framework is not intended to simulate the process of becoming a teacher leader or distributing teacher leadership. Instead, the conceptualization will help focus my study by providing identifiable waypoints and descriptors of teacher leadership as already identified in the literature.

The problem of defining and categorizing teacher leadership speaks to the need for further study. For the purpose of my study, I needed to provide a guiding definition and categorization of teacher leadership in order to discover the processes of becoming a teacher leader and how teacher leadership becomes distributed within a school. Therefore, I have chosen to use a definition synthesized from the work of York-Barr and Duke (2004), which states that teacher leadership “is not necessarily vested in a formal hierarchy or role description” (p. 263) and that “[t]eacher leadership reflects teacher agency through establishing relationships, breaking down barriers, and marshaling resources throughout the organization in an effort to improve students’ educational experiences and outcomes” (p. 263) (see Figure 1).

To use the framework, begin at the top rectangle, which indicates a desire of a teacher to improve students’ educational experiences or outcomes. This desire is based on something deeper and more profound than simply helping with the mundane functions of leadership such as scheduling or supervision. Thus, the teacher moves into the core of
Desire to Improve Students’ Educational Experiences and/or Outcomes

Top Down Teacher Leadership Development

External Impetus

Hierarchical Leadership Position

External Motivation

Top Down Teacher Leadership Development

Bottom Up Teacher Leadership Development

Internal Impetus

Unofficial Leadership Position

Internal Motivation

Bottom Up Teacher Leadership Development

Becoming a Teacher Leader

Teacher Agency

Becoming a Teacher Leader

Teacher Agency

Marshalling Resources Throughout the Organization

Establishing Relationships

Breaking Down Barriers

Results

Changes in Student Outcomes

Changes in School Leadership Processes and Culture

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for the Process of Becoming a Teacher Leader Study
the framework in the center circle, which indicates a recursive process of becoming a teacher leader and being a teacher leader.

The becoming rectangle diverges into two distinct avenues to teacher agency, as is emergent in the literature: top-down or bottom-up teacher leadership development. The literature clearly points toward traditional school hierarchy and titled roles as the predominate path to teacher leadership, often in response to external forces such as negative standardized test results for the school and/or district (e.g., York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Yendol Silva et al., 2000). A principal, for example, would notice and engage a teacher to become involved in leadership roles within the school’s hierarchical structure to varying degrees and levels in order to raise achievement scores (a top-down approach). Alternatively, teachers may take it upon themselves to enter into unofficial leadership activities on their own accord, which has traditionally played out initially in instructional leadership within one’s own classroom and reaches beyond that classroom through collaboration regarding successes (e.g., Malcore, 2007; Lieberman & Freidrich, 2010). A teacher, for example, could see the need for increasing student achievement on a standardized test within her own classroom and then would share successful materials and data with her team at a grade level or departmental meeting (a bottom-up approach).

Whether arriving at teacher leadership from the top-down or bottom-up, emergent teacher leaders begin their journey into teacher leadership through a generalized process of teacher agency, which is denoted by the cloud shaped visual at the bottom of both the top-down and bottom-up portions of the framework. The teacher moves back into the core (center circle) of the diagram and traverses into a state of being a teacher leader,
which is represented by the large rectangle where teacher leaders establish relationships, break down barriers, and marshal resources throughout the organization (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Of course, each of these descriptors is generalized and not necessarily all encompassing. However, they are specific enough to help categorize an individual’s experience through the constant comparative method found in grounded theory research and may have a connection to the process of becoming a teacher leader. Given the realities of living out such a process, the framework allows for a teacher leader to traverse back to the core of the diagram, where becoming and being a teacher leader is shown as a recursive process.

Finally, the framework culminates in results. For the purposes of my study, teacher leaders reflected on any results obtained in their efforts and qualitatively assessed whether those efforts were related to changes in student outcomes and/or related to changes in the school leadership processes and culture.

The conceptual framework assisted me in carrying out my study by utilizing the waypoints, definitions, and categorizations outlined from the teacher leadership literature base. While the study was framed initially by the conceptual elements and relationships presented in this conceptual framework, it was not limited by it. Rather, this conceptual framework provided an informed way to enter into a deeper examination of how teacher leaders emerge and evolve. The outcome is a clearer conceptualization of the process (progression/evolution) in which teachers engage when becoming a teacher leader and when distributing his/her leadership within the school.
Overview of Research Methods and Study Design

This study was carried out in the qualitative tradition by way of grounded theory development. In this study, I gathered data from teachers in order to develop my grounded theory. A population sample was obtained by asking principals in six western Michigan middle, intermediate, or Junior High schools to identify teacher leaders within their respective school by utilizing York-Barr and Duke’s (2004) synthesized definition and associated descriptors. I then selected, through a systematic process that includes direct input from the principal of each of the potential participants, a pool of eight teachers who play a significant and meaningful role in attempting to effect positive educational change and results. I conducted one-on-one interviews and had multiple private e-mail correspondences with the teacher leaders in order to develop my grounded theory.

Significance, Rationale, and Usefulness of the Study

While we know that the teacher leadership literature has focused on the traditional school hierarchical structure to bring about the shared leadership structure in that of teacher leadership (the top-down approach), and we know that the literature has provided case studies and narratives detailing how classroom teachers become teacher leaders on their own accord (a bottom-up approach), it is necessary to look at the processes involved in the creation of a teacher leader no matter the impetus involved. A grounded theory, interview-intensive study, helped to narrow and define teacher leadership and the
inherent processes by which classroom teachers become teacher leaders, especially for those teachers who are not privy to formal education regarding the role and who are striving to become teacher leaders from their current station in the traditional school hierarchy. My identified process may also serve administrators who wish to foster teacher leadership in their schools.

My study is significant because it provides for teachers, administrators, and policymakers an awareness of a process (progression/evolution) that might allow for the development of teacher leadership. The resulting practical purpose of my grounded theory study is that both teachers and administrators can recognize and immerse themselves in the identified progressive/evolutionary process of teacher leadership. The rationale is to engender an efficacy for teachers to become leaders in their profession in collaboration and consultation with those fulfilling traditional leadership roles within the educational system. Therefore, the very process of teacher leadership can be identified, recognized, and utilized to grow teacher leaders from the bottom-up, as well as from the top-down, and/or in any other fashion as identified in my resulting grounded theory. If we are in an administrative shortage in this country as Neudecker’s (2006) research suggests, and we are calling for teacher leaders in the main-stream and scholarly literature to fill the void left by “losses in resources while building a capacity for change” as indicated by Anderson’s (2004, p. 98) research, should not we know exactly of whom and of what process we are speaking when employing the shared and transformational leadership approach in that of teacher leadership?
The intent of my dissertation study is to help fill the gap in the literature that exists in that of the process of becoming a teacher leader. Most importantly, I intend my grounded theory to be a useful tool for those in the field who are delving into teacher leadership in practice. Looking to the future of teacher leadership scholarship, my qualitative study helps add to the conversation regarding teacher leadership in order that teacher leaders may someday be more narrowly studied, especially quantitatively, to ensure that we have the most complete data available for the continuance of this form of shared and transformational leadership in the field of K-12 education.

Chapter I Summary

Teacher leadership is occurring in practice, yet it lacks a clear definition and/or a consistent employment in K-12 education. Teachers have historically stepped out of their traditional role as a teacher and into formalized roles within the school hierarchy in order to lead. Teachers also have begun, in recent years, to lead without leaving the role of classroom teacher. A better understanding of the process of becoming a teacher leader and how leadership is distributed in schools is necessary so that students can benefit from the increased leadership capacity in our schools. However, it is important to more fully examine the relative progression of teacher leadership in K-12 education before discussing the results and implications of my study. Let us now turn to Chapter II, which summarizes what is known to date about the topic from within the research literature.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In 1946, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development published a short piece entitled “Newcomers Speak” in which new teachers to the field expressed their frustration of not only fitting in, but also in attempting to diplomatically convey their new-found “expertise” to their elder colleagues through a non-existent teacher leadership role. Now, 67 years later, we are still trying to understand the leadership capacity and roles of teachers. In order to effect the changes that are necessary for the betterment of education in America, mandated or not, teacher leadership simply must be understood more clearly by researchers and practitioners alike. In this chapter, I present a relative chronological look at teacher leadership through the waves as presented in the literature. Through this approach, I highlight the significant elements that continue to shape teacher leadership emergence and development.

As we have already seen in Chapter I, teacher leadership is not a simple concept, nor has it been clearly defined in the literature or in practice. But the fact remains that teacher leadership is employed in schools and districts throughout the country. Each wave of teacher leadership, in fact each source from the literature, offers what research shows as key elements of teacher leadership as developed over time. While it is not my intent to cover all aspects of every wave or key element of teacher leadership, it is my intent to examine research that focuses on emergent teacher leadership; that is, how
teachers become teacher leaders and how teacher leadership becomes distributed within a school.

The Definition Problem

As outlined in Chapter I, defining teacher leadership is problematic when trying to draw comparisons and distinctions across the literature. To review, my working definition of teacher leadership is as follows: Teacher leadership is not necessarily vested in a formal hierarchy or role description, and it reflects teacher agency through establishing relationships, breaking down barriers, and marshaling resources throughout the organization in an effort to improve students’ educational experiences and outcomes. We also know, however, that principals have traditionally been seen as the leadership within schools (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). As an exercise, let us examine the common definitions of teacher and principal, and look for commonalities and differences of these definitions in relationship to the concept of leadership.

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary (2012 edition) defines a teacher as, “one that teaches; especially: one whose occupation is to instruct.” Wikipedia, an online information source where anyone can edit the definition but is monitored by this online community at large, defines a teacher as “a person who provides education for pupils (children) and students (adults)” (2012). In a parallel manner, Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines a principal as, “a person who has controlling authority or is in a leading position” and Wikipedia (2012) offers that a principal is, “a head teacher or school principal . . . [who] is the most senior teacher, leader and manager of a school.”
The point of this exercise is to reinforce what we commonly know in practice: teachers are not viewed as leaders in the real-world context, while principals take on both teaching (to a lesser degree) and leading (to a greater degree) connotations. These commonly held definitions and roles of teachers and principals are accurate and are based upon the last 112 years or so of educational practice in the United States. Therefore, I will embark upon this analysis of teacher leadership in light of these commonly held definitions, within the historical context of American education, and through the relevant leadership theory as is found in the literature.

**Leadership Theory and the History of 20th Century American Education in Relationship to Teacher Leadership**

Burns (1978) describes most leader-follower relationships as transactional. That is, leaders and followers are engaged in an exchange system that allows the leaders to lead and the followers to be led. Leadership, and the resulting followership, is based on tangible things. The leader takes the initiative to determine the needs of followers and to provide an avenue through which followers can have access to those resources. In contrast, Burns (1978) describes a transformational leader as one who “looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower” (p. 4). Thus, the leader is not only concerned with the basics of the exchange between leaders and followers, but also with the value of the very exchange itself on a deeper, moral level.
It is important to note that the teacher leadership literature base, as synthesized by York-Barr and Duke (2004) and further synthesized in this chapter, points to the concept of teacher leadership as falling within the transformational leadership realm.

As is stated above, a chronology of teacher leadership is not necessarily tied to strict timelines and dates. Instead, teacher leadership has developed and continues to be developed in what Yendol Silva et al. (2000) and Pounder (2006) refer to as waves. Just as a surfer catches some waves and not others, depending on the current and the time he is in the water and on the board, some authors and practitioners and not others have caught the waves of teacher leadership, depending on the time and the circumstance. Therefore, each school experiences differing levels and progressions of teacher leadership waves within their organization. How teacher leadership unfolds simply depends upon their unique circumstances and development of the concept within each school. For the purposes of clarity, however, I will present each wave in chronological order and within the context of modern American education.

As outlined in School: The Story of American Public Education (Anderson, Cuban, Kaestle, & Ravitch, 2001), Henry Ford implemented the assembly line on a large scale at the dawn of the 20th century. American schools soon followed suit by preparing students to enter such a workforce through the set-up of the classroom and the curriculum. The teacher, then, was the manager (middle management) and the headmaster, school board, or superintendent handed down the mandates of the curriculum to be implemented. Teachers largely operate within the transactional form of leadership within this system. A 2006 Time magazine article entitled “How to Bring our Schools
out of the 20th Century” (Wallis & Steptoe, 2006) articulates the point that American education, including its leadership structure, has not changed since these days. The amusing analogy provided in the article describes Rip Van Winkle waking up in 2006, after 100 years of sleep, and realizing that the only thing he can recognize in modern society is how school operates. Essential to a school’s operation, in this traditional model, is the classification of worker and boss, teacher and principal.

The origin of the word “principal” in relationship to the slow development of teacher leadership presents an oxymoron. The title of principal comes from a time in American education that predates Henry Ford's assembly line and denotes one as the “principal teacher” in a school (Cuban, 1988). Thus, this role should have long ago developed into what teacher leadership advocates look for today in any of the waves of teacher leadership. Instead, the word and concept of principal has come to mean manager in the school setting and has largely not changed throughout the implementation of the waves of teacher leadership (Murphy, 2005).

The reality is that our educational structure has been changing throughout the last two decades whereby teachers and administrators have acquiesced, and have begun to share roles and functions in the school setting. As Cuban (1988) put it,

Teachers and administrators are both bosses and subordinates. They direct others while obeying orders. They are also practitioners. They prize autonomy. They manage conflict. They are expected to lead. (p. xix)

The discussion of teacher leadership in this chapter will be carried out though a discussion of the waves of teacher leadership as well as through the synthesized definition provided in Chapter I. The literature is certainly replete with examples of
teacher leadership, even in light of an undefined process, progression, or evolution outlined for practitioners to follow. In other words, teacher leadership is alive and well in the day-to-day realities of American schools. What may be the crucial missing element is the fact that change itself in this regard is largely ignored and untended.

First order change theory regards simplistic change (e.g., a change in how something is reported; utilizing different data analysis tools to report the same data) as low-level and relatively stress free. Second order change theory, however, is quite a different story. Second order change is a major shift in how an organization is run, e.g., change in leadership roles and functions, implementation of accountability structures that did not exist before, etc. (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Therefore, a teacher who acts in becoming a teacher leader is regarded as first order change in the school organizational structure. If a teacher takes on curriculum, leading a professional learning community, or engages colleagues in professional development, it is no different than an administrator taking on that role. In other words, the activities are still the same; just someone else is doing the grunt work.

In reality, however, the sea change is monumental if second order change is indeed the goal of the change in the first place. Formal and informal relationship paths (Calabrese, 2002) can be leveraged by the emergent teacher leader in many ways that a principal cannot; thus the leadership change itself is that which is of the second order, not simply the tasks carried out in their work. However, this realization was not and has not come to fruition as of yet on a large scale; thus the crux of my study to examine emergent
Therefore, I turn to the waves of teacher leadership for further insight into the emergence and practice of teacher leadership in American schools.

The Four Waves of Teacher Leadership

The phrases in my conceptual frame such as breaking down barriers, marshaling resources, and establishing relationships, are rather neutral. The descriptions presented in the teacher leadership literature permit the reader a great deal of latitude in determining specific applications of the elements of my conceptual framework. The same is true for the two very simplified avenues of top-down and bottom-up teacher leadership development as presented in my conceptual frame. The waves, while chronological in their emergence on the whole in modern American education, do not play out exclusively in a time period in for each individual case. Rather, they are fluid entities that exist in different stages dependent upon the state, district, school, teacher, and hierarchical leadership structures. Therefore, the compartmentalization provided below with regard to each wave of teacher leadership is simply as a vehicle of understanding of what each wave represents. Teacher leadership does not emerge and/or progress in a lockstep chronological order. Instead, waves emerge and flow within each organization and teacher in uniquely specific ways. With that being said, what is provided in this chapter is an overview of each wave as presented in the literature.
The First Wave of Teacher Leadership

As described in Chapter I, the first wave of teacher leadership is focused on the educational system itself and provides hierarchical roles for teachers to fulfill such as a department head, head teacher, master teacher, or union representative (Yendol Silva et al., 2000, p. 780). What follows are examples of some research work within this first wave as found in the literature.

Leithwood et al. (1999), following their qualitative study at an Ontario high school, postulate that teacher leadership can only really happen within the context of formalizing the role. Interviews were held with the principal, two vice-principals, 18 teachers and department heads, nine students, the principal’s secretary, the childcare supervisor, and the head caretaker. In addition, the researchers conducted observations in multiple visits to the school. The researchers found that informal teacher leaders’ personal time is affected due to a lack of training in the role, thus requiring the teacher to continually feel like he/she is trying to catch up to what needs to be done. Furthermore, teacher leaders took a second-seat next to principals who were more likely to be seen as transformational leaders than teacher leaders.

Heller and Firestone (1995) examined teacher leadership functions in eight elementary schools through 35-40 minute interviews over a four-month span. The study focused on four schools that successfully institutionalized Elias and Clabby’s Social Problem Solving (SPS) program, three schools that implemented SPS in name only, and one school that applied SPS to a select group of teachers. Interviewees consisted of eight principals, 24 teachers, three district informants, and SPS staff. Seven of the schools
were designated as suburban, while one school was classified as inner city; a representation of a variety of socioeconomic statuses existed from among these schools. The researchers found the roles that teachers were playing were redundant and overlapping with persons in hierarchical authority and that the teachers did not truly have a leadership role within the school unless teachers were given formalized roles as a result of their work that resulted in change that “give teachers increased responsibility for making decisions that affect the collective life of the school or for coaching and providing feedback to colleagues” (p. 65). The six leadership functions that these researchers found that result in such change are: (1) providing and selling a vision of change; (2) obtaining resources; (3) providing encouragement and recognition; (4) adapting standard operating procedures; (5) monitoring the improvement effort; and (6) handling disturbances. Leadership functions such as providing encouragement were more easily carried out (and believed) by teachers and their colleagues without formalized roles. However, teacher leadership did not come to full fruition in all six areas until formal titles were bestowed upon the teachers, and therefore the authority to obtain resources and adapt them to standard operating procedures, for example, could become reality.

In much the same manner as Heller and Firestone’s (1995) study, Little (1995) examined two high schools that were undergoing restructuring. The two schools in Little’s (1995) study were ethnically, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse and had approximately 2,400 students and 100 staff members each. Open-ended and semi-structured interviews were held with 53 teachers, including 21 present and former teacher
leaders, in addition to direct observation of teachers in the school setting, and also examining documents from the work performed in the school. Teacher leadership emerged in the form of department heads, who were able to lead the charge of the restructuring. The defining factors of these teacher leaders were subject area expertise and the formal title of department head. Without these designations, the restructuring in the schools would not have likely occurred, nor would have the acceptance from the staff.

Cultural shifts were explored by Stone, Horejs, and Lomas (1997). In all, eighteen teacher leaders from Northern California were selected for this study through a peer identification (survey) process. Six suburban elementary, six urban middle, and six suburban high school teacher leaders were followed in the 1995-1996 school year through a case study design. The researchers found that the culture of the school must diminish hierarchical differences if teacher leadership is to develop within the school. Even then, the development of these leaders takes several years. This is often due to the egalitarian nature of the teaching profession, not to mention the courage needed by individuals to step forward into leadership roles. While differences exist in what elementary, middle, and high school teacher leaders want and/or expect from their roles, it is apparent that these leaders are exemplary in the classroom. Leading from the ranks, however, necessitates a “nod” from the principal as well as from the teacher leaders’ colleagues.

Lieberman, Saxl, and Miles (2000; 1988) qualitatively explored the skills that emergent teacher leaders need to have to begin to effect change in schools through observation, interviews, and artifact collection and review. The 17 emergent teacher
leaders from a large eastern city study were, first and foremost, effective teachers within the classroom and could handle multiple teaching assignments with relative ease and effectiveness. In short, they could be described as master teachers who usually held many academic degrees and engaged themselves in ongoing professional development. These teachers also gained experiences within their schools that gave them various levels and degrees of administrative and organizational skills. Their background, experiences, and education often made them risk-takers who promoted new ideas to their colleagues, yet had the interpersonal skills to be strong, caring, and compassionate with their peers who were resistant to change. The two teachers in this case study had formalized roles within their schools: one being a teacher-specialist, the other is a director of a teacher center that provides support to teachers within the school and is fully monitored and sanctioned by a strong principal. The results of the study pointed to characteristics of teacher leadership that are crucial to the concept of teacher leadership: (1) placing nonjudgmental value on providing assistance; (2) modeling collegiality as a mode of work; (3) enhancing teachers’ self-esteem; (4) using different approaches to assistance; (5) building networks of human and material resources for the school community; (6) creating support groups for school members; (7) making provisions for continuous learning and support for teachers at the school site; and (8) encouraging others to take leadership with their peers. While the context of this early case study formalized the role of teacher leadership, it points to roles of teacher leadership that could push the concept to the second or even third waves such as teacher leader as a learner and as a professional model. However, putting findings such as these into practice is often slow to occur.
Teacher leadership is sometimes attempted within the context of formalized programs due to implementation difficulties without a structure for participants to adhere to. Bauer et al. (2005) examined a University of New Orleans teacher leader pilot program as instituted in St. Charles Parish Public Schools. Emergence of teacher leaders was simply identified by enrollment in the pilot program. These teacher leaders, as part of the university course (and subsequent certification designation), were given tasks by administrators to carry out within the schools. The authors found that true teacher leadership did not exist or develop and that the program itself was unsuccessful as a vehicle to produce or enable emergent teacher leaders, thus leading some authors to take their experience base as practitioners and offer advice to teacher leaders engaged in their practice.

Gabriel (2005), based on his experience as a teacher leader in Falls Church High School in Fairfax County, Virginia and through an extensive review of the literature, offered advice to emerging teacher leaders by providing tools like letters, surveys, and checklists to those who are already serving in teacher leadership roles such as department chair, peer coach, and faculty representative. His work does not offer advice on how to enter the realm of teacher leadership, but rather on how to utilize the tools he offers to enhance the teacher leadership practice already in place.

In summary, the first wave of teacher leadership exists due to roles developed and defined by already established hierarchical leaders within the school. Teachers are pulled from the classroom in order to fulfill these roles. While trust from the staff is crucial, it is clear that the teachers that take on these roles are now somehow “different” and separate.
from their colleagues (Little, 1995). A natural emergence of the second wave of teacher leadership comes with the realization and recognition of teachers as leaders through their performance in the classroom.

The Second Wave of Teacher Leadership

To review, the second wave of teacher leadership acknowledges the role of instructional leader. However, hierarchical positioning of teachers in roles such as team leader, curriculum developer, or staff developer continues within this wave (Yendol Silva et al., 2000, p. 780). For example, Frost and Harris (2003) found in an analysis of the policy, research, and theoretical perspectives with regard to the concept of teacher leadership in the United Kingdom that teacher leaders in the second wave are a direct result of the hierarchical leadership and the culture that exists in the school. In addition, each teacher’s personal capacity for leadership played a role in how successful his or her role was carried out. It is unmistakable, too, that teachers who played these roles were often seen as middle managers rather than transformative change agents within the school. Thus, the shift to the second wave is a rather arduous task for many practitioners due to the very nature of teacher leadership itself as a cultural change agent within schools.

Through extensive analysis and application of the literature, interviewing, observing, and surveying over 5,000 teachers, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) relayed in their book, *Awakening the Sleeping Giant*, that teacher leadership is still emergent in schools and that more professional development is needed in order for these teachers to
truly accept their roles and carry them out. The delicate balance between being an instructional leader and being a “middle man” in the leadership structure of the school does limit teachers in what they are able to contribute. The contribution that is consistent through identified teacher leaders, however, often comes in the form of instructional leadership.

Teachers at an urban middle school, for example, were engaged in Project Achieve, which initially focused on instructional practice (Yost, Rosenberg, & Vogel, 2009). The teachers who, according to Project Achieve coordinators, excelled the most in this program were asked in the second year to take on leadership roles such as professional development coordinators. These teachers also experienced the same barriers to their development as teacher leaders, specifically a balance between the instructional responsibilities of their classroom teaching with the pseudo-administrative responsibilities bestowed on them through this program.

Moving toward more transformative change, Lambert (2003) points out five prerequisites for high leadership capacity as a result of her ongoing (since 1998) in-depth case study and literature-based research centering on teacher leaders at Belvedere Middle School, Arabesque Elementary School, Capricorn High School, and Fairview High School (which are all pseudonyms): (1) skillful participation in the work of leadership; (2) inquiry-based use of data to inform decisions and practice; (3) broad involvement and collective responsibility for student learning; (4) reflective practice that leads to innovation; and (5) high or steadily improving student achievement. These characteristics speak to the second wave teacher leader and also point to the limitations a
classroom teacher can have in carrying out these attributes outside of his/her classroom, with a main obstacle being peer opposition to such roles. Thus, principals can be a key element in the development of teacher leadership within a school and its relative culture.

An example of how principals influence teacher leadership is found in Mangin’s (2007) research. This study was an exploratory, comparative case study of 12 math teacher leaders, 12 principals, and six supervisors from five different districts, four of which were low socio-economic in status. Mangin found that if principals understand their teacher leaders and their associated roles and functions, then teacher leadership could more easily develop. While this study points out that hierarchical leadership (i.e., the principal) in essence puts his/her “blessing” on a teacher leader through their understanding and support, it does show that each wave of teacher leadership is fluid and is inclusive of multiple players within the system. In fact, principals were labeled as leaders, managers, and change agents in this process. In addition, these teacher leaders were bestowed titles such as instructional leader and coach and taken out of the classroom in order to perform those roles. However, the study concludes with the call for principals to fully understand the roles and functions of their teacher leaders to help further develop the role within schools.

One specific example of the transformative nature and expanding roles of teacher leaders is found in Olson’s (2005) study. He invited 300 elementary teachers (K-5) to join a leadership institute that focused on math professional development. This invitation resulted in 10 teachers, each of whom had five or more years experience, engaging in a modified ethnographic study for 18 months. Olson identified both formal and informal
teacher leadership roles and described them as “extend[ing] their professional lives beyond the classroom by influencing the actions of other teachers” (p. 143). These teachers were identified as humble, reluctant, overwhelmed, and entrenched. While these teachers may fall into a particular identification as according to Olson, they also had capacity beyond the classroom as described on a continuum that bridges the gap between formal roles and title to grass-roots collaboration among their colleagues. Thus, the idea of an emergence of teacher leadership was brought forth, but not studied directly in terms of “becoming” – e.g., the process of becoming a teacher leader through, plausibly, the continuum described.

An interesting approach to viewing the emergence of teacher leadership comes from Shantz and Prieur’s (1996) study regarding Sergiovanni’s premise that leadership and professionalism were antithetical. The survey study included 110 teachers in Ontario who were identified as being at the pre-service, in-service, or graduate level. Indeed, they confirmed that these two concepts were at odds in an educational environment. However, leaders who sought to facilitate leadership qualities in others may bolster the development of leadership that could “evolve into new, more adaptive forms” (Shantz & Prieur, 1996, p. 5). It is quite possible that these new and adaptive forms of leadership in education were an early indicator of teacher leadership development that moves beyond the second wave.
The Third Wave of Teacher Leadership

A shift in thinking and practice is found in the third wave of teacher leadership. This wave explicitly introduces the idea that teacher leadership is a process within the transformational realm of leadership. Teachers help other teachers to improve their professional practice by stretching them to lead at the school level, such as: redesigning the school, mentoring colleagues, problem-solving, and engaging colleagues in professional growth activities (Pounder, 2006, p. 533).

A major facet of any leadership position in schools is professionalism. According to Middlebrooks’ (2004) mixed method, non-participant observer and focus group interview design, professionalism is inherent in what teachers do every day in the classroom. In all, 185 students, 52 administrators, and 90 teachers were involved in the study. The author was a silent observer in this study, therefore she was able to see emergence of characteristics teacher leadership such as: managers, decision makers, role models, change agents, advocates, models for leadership skill use, agents of distributed leadership, and helpers with administrative functions. However, as stated so many times throughout the literature, traditional school organizations do not typically allow for formalized teacher leader roles to emerge easily. Therefore, Middlebrooks advocates for a systematic approach to development of teacher leaders from the principal’s seat and in higher education teacher education programs. Furthermore, she calls for what Pounder (2006) describes as fourth wave teacher leadership through the development of youth leadership by these teacher leaders.
Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, and Cobb (1995) identified the need to move away from hierarchical teacher leadership roles early on. These authors, through seven in-depth case studies of teacher leaders in practice, saw that the barriers these teacher leaders encountered were inhibiting their further growth and development as true leaders within their schools. The authors suggest that teacher leaders be first taught in collaborative school-university programs, dubbed Professional Development Schools, so they can identify and hone their skill sets to bring back to their colleagues in their schools. In other words, instead of removing effective teachers from their classroom in order to perform their leadership roles, teacher leaders could lead from their classrooms instead. The authors readily admit that the idea of these Professional Development Schools were purely theoretical in nature and had no guarantee of working. A later study by Richardson (2003), who utilized a mixed-methods design to survey 170 graduates of the Educational Leadership Department at Southern Connecticut State University from 1995 to 2000, points to the need for instruction on internal and external realities of school leadership, both at the pre-service stage and in graduate courses in educational administration. In addition, Bascia (1996) conducted an extensive individual case study with a teacher named Edgar Culver who, throughout his career and on his own accord, emerged into what can be described as a third wave teacher leader.

Peckover, Peterson, Christiansen, and Covert (2006) conducted a two-year grounded theory longitudinal study of a professional development program surrounding the tenants of teacher leadership, especially with regard to the cognitive processes of the teacher leaders studied. The program included approximately 1,000 teachers. A random
sample of 24 teachers was followed through five semesters of their responses to their professional growth inventory. Then, Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) grounded theory constant comparative method was utilized to code and categorize the data. Through this process, the authors identified six emergent themes of teacher leader thinking: (1) teacher awareness and sensitivity to their context as a place for inquiry; (2) empowering and giving voice; (3) finding commonalities and building on diversity of understandings; (4) dynamic feedback processes guiding change; (5) learning serving development of coherent frameworks to guide decision-making; and (6) constructing a caring and interdependent sense of community. According to the researchers, “[C]reating sustained collaborative, inquiry-based problem solving conditions activates teacher cognitive development” (p. 139). That is, once teachers learn and develop cognitively through problem solving, then they are better suited to help contribute to the changes needed for school improvement, as teacher leaders, on a continual basis.

A study by Henning, et al. (2004) provides another example of an intentional teacher leader development program at the University of Northern Iowa in partnership with the Waterloo school district. A cohort of 24 principal-selected candidates from a local urban school district (17 from eight elementary schools and 7 from two elementaries) applied for the program that had elements of teacher leadership that were job embedded, collaborative, inquiry based, and standards based. The researchers found through ethnographic participation in leading the program that the teacher leadership is beneficial because programs such as this could ease the burden on traditional leadership as demands increase for performance and accountability. Most importantly, “cultivating
teacher leadership has become synonymous with improving student achievement through professional development” (Henning, et al., 2004, p. 401).

The literature suggests that developing teacher leaders face a major barrier due to the hesitance of peers to accept them as leaders based on the hierarchy of the organization. Robbins and Zirinsky (1996) studied 14 high school teachers in an English department through in-depth case studies and found that formal teacher leadership (i.e., role definition as determined and managed by hierarchical leadership) is not necessary. Instead, teacher leadership may be more useful, efficient, and accepted by teachers if emergent teacher leaders develop and employ their leadership informally and through the position of classroom teacher.

Likewise, Donaldson, Johnson, Kirkpatrick, Marinell, Steele, and Szczesniul (2008) conducted an interview-based qualitative study of 20 third through tenth year teachers who were operating in formalized teacher leadership roles within their schools. Those activities that were intended to change teachers’ practice encountered the most resistance. The researchers found that traditional norms of the profession, egalitarianism, autonomy, and seniority, were threatened – often prohibiting the change sought within the school. The authors conclude by calling for bottom-up and embedded teacher leadership, exercised from the equal station of the classroom.

Avenues to achieving the buy-in that is so critical to the emergence of teacher leadership throughout a school (e.g., distributed leadership) can be found in Spillane et al.’s (2003) study of the forms of capital necessary to develop leadership. This observation and interview-based study included 84 teachers at eight public elementary
schools in Chicago. The researchers found that leaders at any station in the school, but largely principals and instructional leaders, are able to foster leadership from within through human, cultural, social, and even economic capital. Major findings from the study show that administrators largely have much more cultural capital than any other trait, while teacher leaders exhibit a propensity to connect much more with potential leaders through the use of human capital. Validity of leadership within the school (i.e., how followers perceived their leaders) was crucial to the buy-in necessary for the emergence of teacher leaders. In fact, it was found that hierarchical roles and/or titles had little to do with how teachers perceived their leaders. Instead, perceptions were based on performance, style, and the portraying of the various forms of capital that made a difference.

As the concept of teacher leadership naturally develops over time, both formally and informally in the fluid, natural environment of educational practice in schools, Lambert (1998) identified the need to connect capacity building with leadership. Third wave teacher leaders (although not explicitly identified as such in this study) engage in (1) broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership; (2) inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice; (3) roles and responsibilities that reflect broad involvement in collaboration; (4) reflective practice and innovation as a norm; and (5) high student achievement.

Of course, teacher leaders carry out their roles in a variety of ways. Lieberman and Miller (2004) explored four case studies (two from California and two from Maine) of teacher leaders who are engaged in innovative programs that allow for the emergence
of teacher leadership characteristics, such as the National Writing Project and Leadership for Tomorrow’s Schools. The authors note that teacher leaders in the study were developing as scholars, researchers, and mentors within their role as classroom teacher through participation in those innovative programs. Thus, teachers are not only developing the skill sets necessary to become more proficient in the art of teaching, but also exhibit the characteristics of third and possibly forth wave teacher leaders.

As part of systemic change in schools, Fullan (2005) calls for teacher leadership that is transformative in nature. He states, “the revamping of the teaching profession should be designed to provide expectations and opportunities for every teacher to become a leader from day 1 on the job (and before/during teacher preparation)” (p. 95). A major facet of emergent teacher leadership is the concept of distributed leadership as outlined by Spillane (2006) through his in-depth case study and 84 teacher interviews at Baxter Elementary School on Chicago’s Northwest side. Spillane finds that, “In a distributed perspective on leadership, three elements are essential: (1) Leadership practice is the central and anchoring concern; (2) leadership practice is generated in the interactions of leaders, followers, and their situation; each element is essential for leadership practice; and (3) the situation both defines leadership practice and is defined through leadership practice” (p. 4). However, changing the culture and traditional roles of schools, even within transformative initiatives, continues to be problematic for the emergent teacher leaders and their principals.

An example of the ongoing tension between tradition and transformation is found in Anderson (2004). He conducted a comprehensive qualitative study of six schools that
showed teacher leadership characteristics, yielding 28 respondents. The schools studied were within an active school improvement process whereby teachers and administrators were working together on this common goal. The study found that teacher leadership is reciprocal with principal leadership. Within this dynamic, it was found that: (1) A transformational leadership style is more conducive to teacher leadership (for both for teachers and principals), and according to Leithwood et al. (1999), transformational leaders are often young women elementary teachers; (2) informal teacher leadership had a greater influence in results than formal teacher leadership roles; (3) even though the relationship between teacher leaders and principals is reciprocal, all respondents (teachers and principals alike) indicated that principals have much more influence on teacher leaders than do teacher leaders on principals. Three models of mutual influence emerged in Anderson’s study: Buffered, interactive, and contested. Buffered Model teacher leaders often have formal roles within the school, but are “buffered” by the principal and the role itself when carrying out initiatives. The interactive model teacher leaders often have more transformational influence on change as they are intrinsically interwoven in their roles and functions within the school. Finally, contested model teacher leaders often cannot affect change due to the tensions that exist between principals and emergent teacher leaders.

Supporting Anderson’s (2004) work are Blase and Blase (2006) who conducted a survey-based study of 297 elementary, middle, and high school teachers in the southeastern United States. The findings of this study show that teacher leaders attempt to distribute leadership throughout the organization by engaging in five behaviors that are
beneficial to the process of influencing teachers’ morale, teaching skills, and professional growth in a positive fashion through a peer consultant process: (1) building healthy relationships by communicating, caring, and developing trust; (2) using five guiding principles for structuring learning experiences; (3) planning and organizing for learning; (4) showing and sharing; and (5) guiding for classroom management.

Muijs and Harris (2007) highlighted three schools in the United Kingdom as part of a larger national study with regard to the development of teacher leadership. These three schools all had different descriptors attached to their resulting form of teacher leadership: Developed, emergent, or restricted. No matter the school in this study, the researchers determined that: (1) teacher leadership development is a deliberate process; (2) heads’ (principals’) style matters, even though they all supported the teacher leadership concept; (3) collaboration is necessary throughout the organization; (4) staff development and external supports are necessary for the success of teacher leadership; (5) reculturing and restructuring are necessary for schools wishing to employ teacher leadership; and (6) rewards are often a necessary component of changing the culture toward the acceptance of teacher leadership. Even though three distinct types of teacher leadership schools emerged in this study, there is no one mitigating factor that either helped or hindered progress for any type of teacher leadership development. In fact, hierarchical leadership and management both helped and hindered teacher leader development, dependent upon the culture of the school. For example, in one school, teachers wanted more hierarchical involvement in the teacher leadership development process; in another it was a barrier to that process (p. 126).
Recent research from Lieberman and Friedrich (2010) examines how teachers become leaders through vignettes written by 31 National Writing Project participants who were arranged in three writing response groups. Four themes emerge in this study: identity, collaboration, productive conflict, and learning new practices. This study, elicits many direct quotations and vignettes that capture teacher leaders’ perspectives on their emergent role. One such vignette produced the following with regard to the difficulties in developing his new role: “In order to define the line between teacher-leader and principal I have minimal interaction with the English department I had been a part of for 8 years. ‘You need to think like a principal, not an English teacher,’ I am told” (p. 19).

Another teacher leader, however, delved more deeply into this transition:

Although many of my colleagues perceive me as a teacher-leader, I have avoided wearing that label because of my own perceptions of teacher leaders who had been ordained as leaders by local school administrators who wanted ‘servant’ leaders who would become extensions of themselves. Over the years, I have learned that teacher-leaders are both self- and other-appointed. Some teachers are leaders in their local schools, while others are perceived as leaders outside of their local schools and school districts. Over the years, I have worked hard to become both. (p. 24)

Yet another teacher leader came to this conclusion:

Some authors assumed, in the beginning, that leadership meant holding positional authority, working hierarchically, having all the answers, and being solely in charge. As we worked together, we learned that teacher leadership reflects several core principles that are exemplified in their work:

- Advocating for what’s right for students;
- Opening the classroom door and going public with teaching;
- Working “alongside” teachers and leading collaboratively;
- Taking a stand; and
- Learning and reflecting on practice as a teacher and leader. (p. 95)
It is clear that teacher leaders continue to be conflicted about their roles while navigating the traditional school leadership set-up and functions; however, they are making progress in the transformative realm.

Reeves (2008) conducted an in-depth study of teacher leadership in Clark County School District in Nevada due to its growing prominence in practice and in the literature. Eighty-two schools were selected through an application process and 81 teams conducted the research that consisted of observations, interviews, and surveys. Teachers in this study indicated that they were influenced much more by their colleagues than by undergraduate courses, professional readings, and graduate courses. In fact, only 5% of teacher respondents to a survey conducted within the study, where up to four categories could be selected, chose traditional hierarchical leaders as influential to their professional practice. In contrast, teacher colleagues received 14% of the tally. Twenty percent of teachers self-identified as influential to their own practice, while 24% cited professional development as important. In addition, 15% relied upon personal reading. In all, 73% of the responses on the survey indicated some form of reliance on the individual teacher or teacher colleagues to influence professional practice.

In response to the data in his study, Reeves (2008) offers a framework for teacher leadership centered on resilience. The five elements identified for the framework are recognition, research, results, reflection and reinforcement. A conceptual model is offered whereby decision-making is affected in the organization. Teacher leadership initiatives can enhance organizational capacity given the freedom to provide a factual
basis for decisions and direction, resulting in resilience of the teacher leadership model through a sustained network within the organization (p. 45).

Reeves (2008) also discovered what he terms fundamental barriers to teacher leadership: Blame, bureaucracy, and “baloney.” Avoiding responsibility often results in a shifting of responsibility in the form of blame (e.g., blaming students, the union structure, parents, socio-economic conditions, language barriers, etc.). Blaming is counterproductive to school and student improvement, and is detrimental to the cultivation of the collegiality necessary for teacher leadership to emerge. Bureaucracy also gets in the way of burgeoning teacher leadership due to the traditional hierarchical structures within schools, and the associated roles and responsibilities associated with that hierarchy. In this model good ideas, no matter the impetus, are developed from the top and instituted in a top-down fashion – often to little or no effect. In contrast to the top-down model, individual teacher leaders operate in a “superhub” fashion, whereby clusters of colleagues are influenced simultaneously and interdependently (p. 64). Finally baloney, defined as pretentious nonsense, stands in the way of change in schools such as teacher leadership due to, “superstition, prejudice, and deeply held convictions, all unburdened by evidence” (p. 68). Holding fast to beliefs and past practices without evidence of success, is counter-productive to positive change in schools.

Reeves (2008) concludes his study with a call for respect from traditional hierarchical leadership toward teachers, as this was a central theme in the study. Data indicate that teachers desire the following from their leaders: (1) recognize excellence; (2) emphasize freedom to use judgment; (3) listen to and act on teacher ideas; (4)
encourage innovation; (5) provide feedback and coaching; (6) value people as individuals; (7) provide a sense of being included; (8) appreciate diverse perspectives, ideas and work styles; (9) encourage full expression of ideas without fear; and (10) listen to and fairly handle complaints. Given the results of the surveys in Reeves’ study, teacher leadership (not just hierarchical leadership) may have traction to make these desires happen. Reeves also admits that teacher leadership literature and scholarly study is incomplete. Uniquely, and with an intentional nod to teacher leaders in action, Reeves offers a website where teachers can help to complete the book, so to speak, on teacher leadership through teachers’ experiences in trying to develop the role.

In addition to leading within the school, Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, and Hann (2002), who conducted a five-year, three-phase study in Australia and Michigan that offered professional development and action research in cooperation with the staffs at 122 schools, put teacher leadership this way:

Ultimately, teacher leadership, as we intend it, is about action that enhances teaching and learning in a school, that ties school and community together, and that advances the quality of life for a community. All these elements are part of the portfolio of teacher leaders. (p. xvii)

In short, these teacher leaders lead from within their station as a classroom teacher, and without formal roles and titles. In fact, they have the freedom and ability to transform the educational landscape beyond their classroom, beyond their role as classroom teacher, beyond their role as a leader of teachers, to beyond the walls of the school itself. This concept is the very essence of what Pounder (2006) proposes as the fourth wave of teacher leadership.
The Fourth Wave of Teacher Leadership

Pounder (2006) postulates from his meta-analysis of the research literature on teacher leadership that a defining quality may exist in that of “transformational classroom leadership,” whereby students are involved with their teacher in creating and maintaining a shared culture of responsibility for learning and leadership within the classroom (p. 533).

Collay (2011), through her research and experience as a professor of educational leadership at California State University and coaching of school leaders in professional learning communities, constructivist teaching and leading, and equity-focused inquiry, attempts to provide guidelines for what and how to implement teacher leadership from the classroom. While teaching as a profession has evolved over time, direct correlations to teaching as leadership still need to be defined and implemented in schools. “I position the classroom as the nucleus of leadership in schools. Instructional design, implementation, and assessment practices emanate from the essential core” (p. 75).

According to Collay, the concept of leadership in this form is especially true since the current role of principal is not fully transformed to one of complete engagement regarding student teaching and learning. In fact, she calls for a transformational shift whereby principals are considered “support staff” to the teachers who make educational decisions. Furthermore, principals could shift to a role of “servant leadership” whereby their focus is more centered on people than organizational objectives. Together, then, teachers and principals can lead change through collaborative structures, inquiry-based practices, and transformational partnerships throughout the organization.
Danielson (2006) also utilizes research on teacher leadership to develop a descriptive framework of the concept through descriptive case studies. She emphasizes that teacher leadership is still a developing concept, however the research literature and the teachers highlighted in each case study clearly show that teacher leaders see themselves as teachers first and have no real desire to be considered a hierarchical manager of any sort. It follows, then, that teacher leaders are different from administrators, creating unique cultural and structural pros and cons within a school’s organization and functioning. Culturally, teacher leadership embodies a risk-taking climate in the school that takes on democratic norms and treats all teachers as professionals.

Inhibiting factors to this cultural shift are administrators who are threatened by this type of leadership within the school as well as teacher reluctance to accept and/or take on such roles. However, in their qualitative study of a graduate level teacher leader program, Valli, van Zee, Rennert-Ariev, Mikeska, Catlett-Muhammad, and Roy (2006) focused on a graduate level teacher leadership program that emphasized a culture of inquiry whereby the authors examined their own teaching practices in order to improve their craft. In addition, a survey was conducted of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th cohorts of the program, consisting of 19, 16, and 11 members respectively. Their study concludes there is a strong link between inquiry and leadership. Structurally, teacher leadership can shift a school to utilizing increased and differing mechanisms for involvement in school governance, new vehicles for proposing new ideas, increased time for collaboration, and
opportunities for skill acquisition. Standing in the way of this structural overhaul, however, is often the traditional structure of schools themselves.

Crowther et al. (2002) capture the essence of the fourth wave of teacher leadership in their ongoing case study analysis through the completion of the fourth and fifth phases of their longitudinal project spanning 12 years: “Teacher leadership facilitates principled action to achieve whole-school success. It applies the distinctive power to teaching to shape meaning for children, youth, and adults. And it contributes to long-term, enhanced quality of community life” (p. 10). Through their station as classroom teachers, teacher leaders are able to affect the school and community by: (1) conveying a conviction about a better world; (2) striving for authenticity; (3) facilitating communities of learning; (4) confronting barriers; (5) translating ideas into action; and (6) nurturing a culture of success. In addition, these roles allow for greater avenues for individual expression and a sense of mutualism to arise in the school. This sense of shared purpose allows for increased possibilities for the cultivation of teacher leadership within the organization.

**Chapter II Conclusion**

Through this analysis of the literature, it is clear that teacher leadership needs to continue to be studied in order to fully understand and apply it in practice. Teachers have not traditionally been part of the leadership hierarchy and structure in schools. However, that does not mean that teachers have not, do not, and will not lead. Through the analysis of the waves of teacher leadership, which play out relative to each organization in unique
ways, we know that teacher leadership can evolve into transformative change for school leadership structures. Likewise, the cultural shift that needs to occur in each school environment in order to employ the concept of teacher leadership, and how each school chooses to get to that second order change, is unique. Still missing in this literature is a clear understanding of process, i.e., a progression/evolution, of how a teacher becomes a teacher leader. Chapter III outlines the design of my grounded theory study of teacher leadership. My goal is to shed more light on the concept of how teachers become teacher leaders and how teacher leadership is distributed in a school by using a grounded theory approach to research in juxtaposition to the literature base provided herein.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

My interest in research and practice is centered on the processes that are in play in the educational system. Since processes are hard to quantify, I have elected to use the qualitative tradition of research. Although it is relatively new in the research field in comparison to quantitative research, the qualitative approach lends itself to the rich and complex world of education. In addition, it is becoming widely accepted in the educational field. Use of the natural setting of teachers’ experiences in schools has allowed me to become privy to the processes at play in teacher leadership, thereby enabling me to better interpret the data and emergent themes that flow from the experience (Creswell, 2007), and culminates in holistic conclusions that are crafted into my grounded theory (Merriam, 1998).

Research Design

The most appropriate research design to use for my study that focused on the process of how teachers become teacher leaders and how teacher leadership is distributed within a school is the systematic grounded theory approach. A grounded theory’s primary purpose is to allow for the identification of a process as it emerges in the data collection procedures while providing structure in its open, axial (inclusive of an illustrative coding paradigm), and selective coding procedures. This qualitative method
in educational research, as developed by Strauss and Corbin, allows the data to speak for itself while providing the structure necessary for beginning researchers as well as quantitative-minded reviewers (Creswell, 2007, pp. 434-438).

The constant comparative approach and open-ended questioning are hallmarks of grounded theory (Creswell, 2007, p. 90). In my particular study, the basic open-ended question asked of participants is, “What process did you go through in becoming a teacher leader and how did your teacher leadership become distributed within your school?” Procedures within the research design itself such as face-to-face interviews, multiple e-mail correspondences, and the formulation and organization of categories of data helped to get participants to answer this question in a richly-detailed and ever-narrowing fashion so as to lead to an eventual theory, grounded in the specific research carried out in my study, and verified by its juxtaposition to and within the literature.

**Sampling, Subjects, Access, and Setting**

Since the literature is replete with case studies of individual teacher leaders in a wide variety of forms, it is necessary to draw from many teacher leaders in order to develop a grounded theory that reflects the experiences already found in the literature. Teachers were selected based on their identification as a teacher leader as is evidenced by their adherence to the definition of a teacher leader (as prescribed in this study). Specifically, I was interested in teachers who play a significant and meaningful role in effecting positive educational change and positive results in their respective schools and solicited their help as participants in this study.
Teachers were selected using criterion sampling procedures based on their identification as a teacher leader as is evidenced by their adherence to the definition of a teacher leader (as prescribed in my study). Specifically, I was interested in teachers who play a significant and meaningful role in effecting positive educational change and results in their respective schools and solicited their help as participants in this study.

In order to efficiently identify teacher leaders for this study, administrators were first engaged in the selection and invitation process. Contact between myself (as an administrator) and other administrators, in an e-mail format, was necessary to develop the pool of teacher leaders to be engaged throughout western Michigan middle schools. A population sample was identified by soliciting the help from principals in six counties in western Michigan middle schools (and/or Junior Highs) who, in their opinion, match the synthesized definition of teacher leadership as developed from the work of York-Barr and Duke (2004) and is further delineated into practical and practitioner-friendly language in my e-mail correspondence with them. The practical and practitioner-friendly language was worded as follows: A teacher leader is one who . . .

- takes initiative and/or accepts responsibility for roles beyond their teaching assignment
- may or may not have a formal title and/or leadership role within the school or district;
- is able to form and maintain professional relationships with differing constituencies surrounding educational goals and purposes;
- is able to work through and navigate a wide variety of people, situations, and red tape;
- can find and utilize the time, talent, and treasure of those people and entities involved in an educational goal;
• is interested in making students’ experiences rich, meaningful, and academically rewarding.

The design of my study allowed for my participants to come from different and/or the same school and/or district. I randomly drew the names of teacher leaders (as selected by their respective principals) from independent schools/districts thereby strengthening my grounded theory within a small population sample. In addition, I did not contact school districts with which I have, or have had, direct ties with in an employment capacity.

For practical purposes in completing a grounded theory study in my dissertation, I engaged eight teacher leaders as described previously, with multiple layers of recursiveness in questioning, e-mail correspondence, and formatting. The duration and recursiveness of a grounded theory study may be extensive, well over a year with thousands of hours of data and data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). However, in order to be reasonable and attainable for this dissertation study, my process involved three month’s time for the entire process, and no more than three to four hours time, in total, for any one participant.

In this qualitative study, I gathered data from teacher leaders in order to develop my grounded theory; however, I first obtained potential candidates for participation in my study through criterion sampling procedures. I asked each principal to e-mail to me the public contact information for the teacher leaders they selected, such as school e-mail address, school address, and school phone number, per the procedure described in this chapter (also see Appendix A). Once a population sample was identified in this manner,
I randomly drew teachers from a hat and recorded their names in the order they were drawn. The first 10 of these teacher leaders drawn were asked to be the primary participants in my study (see Appendix B and Appendix C). I continued utilizing the ordered list until, finally, I had eight consent forms signed (see Appendix D). No alternates were needed as no participants dropped out of the study before completion (see Appendix G).

Access to school classrooms or conference rooms that were private, equipped with whiteboards and/or smart boards, had computer/Internet access, and that were comfortable were obtained so that participants are able to share their stories and engage in approximately 75 minute interview sessions. It was helpful if participants had computer and Internet access at home, or at least at school outside of school hours, for follow-up e-mail interview correspondence. Technological support for the participants was not necessary for the technology employed in the study.

**Data Collection Methods, Procedures, and Instrumentation**

The data collection for my study occurred in three stages as outlined below. A total of approximately three to four hours of time was necessary for the candidate to engage in each of these stages over a period of two to three months.

- **Stage I:** In-depth, one-on-one, face-to face interview (lasting approximately 75 minutes)
- **Stage II:** Member-checking and augmenting of the transcript of the personal interview via e-mail correspondence (lasting approximately 60 minutes)
- **Stage III:** Reflective journaling on specific questions gleaned from emergent themes via e-mail correspondence. Additional follow-up responses to specific
questions on emergent themes via e-mail correspondence was also necessary (four follow-up e-mail responses were required taking approximately 20 minutes per question, for a total of 80 minutes).

Stage I

Once the participants were selected and verified, I conducted in-depth, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews that contained many facets of the following open-ended question: “What process did you go through in becoming a teacher leader and how did your teacher leadership become distributed within your school?” (see Appendix E). In-depth interviewing was utilized as the initial data collection method so as to conduct a “conversation with a purpose” (Kahn & Cannell, 1957, as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 101). Open-ended questioning allowed for each participants to share his/her story of how he/she, specifically, became a teacher leader and how he/she viewed that leadership being developed and distributed within the school. I recorded each face-to-face interview using an open microphone on my computer as well as a digital recorder (in case one device failed). To limit my influence on the telling of each participant’s story, I asked follow-up questions only in an attempt to elicit more detail.

Stage II

Once the interviews and transcription were complete, I engaged each teacher leader in e-mail correspondence that contained the Microsoft Word file with his/her respective story of how he/she became a teacher leader and if/how they distributed his/her leadership in the school. I asked each teacher to member-check their story by
adding, expanding, and/or clarifying any information they had provided. Member checking took each participant approximately 60 minutes to complete. As these stories were told, I began to categorize, group, and develop emergent themes using *HyperRESEARCH* qualitative software from information obtained in the interviews and through the definition and conceptual framework already in place.

**Stage III**

Based on the categories that emerged from the information gathered in Stage I and Stage II of the data collection, additional e-mail correspondence in the form of reflective journaling was utilized to get a full and complete picture of the process of how teachers become teacher leaders and if/how teacher leadership was distributed within his/her school. This reflective journaling focused each participant in individualized ways so as to elicit more detail about salient categories that unfolded in the study. Additional questions were asked of participants via e-mail dependent upon my grounded theory’s development vis-à-vis my coding procedures as described in the next section. Journaling consisted of a participant responding to a specific question from me in e-mail format. Participants took approximately 20 minutes to read and respond to each question. To keep within the four-hour maximum time of participation (keeping in mind the time needed for Stages I and II), four reflective journal questions were asked of any one participant.
Data Analysis Processes and Procedures

It was imperative to the accuracy of my dissertation study that I had consistent and accurate coding procedures in place for the qualitative, word-intensive data I collected. The systematic codification was tracked through electronic means so the manipulation of the data was performed in multiple fashions for a variety of reasons that were either necessary or desirable as the grounded theory developed in the interviews and follow-up e-mail correspondences (see Appendix F). Throughout and especially at the conclusion of data collection, I returned to the literature to compare, contrast, and locate my research findings within the literature itself. This analysis helped to solidify the grounded theory that I developed through the means of this study.

In the open coding phase of data analysis, a constant comparative approach was utilized in order to identify recurrent categories contained in the data in order to identify a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Axial coding then followed; that is, data is again examined to determine subcategories and their relationship to the central phenomenon. Causal conditions are identified as well as conditions and consequences (Creswell, 2007). These beginning steps set the stage for the creation of my grounded theory. I, as the researcher, and even the participants, returned to the central phenomenon and the data itself in multiple reexaminations in order to refine my theory as it developed (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Since I as the researcher cannot be completely removed as an influence on my theory’s development, specific detail is provided in Chapter IV with regard to exactly how initial, open, axial, and theoretical coding and memoing processes actually unfolded. A graphical representation of the process of how
teachers become teacher leaders was derived and presented within the analysis and data was used to support its form, structure, and overall underpinnings as related to the data and the literature.

The Researcher

As a current practitioner in K-12 education as an elementary school principal, and by the very fact that I engaged some of my administrative colleagues in the identification of teacher leaders to potentially participate in this study, it was possible that I may have already known some of the participants in this study. Clear indications of confidentiality were made explicit to all participants, but especially in the cases where individuals I might have known could potentially be a part of my study. As it turned out, I did not know any of the participants included in my study. As I noted previously, I refrained from selecting any participant from any school district in which I have worked so as to avoid any potential conflict of interest that may have impeded the study and/or jeopardized a working relationship or contract.

In addition, it is very apparent that I am interested in and have studied teacher leadership a great deal in preparing for the implementation of my study. Therefore, my own thoughts on teacher leadership, and how it does or should develop, were kept in check at all times.
Limitations and Delimitations

While this study was carefully designed as a grounded theory study, inherent limitations exist. As Marshall and Rossman noted in 2006, there is no perfect design. The most glaring limitation is the definitional problem of teacher leadership itself (in that many definitions exist) and the resulting definition I have chosen to employ in the conceptual framework of the study that helped to serve as a portion of the underpinning of the theory brought forth in the final analysis of my data. While some may argue that York-Barr and Duke’s (2004) definition is lacking for one reason or another, I have a bias toward this operational definition as it fits both my world-view as an educator and it seems to make logical (and very encompassing) sense for the purposes of my study.

As noted previously, my grounded theory was developed within the context of a dissertation research project. While this should not serve as an excuse to shirk the depth needed to derive theory from data, there was a very real need for me to finish my degree within a reasonable period of time. All researchers face limitations, but attempting a grounded theory within a dissertation is an ambitious endeavor that needed to be accounted for at the outset as well as in the final analysis of my finished product.

An attempt to account for the limitation of attempting a grounded theory in a dissertation is made in the use of technology. Technology, however, creates its own set of limitations. Utilization of e-mail correspondence added an unknown element to the study which, in and of itself, is largely unstudied as well (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). That is, did participants participate in a different fashion on-line as opposed to in person?
Did technological difficulties get in the way of participation rather than making the participation more readily accessible for both the participants and me?

A delimitation (boundary) of this study is intentionally set in seven counties in West Michigan and only in middle schools. While this made the study achievable for me as a researcher, it may have also set limits on who or what my grounded theory can apply to.

Finally, my biases as a current practitioner had the potential to sway the development of my grounded theory. While I intended to keep my biases in check, even subconscious categorizations of data might have occurred throughout the study and even in the final analysis.

In Chapter IV, I detail the findings of my study. It includes the stories of each of the eight teacher leaders as well as develops the foundations for my grounded theory.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

This chapter details the findings of my study that was conducted through the identification and participation of eight West Michigan middle school teachers who were defined by their principals as teacher leaders. Grounded theory research methodology as outlined by Charmaz (2006) was used in my study. Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic information connected with the teacher leaders who participated in this study, as ordered from the most years of teaching experience to the least. The names provided are pseudonyms of my own creation, which matched gender and had significance to me so I could more easily remember them throughout each phase of my study without compromising anonymity.

In summary, my study involved four males and four females who teach an even distribution of math/science and humanities subjects in participating West Michigan middle schools, all of which are comprised of 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. The grade level most represented is 6th grade, while the types of subjects taught most commonly is ELA and Social Studies. The mean and median number of years in the same teaching assignment is nine years, and the mode is three years. There are six suburban, one urban, and one rural school represented. The mean number of students is 605 and the median number of students is 615. There are 38 teachers, on average, in each school while the mean is 37 and the mode is 22. The mean and median number of administrators is two,
and the mode is one. The average number of years taught is 12, the median is 11 years, and the mode is 21 years. All teachers hold a Master’s degree, but not of the same type.

My study was carried out through in-depth one-on-one interviews and multiple e-mail follow-up journaling experiences over a three-month timeframe in the late autumn of 2012 and early winter of 2013. As the study unfolded, emergent themes developed through the process of initial, axial, and theoretical coding procedures. Coding was augmented by returning to more specific data collection, vis-à-vis the e-mail journals, and by me writing memos and diagraming concepts about the emergent data throughout the process.

The first part of this chapter details the profiles of each teacher leader through demographic information and by way of key quotations and descriptors that capture the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Leader</th>
<th>Urban, Rural, or Suburban School</th>
<th>Approx. Student Pop.</th>
<th># of Teachers in the School</th>
<th># of Admin. in the School</th>
<th>Grade Level(s) Currently Taught</th>
<th>Total # of Years Teaching</th>
<th># of Years Taught in this School</th>
<th># of years in this Teaching Assign.</th>
<th>Subject(s) Taught</th>
<th>Master Degree (Y/N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>300</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Soc. Stud. Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>590</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sci./Lead. Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Math/Alg. Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>61</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>ELA Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>320</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Math/Sci. Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7th &amp; 8th</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Math Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Liz</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>ELA Y</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Michael</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6th &amp; 8th</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Soc. Stud. Y</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>ELA/SS</td>
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**Mean**

- 605  38  2  -  18  12  9  -  -

**Median**

- 615  37  2  -  18  11  9  -  -

**Mode**

Suburban N/A 22 1 6th - 21 3 ELA/SS Y
essence of his/her voice and experience of becoming, being, and distributing teacher leadership. The second part of this chapter is written in a “process to product” approach whereby the specific experiences of each teacher leader are combined conceptually until an extrapolation to a generalized, over-arching, and all-encompassing theory grounded in the research is achieved.

**Teacher Leader Profiles**

This section offers the properties of the teacher leaders involved in the study in the order of the most years of teaching experience to the least.

**Betty**

Betty is a 7th Grade Social Studies teacher in a suburban middle school comprised of approximately 300 students, 22 teachers, and one administrator. She has been teaching for 37 years, 21 years in this school and 17 years in her current teaching assignment. Betty holds both Secondary and Elementary certifications. At the secondary level, Betty can teach 7th – 12th Grade History, Social Studies, and Spanish. At the elementary level, she can teach K – 8th Grade in a self-contained classroom. Finally, she holds a Bachelor of Science in Educating degree from Central Michigan University.

**Betty’s experience of becoming a teacher leader.** Betty, like so many teachers it seems, has always wanted to be a teacher. Although she begins her description with an honest yet funny reason for becoming a teacher leader—she liked the teacher desk—Betty describes the importance of students and her role in being a leader in the
profession. First and foremost, Betty loves her subject matter as well as her students.

These loves drove her beyond her insecurities of public speaking, something that she still struggles with even today, after 37 years in the profession. She continues to conquer this fear every time she speaks in front of her peers because she feels obligated to offer what she knows for the betterment of her colleagues and, in turn, the students they serve.

Betty carries out her role of teacher leadership in traditional and semi-formalized ways, which is not a surprise given her years of experience in the profession. She claims that she has accepted these roles when approached by her administrators simply because no one else would. To be certain, Betty takes on the persona of an unlikely and reluctant leader. She describes herself a bit of an anomaly when it comes to what one would expect in a leader, especially when it comes to interpersonal relationships within the school.

I’m involved in the district school improvement. I’m involved in our formative assessment team. I pretty much direct what goes on with middle school social studies. I think that probably was the biggest part of it. To some degree, there are a few people who turn to me when they have questions. I’m not the most popular person with the staff because I’m not real social, you know. I don’t do the after school party thing and so that kind of thing kind of made me think am I a school leader, but I guess when we talk academics and we talk processes that drive the school, yes I am.

Even though Betty does not perceive herself as popular among her peers within the social realm of professional relationships, she is willing to go above and beyond her contractual obligations as a teacher for the sake of the students and the school. By her own account, she is adept at understanding other teachers’ strengths and weaknesses, and in realizing when balance is needed in the leadership structures of the school.
Betty’s experience of being a teacher leader and the resulting distribution of her leadership in the school. Betty is very aware of her personal and professional need to understand and have a direct impact on decision making within the school. She is concerned that there will be gaps in her own learning and implementation if she did not hear the information or help make decisions firsthand. This need has driven Betty to take on leadership roles that she normally would not have taken throughout her career. In the following excerpt, Betty uses her self-deprecating humor to help describe how she got involved in a teacher leadership opportunity with a colleague. Notice, too, how Betty turns her own weaknesses into strengths, and likewise for her colleague, through a conscious effort to work collaboratively, and equally as a learning and leading team:

Okay, and when I heard that [Mary] was going to be on [the district school improvement team], I felt really comfortable with it. She can be a little difficult to work with because she’s kind of a steamroller, and so I was a little concerned about that because I am a “steamroller object” with most people. You find this hard to believe, right? But I also knew that we could offset each other because I’m a little more give and take, but I’m also more detail oriented, and so I thought we would make a good team.

However, it is not just Betty’s “need to know,” nor her need to be directly involved in the decision-making process, that drives her. The very reason she wants to be involved in teacher leadership activities and processes is for the sake of her students. Betty describes herself as a demanding teacher who has high standards. She believes that if she is going to be demanding of her students, then she sees it as her responsibility to be available to students who are struggling. She makes herself available to her students after school hours (beyond the contractual day) even though the school offers a tutoring and homework room after school.
In summary, Betty is not a traditional leader when it comes to interpersonal relationships or popularity. However, her dedication to her work for students and her colleagues allows for effective distribution of her leadership through the necessary work that needs to be done in the school. Although Betty may prefer to be hidden away from the limelight, she is deliberate in her perseverance over her own fears, hesitations, and perceived limitation—and leads.

Jenna

Jenna is a 6th Grade Science and Teen Leadership teacher in a suburban middle school comprised of approximately 590 students, 39 teachers, and two administrators. She has been teaching for 24 years, 12 years in this school and four years in her current teaching assignment. Jenna is certified to teach 6th – 8th Grade English Language Arts, Science, and Health. She also has Middle School and K-12 Reading endorsements on her teaching certificate. Finally, she holds a Master in Reading degree from Western Michigan University.

Jenna’s experience of becoming a teacher leader. Jenna exudes passion for her work as a teacher. It is apparent that Jenna wants to help students and/or teachers in any way that she can. She is adamant that she has no desire for administrative roles, even to the point of passing up opportunities for advancement in the school hierarchy in curriculum development. Her reasoning for passing up these opportunities is that she loves the classroom and would simply miss the kids too much. In fact, Jenna describes the classroom as the very thing that drives her each and every day.
Despite passing up more formal avenues of leading, Jenna states that she is a teacher leader within her school. So, how did she arrive at this station of leadership?

It always comes down to usually a principal asks if you will do something and sometimes you feel like you never say no, but then it turns out that you find that’s some of your strengths and you don’t mind doing some of those things.

**Jenna’s experience of being a teacher leader and the resulting distribution of her leadership in the school.** Jenna asserts that she loves teaching teachers, and she has done so on a larger statewide and even a limited national scale through speaking at conferences. However, she does not see herself as a teacher leader, and even resists the title. Instead, she sees her role as one of support and as being a servant to other teachers. The following example of leadership that Jenna offers, one of mentorship, helps to affirm the egalitarian nature of the teaching profession.

I don’t see myself as much of a teacher leader as a teacher supporter.

I see my role as maybe—somebody would call leader, I see as serving and supporting others. I’ll give you an example. I always take the new teachers. I’m always a mentor. I’ve mentored now since my fourth year of teaching. I’ve mentored other people and I love that role where you get time to meet and you go through criteria and you work in how to become a better person, and it makes me a better person and so I see myself as a leader. Not as a leader like you are going to do this, like that type of leading. I see myself as a supporter.

Jenna seizes the opportunity to lead and to continue to learn through her “teacher supporter” mentoring role. As is evidenced in the excerpt below, Jenna fosters a collegial learning community by building on each other’s strengths, and compensating and helping each other grow in each other’s weaknesses.

*When you mentor somebody else, when you work with them, you’re going to find their skills—they have different strengths and skills . . . I mentored a young teacher six years ago now who started new in science, and I loved how she really understood science. She was so scientific. I have more of a reading elementary*
background and I used her skills of finding new labs and ways to teach science. I learned from her and then she learned from me how to add the reading and the literacy piece to the science and so I always find it’s better to work with people. So I lead by supporting and we both benefit.

The support that Jenna offers to her colleagues extends beyond educating students, too. On a basic, human, and relational level, Jenna strives to make the necessary connections with her colleagues in natural, positive, and purposeful ways. These connections help her foster a genuine community in the school.

You know this job and you get bogged down and you feel like oh, I’m just not going to go to lunch. I’m just going to stay here. I’m going to close myself in my room and never get out until it’s done. I make sure that I always go to lunch and not talk about all the bad stuff going on but like hey, what’s going on positive? What did you guys see on TV last night? We always say we have a fun lunch. So whatever lunch I’m in, I try to make sure it’s the fun lunch.

The community Jenna helps to build relationally with her colleagues pays dividends when she engages her colleagues in the work of the school. In essence, Jenna is building and fostering a learning community. Therefore, the culture of the school is safe for Jenna to carry out her role as a teacher leader. While Jenna claims that she alone has not created this culture through her teacher leadership, her outlook and continued positivity shines through for the teachers she encounters each day. When asked about how others react to her positivity, Jenna responded that they simply support one another. There’s a mutual understanding, a level of trust, and a common goal in student learning.

Ellen

Ellen is a 8th Grade Math and Algebra teacher in a suburban middle school comprised of approximately 450 students, 28 teachers, and one administrator. She has
been teaching for a total of 21 years (all in this school) and 15 years in her current
teaching assignment. Ellen is certified to teach 6\textsuperscript{th} – 12\textsuperscript{th} Grade Math and Science and
holds a Master in Educational Leadership degree from Michigan State University.

**Ellen’s experience of becoming a teacher leader.** Ellen’s teacher leadership
begins with self-motivation and a desire for things to run smoothly for her and for the
school. She does not hesitate to communicate with her principal to share in the work, and
the leadership, in a complementary and respectful fashion. Ellen sees herself as
precipitating these interactions with her principal, but is conscious of the fact that he
empowers her to help do the work that needs to be done in the school.

I think that I go in and I will push to have my needs met as a teacher or what I see
as perceived needs in the building . . . I’ll do whatever needs to be done, whether
it’s the work that’s the grunt work [or] I’ll help or be on this committee or
whatever needs to be done, or if it’s talking to people or that kind of stuff . . .
[Administration] empowers me by a lot of times they ask me for my input on
things.

Ellen first felt empowered by hierarchical leadership when she was asked by a
new principal to move from the high school to a newly-formed middle school in her sixth
year of teaching. She made the decision overcome her fears and to accept the invitation
largely because she was asked and because the new middle school structure was being
developed with a student-centered philosophy at its core. Embedded in this philosophy
were a schedule and a structure that allowed for and encouraged teachers to team.

I was very excited to have the opportunity to work in an interdisciplinary teaching
team and I felt very proud that the principal would ask me to join him in the move
to the middle school. I realized at that time that he saw something special in me
and the work that I did. He had the chance to hire any teacher he wanted, but he
thought I would work well with the middle school students and staff. I was very
nervous because I had always considered myself a high school teacher; middle
school students seemed so young and immature.
Ellen’s experience of being a teacher leader and the resulting distribution of her leadership in the school. Even though Ellen acknowledges that she was asked early on in her career by an administrator to help lead change, Ellen believes that seniority plays a role in making her teacher leadership successful and accepted by her peers. She uses an example of a new, young math teacher in the building. Ellen respects her younger colleague for her abilities with her subject matter, and tries to let her know how talented she really is. However, Ellen also realizes that this new teacher looks up to her, and attributes this respect to the station seniority holds among teachers. Nevertheless, Ellen does not think that seniority has been a prerequisite for her leadership abilities to come to the forefront.

Yeah, I am a veteran for one thing, I mean, because I’ve been here for a long time, but I think I’ve always been bossy and outgoing and assertive and always been the type to kind of take the bull by the horns kind of person. If there’s something I’m not happy with or if there’s something I think that can work better in a different way, you know, I work that out.

In addition, the Ellen points to the professional culture of the school as fostered by administrators as a major reason why her teacher leadership can be and is carried out, even beyond the contractual workday. Ellen points out that in the past, teachers have not always been treated professionally in the district, therefore limiting any hope of teacher leadership in the school. Thankfully, this is not the case currently.

And when you’re treated [professionally], then you act in a professional manner. Then, you do what you need to do to get the work done [even] if that involves meeting after school, or in the evening, or doing stuff on your own time, or whatever—or not having the 15 minute technical prep time, or whatever that is, I think that [it’s] the way we’re treated. [T]here has been some upper level administration where we weren’t all that connected to, where we didn’t have that feeling, and then it was much more like, “you know, you can’t make me stay here
past 3:25,” or whatever. “I’m out,” or, you know, you did have more of that, “you can’t make me do that kind of thing,” because in some ways we weren’t treated as professionals, and then you act a little bit less professional when you’re not treated as a professional, I guess.

Ellen also relates the positive culture in the school to administration and teachers agreeing to put forth the effort in the budgeting process to create teaching and learning structures (i.e., learning communities) that fit the middle school level most effectively. In the end, all of the budgets, structures, seniority, administration, and navigation through the formal and informal ranks and processes of the school comes down to Ellen wanting to make positive a difference for students and teachers in her school. The middle school teaming concept is alive and well at Ellen’s school today due, in large part, to her leadership within the building, from inside the teaching ranks.

David

David is a 6th Grade English and Advanced English teacher in a suburban middle school comprised of approximately 950 students, 61 teachers, and three administrators. He has been teaching for 19 years, seven of which have been in his current school and teaching assignment. David is certified to teach 6th – 8th Grade English Language Arts and holds a Master in Educational Leadership degree from Grand Valley State University.

David’s experience of becoming a teacher leader. David, who is also a soccer coach on the collegiate level, likens his teacher leader role to coaching others. Notice, too, that his description starts with a focus on students.
I mean, I think obviously you have to have a passion for teaching kids and wanting to teach kids, but I think it’s just the overall leadership of not only are you a leader within your classroom, but are you a leader within your school? Are you a leader within your community? Do people look to you to lead and, I don’t know, for me I find a number of great parallels from coaching to being a teacher leader . . .

David first became what he describes as a “go-to” person in his third or fourth year of teaching when he was a member of the school improvement team. From that experience, and from the respect he gained from his colleagues and administrators, he was asked by his principal to take the chairmanship of the school improvement team the following year.

**David’s experience of being a teacher leader and the resulting distribution of his leadership in the school.** David is very confident in himself and in his roles as coach, teacher, and teacher leader. In fact, he sees himself as a go-to person not only for fellow teachers, but also for the school itself in order to fill a void that he sees in administrative leadership. For example, David relates an experience that is representative of how he typically operates within the school when he was asked by his colleagues to be an emcee for a pep assembly, even though he was not part of the planning process. So, David describes drawing on his coaching experience and fearlessness in front of crowds to make the assembly operate smoothly for the sake of the students and his colleagues.

David makes it clear that he wants the school to be represented well and believes that someone needs to take on that leadership role. Otherwise, David states, “you miss out on who is the face of the school, who’s the person who’s really the driving force behind things, and trying to capture that energy and where you want to move as an organization.” Clearly, David does not think that this person necessarily needs to be a
traditional, hierarchical leader. It’s something that needs to be done, he possesses the skill-set, and is happy to help in this fashion.

Being that go-to person, however, sometimes creates tensions within the teaching ranks, which David fully realizes and confidently confronts. However, he once again draws on his coaching experience and applies these skills on a professional level to resolve disputes that arise in his teacher leadership role.

I had a conflict with one of my colleagues before school started about a pretty sensitive issue and it got a little bit heated, but we addressed the issue face on. We talked about it. Boom, we have a great relationship—but you don’t talk behind people’s back and you don’t poo-poo it and pretend it’s not there . . .

As a teacher, David certainly is not immune to some of the difficulties and frustrations that come with the job. In the example below, David relates how the staff was in turmoil over the new teacher evaluation laws and processes in the state of Michigan at the beginning of the 2012 – 2013 school year. However, he applies a mindset of positivity and perseverance to his own struggles, and communicates this positive outlook to his peers by building relationships.

I’ll deal with [the new evaluation process] when I have to, but I’m focused on building relationships with kids, building relationships with my colleagues, building relationships with my staff and not going down that road, but it’s a mindset.

In keeping with this positive mindset, David fully embraces his role as a teacher leader – a coach in all aspects of life. “Honestly, I think my greatest hope is to make a connection with a kid or a family or another teacher that’s life-impacting.”

David engages with his students and makes those life-impacting experiences in very natural and embedded ways in the school. Students also see him as a coach as well.
as a leader—someone they can trust and look up to. He is highly visible in the community and never shies away from an interaction at the grocery store, at youth league soccer, or in any aspect of his life as a teacher leader. He describes his combined teaching, coaching, and teacher leadership roles not so much as a job, but as a way of life. As a result, he sees improvement and engagement from his students that, he believes, would not be seen otherwise due to the family and social lives of his students outside of school.

Coaching is so much more than the rules and the plays—it’s about motivating people. David’s approach to teaching and leadership within his school certainly plays out, by his own admission, through the eyes and actions of a coach. David’s “team” is comprised of all the people that he encounters, teaches, and leads, both in and outside of the school.

**Kent**

Kent is a 6th Grade Math and Science teacher in a rural middle school comprised of approximately 320 students, 22 teachers, and one administrator. He has been teaching in this same capacity for 16 years in the same school and district. Kent is certified to teach 6th – 8th Grade Math and Science as well as K-8th Grade in a self-contained classroom. Finally, Kent holds a Master in Middle Level Education degree from Western Michigan University.

**Kent’s experience of becoming a teacher leader.** Kent does not see himself as a leader. Throughout the interview, he struggled to see the connection between what he
does and the concept of leadership. The quotation that follows came after a few minutes of Kent attempting to define the concept of teacher leadership:

Okay, if you want to say it as though I have a formal thing like I’m the math chair, no or I’m on the school improvement team, no. I don’t have any of those. I do just feel myself personally that to invest in the community, invest in the school district, and I don’t think it should be just a seven hour or what is it—7:40 to three o’clock job. So I go and I volunteer in other ways or when I see an idea of where there’s a hole in it, I talk with some teachers above and below me and I try to say hey, let’s go and how about we try shooting for this.

Kent’s struggle to see himself as a teacher leader may very well be the result of his own perceptions of leadership on the whole, in which titles and roles are readily identifiable. In contrast to his traditional definition of leadership, Kent leads through the giving of himself and of his time to make a difference for students and his colleagues in the school.

Kent’s definitional and role identification conundrum relates back to the first time he entered into teacher leadership when he was asked by his principal to get involved for the benefit of student learning. Upon reflecting upon this experience, however, Kent continues to question whether or not he was engaging in leadership at all.

I don’t know if this is really a teacher leader thing, but I remember that about four to six years into teaching, my principal sent me to a conference on teaching math conceptually. Basically it involves showing the "why" behind the math and not just teaching kids tricks . . . I did this in the classroom and reached many struggling students who before I think I would have lost . . . My principal asked me to show my peer teachers how to do this at a staff meeting. I prepped a lot for it and was really nervous.

Kent’s experience of being a teacher leader and the resulting distribution of his leadership in the school. Over time, however, that nervousness has at least somewhat evaporated for Kent. He is very confident in his abilities as a teacher and, in his words, as a human being. Throughout the interview and journaling process, Kent
regularly referred to his religious faith. He sees his teaching position as an opportunity to spread his faith through action, to be an example for those he serves because that is what he believes he is called to do.

Given Kent’s strong sense of faith, duty, and an obligation to do what is right, he does not shy away from creating a culture of accountability among his teaching peers in order to get positive results for the school. This growing confidence also reflects Kent’s realization that it does not necessarily take a title like “administrator” to make a positive difference in the lives of his students and colleagues after all.

[Sometimes] you have an administrator that will call the rights right and the wrongs wrong, but . . . the more powerful thing is when the administrator doesn’t have to do it. Peers do it to each other . . . It’s very easy to want to just go and say, “Well, that’s the administrator’s job,” and in one respect that’s true, and another part it’s not. [Y]ou build a better school system if you can have some peer accountability.

However, Kent realizes that sometimes his efforts are not well-received by others in the teaching ranks. “Some people have been really receptive. Some people we sit down and we agree to disagree, and some people won’t even acknowledge me—very rarely for that one—but more so.” Yet despite these inherent struggles in implementing his teacher leadership, Kent remains intent on making a positive difference for his students and the school.

Kent also sees his role as somewhat of a go-between between faculty and administration on initiatives that could help teachers improve and students achieve, all-the-while keeping the egalitarian nature of teachers intact. He is willing to take what he considers small or insignificant topics to administrators (like a scheduling concern for a professional development day) so he can be sure that things are equitable and fair. Kent
believes these small tasks allow him to continue to build relationships with his colleagues, all-the-while making connections with administration. In the end, Kent engages in this relationship building for one purpose: the betterment of students in the school.

Whether Kent views his actions as teacher leadership or not, it is clear that he feels very strongly about the need to create a caring and challenging environment in which his students can learn and thrive.

I remember this from when I first started teaching. I want the classroom to be safe. I want the kids to know that they’re cared about, loved, and valued. And I [want them] to have a challenging curriculum. And that was one of my life goals going into [teaching].

Kent takes on the role of servant-leader in his school as an outgrowth of his religious faith and calling. Although the work may be challenging and sometimes wrought with interpersonal controversy, all of his work is for one purpose: the success and growth of the students in the school.

**Rick**

Rick is a 7th and 8th Grade Math teacher in an urban middle school comprised of approximately 660 students, 45 teachers, and five administrators. He has been teaching for 12 years, eight years in this school and three years in his current teaching assignment. Rick is certified to teach 6th – 8th Grade Math and is also certified K – 5th Grade for a self-contained classroom. Finally, Rick holds a Master in Educational Leadership degree from Grand Valley State University.
Rick’s experience of becoming a teacher leader. Rick entered a teacher leadership role early on in his career by being asked by his principal to take a “team leader” position. While Rick recognized the seniority structure, and even worried about breaking those ranks, he did not shy away from the opportunity to lead. In turn, he experienced success in this introductory experience to teacher leadership.

The first time I actually became a teacher leader was the start of my second year of teaching. At the time, I was teaching 6th grade math, along with seven other core grade level teachers. We had enough students to justify two teams of core teachers, with four teachers on each team. I was asked to be team leader of one these teams. The team consisted of four teachers, including me, and I was the least senior of all. Thinking back, I think that the other teachers on my team reacted well to me in my role of team leader. One reason I feel this way is because they were relieved that they didn’t have to do the job. Another reason is I remember we accomplished what we needed to accomplish by working together. Thirdly, I remember wondering how I was going to convince a group of teachers to take me seriously when they all had more experience than me. After serving in that role, I never had the feeling that I wasn’t taken seriously.

Rick’s experience of being a teacher leader and the resulting distribution of his leadership in the school. Rick certainly identifies with the role of teacher leader, but he also aspires to become a principal one day. Rick respects and communicates with his administrators, and he sees that he can help lead others in improving his school through the more formalized roles that are available to him.

I’ve always liked to be involved in the decision-making processes for whatever, whether it be curriculum or if it was just anything that had to do with how the school ran, how it functioned. I’m glad that my principal gave you my name because that means that I’m hopefully doing something right, you know, in terms of the job that’s expected of me, not only as the teacher but also as part of those teams that help other teachers and so forth.

However, Rick is not just seeking avenues to advance in the hierarchical ranks of the school. Nor is he just extraordinarily interested in processes or functioning of an
organization. Rick is committed to making a positive difference in his school for the sake of the students’ and school’s success. This commitment to students and the school plays out largely through collaborative structures and roles that even go above and beyond his contractual obligations. For example, Rick involves himself in Professional Learning Community (PLC) activities, which are voluntary and held after school.

[I participate in] the optional after school. We have professional learning communities where we used to have them during the school day but because teachers don’t want to be pulled out of their classrooms, now this year they’re set after school and they’re voluntary so I attend those and participate in those and try to, you know, do as much as I can to encourage others to do so also.

One of the purposes of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) is focused on positive end-results for student achievement (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010). This achievement is realized through the collaborative processes that its members engage in on a continual and ongoing basis. While PLCs are envisioned and structured in an egalitarian manner, they often need leadership within the group to get off the ground and, to a certain extent, continue to function. Rick’s commitment to his content, student achievement, and thereby achievement for the school is evident in his commitment to the PLC process:

[I encourage others to participate in PLCs] because the content that we’re working on is important. There’s, you know, some of the activities that we do, one of the activities is study student work, so looking at student work and what kind of assignments teachers are using in the classroom I feel is important so that we can see if this is an assignment that’s going to help us go in the right direction in terms of our standardized test scores because our scores have not been great and that’s one of those things that ever since I’ve been in the district, we’ve been fighting the battle of trying to increase test scores and getting teachers to see the assignments that students are doing and then talking about what can be made better for those assignments to work towards that student achievement.
Rick emphasizes that introspection is an integral part of his leadership. This introspection—the self-talk, planning, and strategizing that are hidden from the world—speaks to the seemingly never-ending role of a teacher leader. In addition, Rick worries if it is all worth it. While he believes that his efforts and the efforts of his colleagues are well intentioned and based on research and data, he worries if the end-result will be increased student achievement. Nevertheless, Rick continues to work through the PLC process to make a positive difference for his colleagues and, most importantly, his students.

Liz

Liz is a 7th Grade Language Arts teacher in a suburban middle school comprised of approximately 930 students, 51 teachers, and three administrators. She has been teaching in this capacity for 10 years in the same school and district. Liz is certified to teach 6-12 Language Arts and American History and holds a Master in the Art of Teaching degree from Marygrove College.

Liz’s experience of becoming a teacher leader. Liz became a teacher leader early in her career by being asked by her principal to get involved by providing input on the direction of the school. Her commitment to students and her belief in providing the best education for them is what drives her to above and beyond what she is contractually required to do.

But, um, starting, I don’t know, maybe in my fourth year just, I was asked for more of my input on directions our building was going to go. Initiatives like that and so, I think that teacher leadership is being professional in what you do every day and your conduct with colleagues. But I think what really defines it is just an
unwavering commitment to believing in the best for all kids and you’re never going to have a poor attitude about what you do. You’re going to go above and beyond. You’re going to put in extra hours. You’re going to learn and go to conferences. Um, you’re going to share that knowledge just with those hallway conversations . . . And when I think about the teacher leaders that I respected in my building, its maybe the people who aren’t seeking it but have that really strong influence by how they conduct themselves every day.

It is interesting to note, however, that upon reflection Liz identifies her first teacher leadership experience during her eighth year of teaching (not fourth as indicated above). This role had a formal title and formal duties that came from a district administrator, thus her distinction in definition.

My role as a teacher leader came in the fall of the 2010-2011 school year. At that time my curriculum director had asked me to become the district's first Formative Assessment Coach and my principal asked me to take on the language arts Department Chair position. Prior to this school year I had never led a team of adult learners in any official capacity.

**Liz’s experience of being a teacher leader and the resulting distribution of her leadership in the school.** As Liz took on this more formalized teacher leader role, she began to have doubts and fears about her performance. However, this anxiety also produced thoughtful planning, dialogue, and constructive introspection as well.

I felt pressure and that I was being “evaluated” by my principal and my curriculum director. What if our conversations de-railed and devolved into silly banter and off-topic conversations? How would I guide us back to the team norms without coming across as a brown-nosing jerk? What if the articles, protocols, activities, and prompts I chose completely failed? What if I clammed up and couldn’t string together an articulate thought or communicate directions in a meaningful way? What if I was completely inept and wasted everyone’s time? How could I still be “me” and keep humor and be real with my team while also taking charge and being a leader? My husband and my parents can attest to the anxiety I felt and the immense amount of time invested in planning a thoughtful first agenda with smooth transitions. I also wondered if my agenda would fit into our half day meeting time—was there too much? Was it not enough? I just didn't have the experience to draw on.

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Liz also soon realized that leading adults through her teacher leader role was a whole new challenge and experience. The quote below speaks to the traditional job of a teacher (i.e., teaching students) and juxtaposes that role with teaching and leading colleagues who traditionally have unspoken rank through seniority.

Oh, I had never led a group of adults before. I had never been in charge of, you know, creating meeting agendas. Making sure the, you know, really talk about norms. These are the norms of how we are going to operate as adults. I mean that’s just a new thing when you are used to working with 13 year olds and now you have colleagues who are 30 year veterans and here you are trying to tell them: “This is what’s important. This is what we are going to be doing. Make sure you’re doing these things outside of your meeting.” It was just new.

Liz also came to realize that her communication and relationship with her administrators were changing as well.

And in working more closely with the administration, that was new for me. I was kind of somebody who, you know, I want to have a good relationship with my administration but I would never sit down in their office really or seek them out. Even not have any complaints. I wouldn’t share complaints and I wouldn’t even really share positive things all the time either. I just sort of kept my head down and did my thing. So that was new. Just having more professional conversations and connecting with the administration more.

Liz is very clear, however, that she is not an administrator and she doesn’t want to act like one. Her leadership style is modeled after what she perceives as a positive role model in her principal. She believes he has helped shift the culture to focus on student learning. In implementing her roles as a teacher leader, Liz takes the following approach, with continued regard for the egalitarianism and respect among fellow teachers:

And I felt like when our principal established the expectations and the norm, he was really my model of how I am going to lead basically. And, um, I am probably, and I think that this is a good choice to make, I’m not going to be as rigid as he is. I am not their boss and so there’s places for humor and things like that in the meeting. And donuts and coffee. But, um, I’m still getting the job done and having a very healthy collaboration.
In Liz’s analysis of her role as a teacher leader, she returns to the basics of her involvement in education: “I just, I don’t want to, um… as much as I have worked with adults, I don’t think that’s what fuels me every day. I do that because I think it has an impact on kids and that’s what I really like to do.”

Michael

Michael is a 6th Grade Social Studies and 8th Grade United States History teacher in a suburban middle school comprised of approximately 640 students, 34 teachers, and two administrators. He has been teaching for 5 years, three of which has been in his current school and teaching assignment. Michael holds a professional teaching certificate and is certified to teach 6th – 8th Grade History and Social Studies. Finally, Michael holds a Master in Curriculum Development and the Practice of Teaching degree from Western Michigan University.

Michael’s experience of becoming a teacher leader. Michael first entered teacher leadership when he accepted an invitation from his principal to share his knowledge of curriculum with the rest of the staff in order to help the school build and implement its school improvement goals.

My first time entering into a role as a teacher leader was at the beginning of the year of the 2011-2012 school year. I was asked to present a piece of curriculum that I was trained in to the rest of the staff. This was necessary as the staff was being to incorporate this system into the curriculum as part of the school improvement goals. It was the DBQ, or Document Based Question process for positional writing. I had attended Professional development seminars on this process and utilized in the High School and Middle School levels. The time slot was setup for me to walk the staff through the process and utilize an example. As the lead teacher, it was assumed that I would field and questions regarding the
Michael’s experience of being a teacher leader and the resulting distribution of his leadership in the school. With the advantage of hindsight, Michael realizes that in accepting the invitation to lead it opened the door for him to take on greater teacher leadership roles. Not only had his principal recognized his potential to lead, but his peers received him positively as well. In the following excerpt, Michael explains how and why he has carried his teacher leader role farther than this initial experience.

While this was a small role, it was the first time that I had to present to the entire staff as a knowledgeable professional. It was somewhat nerve racking, but I put together my plan and it went over well. I had teachers tell me they appreciated my presentation and would be coming to me with “all their questions.” Joking aside, it was nice to feel respected as a professional and has motivated me to take on other leadership roles within the school, such as coaching, setting up field trips, and starting a History Day Club.

Indeed, Michael sees teacher leadership as improving the school for the benefit of the students, especially in expanding learning beyond the school walls. He views his main strength in leadership as providing the work, insight, and structure in making opportunities such as educational trips, real-life experiences, and extended learning projects available to his students.

To me a teacher leader is someone who has a philosophy of education that guides them in improving their school. I think that to be a teacher leader you have to be involved more than just your own classroom but the school itself. I don’t necessarily think that a teacher leader is someone who demands others to do certain things. I think a teacher leader is someone who utilizes those who are willing to do more at school than just be in their classroom to make the school a better place and expand the learning to outside the classroom.

However, Michael also realizes that his leadership can sometimes only reach so far. In leading other teachers in his school, Michael has come to understand the
egalitarian nature of the profession, especially in the context of the demands placed upon teachers versus the value in the potential end result. So, if he is going to lead, Michael believes he needs to bring experiences and initiatives that have quality and value to his colleagues.

Well, I think for my role as a teacher demands are typically met with, “I’ve got things to do myself, you know.” So, I mean as a teacher there is an equality amongst colleagues, where if something is demanded of them it’s going to be met with resistance – but not all, but by staff in general. And I think if you really want someone to do something, it has to be something that they see value in. So ask, you know, appreciate those that are participating. I’m one of the younger teachers, so if I’m approaching an older staff member, you’re going to approach it from the vantage point of, “You’ve been here. You’ve got this experience. How would you do this?” You know, “help me help you,” to take the line from Jerry Maguire.

Michael’s teacher leadership is focused not on just providing extra experiences for students, but to widen the scope of what success can and should mean to students, his colleagues, his school, and also the community. The excerpt that follows encapsulates Michael’s ongoing attempts to change the perception and the culture within his school and greater community.

My greatest goal, I would say, is to—I don’t really—I don’t know if I want to base it on scores, but I really want to see [my district] excel [and to be] more respected. I think there’s a lot of things that are done in this district that don’t get noticed. For example, my co-teacher when I did my student teaching does quiz bowl and our quiz bowl team went to the state finals. And, you know, people know the scores on our MEAP tests, but very few people know that we had a team of students that did that and they competed with elite schools from across the state. So I really would hope that by the end of my career I’ve done something that makes [the district] not only better in the eyes of the community, but better in the eyes of themselves.

Michael goes on to describe how the culture within a particular school, and the effects of a particular culture on teachers, students, and greater community can hold great
weight – thereby affecting the potential for teacher leadership to emerge among more senior members of the faculty.

I think that there’s a culture within the community that the school and the population of the student population is underachieving and it in some aspects, you know, that feeds into more negative aspects within the school with disgruntled teachers. I don’t doubt that there’s older teachers that came in a little bit more wide-eyed and excited than they are right now. I think that part of it is the negative spirit that seems to kind of float around the district. It’s interestingly enough though, I think it is combatable within the schools themselves. I taught at the high school and the staff was much more divisive. It was more of a staff against the administration and then staff against staff and when I came to the middle school, it’s not—it doesn’t have that same atmosphere.

Through his leadership, Michael respects not only the structures and mores of the staff and school, but positively challenges the status quo with opportunities that extend learning beyond the school walls. In doing so, he not only positively affects the students in his classroom, but also other students in the school, his colleagues, administrators, and the greater community.

The Grounded Theory Process

While the individual stories of the teacher leaders are integral to my study, they do not tell the whole story when attempting to derive a grounded theory. These teacher leaders’ stories and reflections are not just individual case studies that exist in isolation. Rather, the recursive process of qualitative research inherent in grounded theory demands that I, as the researcher, involve myself as a participant to make sense of the data collected in a real-time and ongoing fashion (Charmaz, 2006). In fact, even the categories in which the previous section was divided (i.e., “becoming,” and “being/distributing”) was derived as a result of this process. Therefore, the next section
of this chapter describes how individual teacher leader stories were raised to more
generalized, yet descriptive, levels until all salient concepts grew into themes that
ultimately pointed me toward a theory grounded in the data.

Making Sense of the Data from the Words of the Teacher Leaders

As each successive one-on-one interview occurred with each teacher leader, their
words were recorded, transcribed, and member-checked so I could begin to make
meaning out of the data collected. This is called the open coding (or line-by-line coding)
phase of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). In this phase, I took segments of text from
each transcribed interview and assigned a code to it. After all eight of the teacher
leaders’ one-on-one interviews, there were 475 individual codes identified. Some of the
codes were used as identifiers in the transcripts of multiple interviews, while other codes
were unique to one teacher leader.

As these codes began to take shape, emergent categories began to form and
individual open codes were placed in these categories. This process is referred to as axial
coding. In all, there were 19 axial codes created. In order to begin to develop
relationships and emergent themes, individual open codes were placed in multiple
categories as appropriate. Appendix H and Appendix I outline these axial codes along
with a representative sample of the types of open codes contained in each category. Keep
in mind that axial codes are not created equal; therefore, the representative sampling of
open codes is not the same length for each axial code listed.
Although it may be tempting to think that axial codes that contain more open codes signify greater importance, this may not be the case. These axial coding categories are used in conjunction with ongoing data collection through e-mail journaling by the teacher leaders, and simultaneous memoing by me. This process is referred to as the constant comparative method (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010). These initial axial codes are then refined to larger conceptualizations and help to begin to bridge the gap between axial and theoretical coding. In addition, I began to make connections back to my conceptual frame and my working definition of teacher leadership. As the data reached a saturation point, where nothing new seemed to be brought forth in the constant comparative method, categories were raised to theoretical concepts (Charmaz, 2006). Appendix H shows these emergent theoretical open and axial codes, devoid of the connecting conceptualizations that eventually surfaced in the final theoretical model that is detailed in Chapter V.

Using Memos to Craft Connecting Conceptualizations for My Theoretical Model

As is necessary in grounded theory, I engaged in memoing throughout my data collection and coding procedures. These memos were crucial to the development of the links between the theoretical codes that emerged in the study. These memos and linkages were also tested and verified through the constant comparative method. The following sections of this chapter relay larger theoretical conceptualizations that apply to all teacher leaders in my study. The examples provided below best capture these theoretical
concepts as derived from the constant comparative method employed in my grounded theory research.

**Resulting Themes**

The themes and subthemes detailed in this section are the result of the grounded theory research process. Teacher leaders expressed their ideas in their own unique way. The quotations and examples provided below are illustrative of my participant group as a whole, and they were selected especially for clear expression of these findings.

**Theme 1.0: Emergent Teacher Leaders Desire to Positively Affect Others Within and Outside of their Classroom while Students Continue to be the Primary Focus of their Work**

Each teacher leader described him/herself as someone who had, as Ellen put it, “an educational philosophy that put the student and their needs first and foremost.” Each teacher’s purpose and intent was to make sure that their students were taken care of; that they felt worth; that they felt accepted; that they could achieve. Kent sums it up this way:

I remember this from when I first started teaching: I want the classroom to be safe; I want the kids to know that they’re cared about, loved, and valued. And I [want] them to have a challenging curriculum—and that was one of my life goals going into [teaching].

David takes his role as a teacher a step farther and realizes that he is not only impacting students with his leadership, but his peers as well. David explains, “Honestly, I think my greatest hope is to make a connection with a kid or a family or another teacher that’s life impacting.”
The rich description provided by each teacher leader in the first part of this chapter details many examples of how students are the primary focus of a teacher leader’s work. These emergent teacher leaders agree that they aim to “positively affect others within and beyond the classroom,” per their independent and unanimous selection from the generalized descriptors from my working definition. Therefore, these teacher leaders naturally expressed how they focused on students when sharing their stories and, when provided the opportunity to select from a list of definitional descriptors, identified the same attribute. However, not all teacher leaders in my study see themselves as leaders.

Theme 2.0: Teacher Leaders Do Not Always See Themselves as Leaders

In my study, Betty, Jenna, Ellen, David, Kent, and Liz were all reticent to call themselves leaders. They expressed that they went into the profession of education to affect students in a positive fashion, and that traditionally and culturally happens through the traditional role of a teacher. Teachers teach students; that is their job. And leadership? That is reserved for administrators. Or is it?

In trying to come to terms of why she thought she was selected by her principal to participate in my teacher leader study, Jenna said, “well, I still think it’s strange that I’m considered a leader because traditionally I see leaders as the people that decided to go into leadership.” And, Liz does not mince any words when describing how she views leadership. Notice how she equates the role of principal with the concept when she says, “I don’t [want to be a principal]. I’m not ever going to do that. I am going to—I want to
die in my classroom. I don’t want to have those roles.” Finally, Betty keeps it simple and direct: “My question is, why me?”

The reality for a teacher leader is that his/her work does not just stop with teaching students. Hence, the link that Liz described as the “chicken and the egg” relationship between becoming and being a teacher leader. That is, these teachers see themselves simply doing what they think is best for their students. So, teachers do not necessarily see themselves as entering a realm of leadership. When questioned directly about this perceived dichotomy between teaching and leading, all of the teacher leaders expressed the sentiment that everything they do is for their students. Further, they do not have a desire to be different from or perceived as better than their peers.

Teacher leaders desire to make a positive impact not only on their own students, but on all students—and sometimes this means going beyond their classroom walls and contractual obligations to do so. But how do individual teacher leaders come to this conclusion and, further, decide to take action?

**Theme 3.0: Introspection is an Important Part of a Teacher Leader’s Recognition and Experience of Becoming and Being a Teacher Leader**

Rick said it best when he described how others do not realize the amount of thinking, planning, and strategizing that teacher leaders engage in well after their day is done. I identified this concept as “introspection,” and it is an integral linkage between theoretical themes in becoming and being a teacher leader. The teacher leaders in this study (other than Rick) did not directly identify this aspect of their leadership development or actions. However, each teacher leader, in their own way, recounted
example after example of their recognition of the attributes, actions, and fears that they experienced as an emergent teacher leader.

Liz was passionate and energized when recounting how she reflected upon her first real foray into teacher leadership. She said,

I just thanked God that it had gone so well because it was a huge investment of time, planning, energy, and courage! From that day, I learned that adult learners liked sharing and that I needed to provide opportunities and/or protocols to have them respond and learn from each other, but in a focused way.

However, teacher leadership takes place within the context of the everyday life of a classroom teacher. So, Ellen takes a very practical approach to her role as a teacher leader. She has reflected upon and has realized her own limitations. Through her introspection, she has come to set boundaries based upon what she knows she can and cannot handle within a given day. In doing so, she tries to ensure that she can be effective for her students and her colleagues.

I don’t do a lot of the teacher leader stuff during lunch because I need a break. I mean, I feel like I know that there are some teachers that do a very good job of volunteering in the cafeteria and doing that kind of thing and I need that time for myself, so I have selfishly said nope, I’m not going to do that during that time.

David took another angle when looking inward about his role of teacher and leader. He recounted how his students do not have many of the resources that other students have in other districts or at home, especially technology. After listing so many things that his students do not have access to, he simply and humbly said, “So I think the single greatest resource in here is me.”

With these realizations through introspection, the teachers are able to more effectively evolve and engage as teacher leaders. However, this introspection also results
in feelings that must be dealt with by each teacher leader. Some of these feelings are positive and foster the teacher leader’s development. Other feelings are negative, often resulting in fears, and must be overcome if the teacher wants his/her leadership is to continue.

Subtheme 3.1: Teacher leaders recognize their positive and negative feelings associated with their teacher leader role, and in the process overcome their fears.

Positive feelings. David comes across as a very dedicated and positive person. This approach and his feelings begin with positive introspection. David says, “I think a lot of times you have to just choose your mindset when you wake up.” Likewise, Jenna finds her positivity comes from within.

Like Muhammad Ali says, “Life is not always sunshine and rainbows,” but it’s what you make of it and so that’s basically my upbringing is to be positive. I had a joke where somebody—I guess my sister started it. I’m the oldest and they called me “Positive Jenna” as a joke. Oh gosh, “Positive Jenna,” but seriously, you’re a lot happier if you’re positive.

In choosing a positive mindset, David and Jenna are able to more fully engage in the leading that they clearly believe in.

While David and Jenna focus on their own inner positive mindset, Michael finds that his positive feelings often come from the culture already in his school, especially in comparison to his other experiences. Michael describes the difference that he thinks enables him to lead:

I think that part of it is the negative spirit that [can] float around the district. It’s interestingly enough though, I think it is combustable within the schools themselves. I taught at the high school and the staff was much more divisive. It
was more of a staff against the administration and then staff against staff and when I came to the middle school, it’s not—it doesn’t have that same atmosphere.

Liz expresses the same cultural feel within her wing of the school, where she began and continues to lead. She explains, “The wing I work in is kind of known as being this happy little bubble where the teachers get along really well and some of the other wings don’t have maybe as much peace and harmony I guess.” That lack of peace and harmony, whether internal or external (or both), can create negative feelings within teacher leaders that often result in fears.

**Negative feelings often result in fears.** In stepping out from the traditional classroom teacher role into the realm of teacher leadership, these teachers encountered challenges that sometimes resulted in negative feelings. These challenges and negative feelings resulted in fears. There were no less than 23 specific fears relayed by the teacher leaders in my study that ranged from not being accepted by their peers in their teacher leader role to not making a difference in standardized test scores. Table 1 shows each of these 23 fears.

**Overcoming fears and focusing on positives.** It is obvious, however, that fear did not overcome these teacher leaders; in fact, the inverse occurred. At some point, each teacher leader evaluated their work and weighed the importance of that work against the fears they were facing—and decided to continue to lead. Simply put, the students are worth it. This introspection goes unnoticed, yet it is integral to the development and extension of teacher leadership. Without thinking through, evaluating, exploring and recognizing themselves as emergent leaders, these teachers would not be engaging in teacher leadership today.
Table 2

Fears Expressed by Teacher Leaders

- Fear of negativity.
- Fear of adult drama.
- Fear of becoming unhealthy as a school.
- Fear of being evaluated in their teacher leader role by their administrators.
- Fear of being perceived as a kiss-up.
- Fear of being perceived as false.
- Fear of being perceived as stupid.
- Fear of being perceived as too friendly with administration.
- Fear of casting judgment on others.
- Fear of devolving as a school.
- Fear of failure.
- Fear of losing identity and connections with colleagues.
- Fear of not being noticed as a school.
- Fear of not being respected as a professional.
- Fear of not having the right amount of resources.
- Fear of not making a difference.
- Fear of not making connections with kids.
- Fear of not understanding the changes and evolution in education.
- Fear of not progressing as a school.
- Fear of rejection.
- Fear that others will think I want to be principal.
- Fear that people will not come on board.
- Fear that student achievement overshadows other areas of education.

Subtheme 3.2: Teacher Leaders continue to be Introspective throughout the Recursive Becoming and Being Phases of Teacher Leadership Development

While teacher leaders are engaging in their work, they continue to be introspective about their newfound roles, duties, and responsibilities. Through their experiences, teacher leaders recognize both positive and negative feelings associated with their role and, as described above, overcome their fears associated with these feelings. In addition, they recognize the unique aspects and processes of their teacher leader role. However, this is not always strikingly apparent to the teacher leaders immersed in their
work. Betty continues to be a teacher leader in her school, but she has never really thought about if what she was doing was being effective—until asked in this study. “So yeah, I guess I have made a difference. I didn’t realize that.”

When asked to reflect on his leadership processes, Rick recounted how even his drive home is filled with reflection about his work as a teacher leader. He says, “you know, on your way home from whatever meeting [and you think about] the conversations that you had with the people at the meeting or the activity that you did—and then, on your way home you’re thinking about oh well, “What if this?” or “Why don’t we talk about this?” or . . .”

Emergent teacher leaders who continue their introspection deepen their understanding of their role within the school. These realizations include aspects that are completely unique to teacher leadership, and certainly are uncharted waters for a teacher who is just beginning to delve into leadership functions.

**Subtheme 3.3: Teacher leaders begin to realize the unique aspects of their teacher leadership role**

A teacher leader’s roles are sometimes different than a traditional classroom teacher’s roles. In Rick’s experience, the biggest difference is the fact that he is out of the classroom more often than his colleagues.

[Teacher leadership] does require to me be out of the classroom more often than teachers that are not teacher leaders, that don’t go outside of just teaching. You know, there’s that part, being out of the classroom a lot is sometimes a little bit, you know, I wish I didn’t have to do that as often.
It is difficult for teacher leaders to be away from their classroom. However, Liz says, “I think our building leadership recognizes this…is just collegialism [being collegial] (that’s what our boss…the term he uses) but getting people to come on board and work together.” In short, sometimes finding the time to do the work of a teacher leader is difficult and can take teacher leaders away from students.

While Rick values the importance of his work as a teacher leader, he also relates to the needs of the teachers to find value in what he brings back to his colleagues. In essence, “[t]hey don’t want to feel like their time is wasted.” Thus, if Rick sees the inherent benefit (if not oxymoron) that if he wants to do well for his students he sometimes needs to be out of the classroom in order to prepare himself to lead his peers. In turn, Rick’s colleagues want to do well for their students and therefore are potentially interested in what Rick has to offer from his leadership activities.

However, sometimes other teachers are reluctant to make the necessary changes to improve their practice with students and/or with one another. Kent believe in directly “challenging them and calling them on the carpet.” Yet, Kent fully understands that he does not have (nor want) the authority of an administrator over his teacher peers. But, “you build a better school system if you can have some peer accountability.” So, Kent tries to encourage and inspire his colleagues by “[talking] with some teachers above and below me [in grade level] and I try to say hey, let’s go and how about we try shooting for this.”

While not everyone comes on board with the teacher leader initiatives offered, and certainly not all at the same time, David recognizes his personality trait of being
someone who helps. In continuing to lead in his own natural way, he is beginning to realize how he responds makes him somewhat unique from his colleagues, and also a model for leadership within the school.

I can step up, do it. Let me know. If anything, I have to be careful of drawing boundaries to say no and that’s hard for me to do is to say no, especially when I’m asked by a superior, even though I know I have an option, but I’m definitely not one who says hey, that’s not in my contract type mentality.

As teacher leaders such as David engage in and recognize their unique station within the school, they also begin to experience processes that are different from their classroom teacher roles.

**Subtheme 3.4: Introspection allows teacher leaders to realize what they want to accomplish through their teacher leadership, what processes might allow them to accomplish their goals, and pushes them toward agency**

Teacher leaders reflect upon what they would like to accomplish as a teacher leader and begin to formulate the processes of how they might go about their work.

Jenna asserts that one of the most crucial processes that educators encounter is change. She says, “Change? We’re change agents, and if you get into teaching thinking you’re going to do one thing and never change, you’re in the wrong profession.” That change comes in many forms such as curriculum, instruction, assessment, leadership, school processes, and decision-making.

Rick points out that processes of change and decision-making should include teachers. “The teachers are the ones in the classrooms working with the students. They know the curriculum that they’re teaching and so they need to have that voice to be able
to set things the way they really are.” However, change inevitably leads to problems, and leadership often involves helping to solve those problems.

Even when faced with the uncertainty that the world brings us, Ellen tries to anticipate problems in her teacher leader role. For example, she relays her introspection from the evening of the Sandy Hook, New Jersey school shootings. She worries for her students, herself, and her colleagues and begins to take action by engaging in dialogue with her principal, even after hours, in the following way:

So then on Sunday night I’m sitting there going crap, we don’t have any plan in place and we’re going to have kids who are going to come to school wrecked [over the Sandy Hook school shootings] and the kids are all going to be chirping about it and I’m going to be in there and I’m going to be wrecked [too] and this is going to be a problem. So I emailed [my principal] and said, “so what’s the plan? Can we have a plan? I’d like a plan.”

Less dramatically, but just as important, Betty explains her process of collaboration with a colleague that plays out in a very practical, natural, useful, and student-centered way:

The eighth grade social studies teacher and I have common planning so we quite often get together to just—a lot of times it’s just where are you at in your curriculum? How’s it going? What have you noticed about the kids? Or gosh, I did this test and only six kids failed. Isn’t that great? Or these kids can’t write. That’s probably one of our biggest themes. These kids can’t write but it gives us a chance to vent or to share hooray moments. So he and I almost always touch base during that planning time, even if it’s only for a few minutes.

Therefore, processes are wide and varied for teacher leaders, each with their unique purpose. How they navigate these processes and engage in teacher leader agency, however, involves many factors and people.
Theme 4.0: The Road to a Teacher Leader’s Action and Agency Involves Egalitarianism, Seniority, Administrative Gatekeeping, and a Safe Culture

As these emergent teacher leaders weighed their initial introspection about their newfound path, they encountered a number of cultural roadblocks on their way to action and agency. Egalitarianism, seniority, administrative gatekeeping, and a safe culture all play into if and how an emergent teacher leader begins his/her journey into these new experiences.

Subtheme 4.1: Emergent teacher leaders recognize and respect the egalitarianism and seniority structure of the teaching profession

While the concepts of egalitarianism and seniority might seem contradictory, they are actually part of the same process. The equality that teachers feel in practicing egalitarianism flows to the deference of those more senior in their ranks. Teachers feel equal to one another and have commonality in purpose and function within the school. In that structure, where all teachers are on the same plane, respect and acknowledgement is given to those who have done the job the longest and respect that their wisdom has merit and weight within the school. However, more senior teachers do not wield any true power or authority over another.

Egalitarianism. As is evidenced above in their detailed stories, Jenna, Kent, Rick, Liz, and Michael directly point out the egalitarian nature of the teaching profession. Betty shows it through how she approaches her colleagues in a self-effacing manner. David sees himself as not only a coach of others, but also as a team member with his peers. Ellen continually goes to bat for her colleagues by engaging her principal in
discussions about the needs of the staff on the whole. In essence, each teacher leader in my study referenced, in one way or another, that all teachers were of equal value and station within the school. Respect and equality among colleagues is the norm. Furthermore, none of the teacher leaders considered themselves akin to an administrator or a boss. Kent looks at administrative roles this way, “I think the administration job is a very yucky job, and I really honestly don’t know how it can be done and you can raise a family at home.” Teacher leaders just want to help, in any way that they can, for the benefit of students. Liz’s sums up the sentiment of egalitarianism in this way: “I deeply respect my learning team members and their ideas and experience; I wanted to be able to provide worthy professional development for my peers, some who had 15 years of experience on me.”

**Seniority.** As described in the individual stories of the teacher leaders earlier in this chapter, teacher leaders give deference to more senior teachers. Out of respect to the time they have served in the profession, teacher leaders ask more senior teachers for input and advice along the way. For example, as Ellen reflected on her own experiences, she said, “when I was a younger teacher, I would always look to the veteran teachers as my role models and I would look for them to be the voice of reason.” In the cases of David, Kent, Rick, Liz, and Michael, there was minimal or no resistance from more senior teachers because of a school culture that, above all else, valued and respected work for the improvement of the students, teachers, and school. In the cases of Betty, Jenna, and Ellen, they tell of how they considered themselves to have enough seniority to make these leadership moves on their own.
Each teacher leader began to realize through their introspection that they were engaging in something different than simply being a classroom teacher; that they were doing something more than most of their colleagues; that they were truly beginning to lead. Once again, Betty comes to a realization: “[A]ll of a sudden I truly can see I am making a difference—so that has been really good.” Since they were equal in station with their colleagues, and since more senior teachers did not stand in their way, the teacher leaders decided that this avenue was acceptable, especially since their work was aimed at positively impacting students.

Subtheme 4.2: Administrators act as gatekeepers of leadership in the school

Administrators hold great positional authority that is recognized by teachers. As is evidenced in the stories detailed in the first half of this chapter, all of the teacher leaders in my study were asked by an administrator to take on some form of leadership role in the school, such as being a mentor, peer coach, school improvement team leader, or PLC facilitator. The simple act of an administrator asking them to get involved was crucial to these emergent teacher leaders taking action. Liz explained that it was her principal that got her involved in leadership activities. She says,

It was never anything that I ever sought. It was [because of] my principal . . . The affirmation I received was overwhelming. My principal wrote a note of praise, my curriculum director verbally applauded my facilitation skills in front of the group, [another district’s] curriculum director wrote me an email response, and the ISD consultant pulled me aside at the end and provided terrific feedback, which I really appreciated.

Ellen sums up this concept best by saying, “I feel like [administrators] want me to go [into a leadership activity] for a reason. That’s where I’m kind of like going with their
leadership. There’s a reason for them sending me, so even if I’m busy and it’s more of a hassle, I do what I’m asked to do…” Each teacher emerged as a teacher leader with caution, through introspection and deference to egalitarianism and seniority, within a positive school culture that allowed them to proceed with their leadership for the benefit of students.

**Subtheme 4.3: Emergent teacher leaders proceed with their leadership if the culture is safe**

The teacher leaders in my study decided to lead because they felt it was safe to proceed. They did so, based largely upon the interactions and/or responses from egalitarianism, seniority, and/or administrative gatekeeping. Likewise, the wisdom and power of seniority in the teaching ranks allowed some teacher leaders to emerge. Similarly, the power and positional authority of administrators encouraged other teachers to lead.

These elements allowed emergent teacher leaders in my study to deem the school culture safe enough to proceed, and they therefore began to delve into leadership actions for the betterment of their students, colleagues, and the school. David explains, “this isn’t about me . . . this is about generating positive culture, community, [and] school spirit.” Indeed, teacher leaders like Jenna find themselves immersed in an overall positive culture that exists in the school, all-the-while trying to improve it. Jenna explains, “it kind of spreads then when people hear that you’re positive . . .” As teacher leaders began their journey and grew in their leadership skillsets, the emergent teacher
leaders grew into the newfound agency of teacher leadership through the building of learning communities.

**Theme 5.0: Teacher Agency is Brought to Life by Building Learning Communities**

Teacher leaders build learning communities that are positive and filled with collaboration about how to improve student learning. Rick’s story, as detailed previously, provides examples of how PLCs are one of the main vehicles to his teacher leadership agency. However, it does not take a formalized PLC in order to have a learning community in a school. The rest of the teacher leaders in my study describe formalized committees and/or more organic structures in which a community is built around professional learning that will positively affect the school culture. For example, even though Ellen was officially assigned as a mentor to another teacher, she says,

> Throughout the years of working together and with all of the conversations that we have had about education we have developed a unified approach on how to deal with our students. Even though I was officially a mentor I feel like my teaching team mentored me right back.

Liz goes on to describe what these learning communities discuss:

> And it’s usually about a best practice that is going on in your classroom. You know: “What is a cool thing that you did last week that really worked?” And that’s my favorite part of the whole department meeting because I am just jotting stuff down like crazy as every person shares. And you realize… And you have so much respect of what is really going on in your building outside your own classroom.

While Kent conveys a very similar example to Liz’s, notice how he still questions whether or not what he is doing is actually leadership:

> Well we have it where like the fifth grade teacher and I work pretty closely together so we will go and share ideas with each other or we’ll say hey, in math I
would rather you focus on these three areas instead of trying to spread it out over seven areas, just skip them, and we work well together with that. I don't know if that’s a leadership necessarily thing.

However, teacher leadership becomes so embedded into processes that Ellen says:

I’ve got to do the work anyway for my class so I send that to him and he always, you know, is very thankful and says oh, you take care of me and that’s wonderful and we do that back and forth with everything, but everything that I do I share with him especially knowing that a year ago I went to the new common core stuff and that’s a whole different way of teaching and I’ve gone through, you probably too, where you start.

Others, like David, actually realize their leadership in action. David says, “I also worked well with others and felt like I did a good job of encouraging and empowering others to work hard and be successful.” That leadership in action, whereby teachers collaborate and make their practice better, all relates back to the students. Jenna simplifies her work as a teacher leader by saying, “I like the kids. I like to see what’s going on new and then do it.”

However, this professional learning and the resulting communities that are fostered by teacher leaders also includes administrators. This is not only for practical reasons such as permission and funding, but also for the fact that all adults in the school are working toward positive changes for students and staff alike.

**Subtheme 5.1: Teacher leaders engage administrators in the learning community**

Even as teacher leaders emerge, administrators still remain a crucial element in the leadership structures of a school. Therefore, teacher leaders include them in their leadership activities, such as building a learning community, for many reasons.
A traditional yet practical reason to bring administrators into a learning community is for access to resources and funding. Kent provides such an example:

[A]nd I’ll just share some ideas with my principal. Hey, can I have some money for this? Here’s my idea, here’s what I want to do, and I think they walk in my classroom and they see it and if they see value, it’s effective.

While funding may be instrumental in implementing the ideas generated in the learning community, Jenna relates how the administration in her district is supportive of the professional learning process as well. Notice how she refers to the school hierarchy while still recognizing that the administrators are a resource in their understanding and approach to professional learning. “So my resources are my leaders above me and them allowing us [to] go to conferences and learn new things.”

Beyond funding, Rick is aware of other practical reasons why administrators should be involved in the PLC process:

Because [administrators] are not in the classrooms. The teachers are the ones in the classrooms working with the students. They know the curriculum that they’re teaching and so they need to have that voice to be able to set things the way they really are.

Liz accomplishes this connection by inviting, welcoming, and including her administrators to her meetings with colleagues.

And our curriculum director sat in on most of our meetings and, um, [our principal] and then our assistant principals but then we started having administrative teams from other districts come and look at some of our meetings.

Once the link is made between the teacher leader, the administration, and teachers, teacher leaders sometimes use their position to continue dialogue beyond the formalized meeting setting. “[My teaching partner] will say to me oh, are you meeting
with [the principal]? You might want to mention ... social studies. We’ll also talk about school improvement, formative assessment, building climate.”

As the PLCs, committee meetings, and collaboration continue, teacher leaders begin to see the need and value in working toward achieving the goals of the learning community. In doing so, they often perform duties and functions that fall outside of their contractual obligations.

**Subtheme 5.2: Teacher leaders go outside their contractual obligations as a teacher and share leadership with their administrators**

Betty, Ellen, Rick, Liz and David’s stories detailed in the first half of this chapter show how they work outside of the contractual workday in order to get things done. Kent, Michael, and Jenna also do the same, as is evidenced in the examples below. Kent says,

I try to make it an open door where most of the time I almost never eat in the teachers’ lounge. Not wrong, I just am in here and I’ll help kids at lunchtime or we’ll do like projects together.

Kent goes on to explain that he sometimes works with his colleagues outside of contractual time as well. “A couple times we came in here on the weekends or whatever and we weighed some of the plastics.”

Kent continues to explain not only why he works at lunchtime or on the weekends, but he excitedly and passionately went into great depth about how he was engaging his students in the learning process. All-the-while, Kent is building relationships with his students, thereby enriching the learning community in the school.
I had some kids go through and take the cross-section of a tree ring and they went and they sanded it down and stained it—and one of these kids can get into trouble. His dad’s in prison and his grades could be better and sometimes maybe he should have worked on his grades, but I had this to build a relationship with him. I have another kid who’s a really good kid, just gets squirrely, but through this we’ve kind of connected and when I call him on something, he’s very respectful. So that’s just one variety. Like I’ll have kids go in and they’ll plant bean seeds. Just let them know I’m human.

Michael conveys the same sentiment as Kent when he says, “I think a teacher leader is someone who utilizes those who are willing to do more at school than just be in their classroom to make the school a better place and expand the learning to outside the classroom.”

Sometimes learning for students is based on practical matters. Jenna volunteers in the middle school office at the end of the day, and admittedly takes on a motherly role for the students. In addition, she is clearly pulling the office staff into the learning community as well:

I need my backpack. Give me the phone. There’s only one body and some days two and so I try to make myself a third body and so as kids are coming in, picking up their football shoulder pads they left at home, having to call because they didn’t know who they’re riding home with . . . It takes all of 15 minutes and that’s not a job. That’s in my job description? No, but that really helps out and you get to see the kids in a different light and they see me as their sixth grade teacher.

Jenna continues, “I do accept a lot of other responsibilities that you’re not supposed to do for—like contractually. You're not supposed to meet with kids for two weeks in the summer getting them ready for school but you do.”

In doing the work of a teacher leader, these individuals are consistently in search of how to positively move others, and the school, forward. Most certainly, positive and collegial communication plays a vital role in the work of a teacher leader.
Subtheme 5.3: Teacher leaders positively and collegially communicate and collaborate with their fellow teachers and administrators

Communication and collaboration are crucial for teacher leaders to positively enact their leadership. For example, Betty used her positive influence to collaborate with and encourage a colleague to take advantage of a grant that she was allowed and encouraged to participate in by her principal. It produced great results not only for her colleague, but is paying dividends for the students as well. “I seriously, seriously twisted [my colleague’s] arm to make him go. As a result, he got to take a trip to Charleston to see Fort Sumter, to Washington, D.C., to see everything.”

Likewise, Liz has a goal of building a learning community that, “connect[s] people to each other.” In connecting people to one another, Kent is truly interested in what his colleagues think. He reflects,

I guess what I sometimes try to do is if I see a decent idea, I will talk and bounce it off people I respect and say hey, what do you think here, what do you think here? . . . Which is kind of like of the recycling thing—and we dreamed.

The dreams of teacher leaders are consistently focused on the students. Ellen speaks of why she communicates with her colleagues and administrators, “I think that that’s the most important relationship I have all day is with [the students]. I mean I look at—that’s what we’re here for. I mean, it doesn’t make any sense to not look at that.”

The focus on collaboration and on student learning hopefully ends in positive results. Teacher leaders and teachers in general are cognizant of this fact. However, they are clear to note that standardized test results are not always indicative of the true and overall results achieved by the school.
Subtheme 5.4: Teacher leaders engage others in accomplishing their work

Teacher leaders demonstrate through their actions and agency that they are leaders within the school, and they do this by engaging their colleagues and administrators in efforts that aim to positively affect student learning. Liz expresses this concept this way: “But I think that I have just thought about [being a teacher leader] in terms of doing whatever I do it’s a bottom line about learning for kids.” And, Ellen’s example shows how something practical like scheduling, which in ultimately is decided by an administrator, is leveraged by her to engage her colleagues for the benefit of student learning:

My first hour class is a team taught class with a special educator and she and I have been working very hard in the last year together to make things different. She and I have been working on trying to develop ways to teach math or work on ways to teach math where it’s not just the teacher.

Michael worries, however, about the results of his efforts as a teacher, teacher leader and as a school. While no teacher leader in my study wishes to shy away from accountability, the spotlight on test results remains still remains and ever-present challenge. Michael explains,

That’s something that I’ve focused on as soon as I got my first job is results. I mean, in education the culture is the grades and overall my results haven’t been anywhere near where I want them to be, through my advanced degrees, from what I’ve read and learned that you should expect an 80 percent passing ratio and I have never been on an 80 percent passing ratio which frustrates me because I do take pride in my job and I do feel like I put effort into it and to not see the results. It’s frustrating and at times you know, that certainly leads to blame.

But blame is not what David is interested in at all. David assumes positive intent in his work as a teacher leader “[I]f you assume the best out of people, it changes your
whole perspective than if you assumed the worst.” By not blaming, and by continuing to engage others in the work of a learning community, teacher leaders engage in positive change in the school.

**Theme 6.0: Teacher Leaders Engage Themselves and Others in Positive Change in the School**

Through their agency, teacher leaders not only strive for increased academic achievement by their students, but also for improving the positive culture of the school. It is in the process of building and engaging in the work of a learning community that the distribution of teacher leadership occurs. Other teachers are drawn into the work of the learning community, through the leadership of the teacher leader, and are affected by the positive culture of the school. Of all the teacher leaders in my study, Liz captures this shared sentiment the best:

My team couldn't have been better. While we have diverse personalities, experience, and attitudes toward formative assessment, our work that day was valuable. Each of my teammates responded with deep insights to the prompts, activities, and articles. Each showcased and explained effective formative assessment strategies they'd used and also shared attempts that had failed. We challenged and questioned each other, we shared ideas, we ignited each other's thinking, and most importantly we ended the day with ready-to-use formative assessment tools for our upcoming units. I felt that my team responded very well to my coaching and leadership, but there were times I had to re-direct our focus. I had to be even more flexible with my adult learners than I would be with my students.

She continues, “I feel like our culture is so changed that even if we went to another administrator, um, I think we’d still operate effectively. I think that it’s just embedded, those practices, the way we do things.”
Simply said, a teacher leader can be (and most likely is) a positive influence on others due to his/her work in the school. Through the positive work by the learning community, as led by the teacher leader, other teachers might emerge as teacher leaders themselves—and the positive cycle begins again. New leaders are born out of the process of becoming, being, and distributing teacher leadership within a school.

Theme 7.0: Teacher Leadership Can Occur at Any Point in a Teacher’s Career

Finally, as theoretical codes and conceptualizations began to take shape, I continuously evaluated whether or not demographic information such as age, seniority, degrees, type of school, etc. (as highlighted in Figure 1), were of any significance to my findings. While the information helped to describe my teacher leader participants, the only significance that surfaced in relationship to my resulting grounded theory was a minor link of seniority to the emergent teacher leader process. As noted earlier, Betty, Jenna, and Ellen, determined that they had enough seniority proceed with their teacher leadership. Therefore, I do not distinguish or qualify any of my findings based on these demographics.

Chapter IV Closure

This chapter has provided detailed and rich descriptions of how teachers emerge into teacher leaders. Table 3 summarizes the themes and subthemes found within my study of teacher leaders.
Table 3
Summary of Themes

- **Theme 1.0:** Emergent Teacher Leaders Desire to Positively Affect Others Within and Outside of their Classroom while Students Continue to be the Primary Focus of their Work

- **Theme 2.0:** Teacher Leaders Do Not Always See Themselves as Leaders

- **Theme 3.0:** Introspection is an Important Part of a Teacher Leader’s Recognition and Experience of Becoming and Being a Teacher Leader
  - Subtheme 3.1: Teacher leaders recognize their positive and negative feelings associated with their teacher leader role, and in the process overcome their fears.
  - Subtheme 3.2: Teacher Leaders continue to be Introspective throughout the Recursive Becoming and Being Phases of Teacher Leadership Development.
  - Subtheme 3.3: Teacher leaders begin to realize the unique aspects of their teacher leadership role.
  - Subtheme 3.4: Introspection allows teacher leaders to realize what they want to accomplish through their teacher leadership, what processes might allow them to accomplish their goals, and pushes them toward agency.

- **Theme 4.0:** The Road to a Teacher Leader’s Action and Agency Involves Egalitarianism, Seniority, Administrative Gatekeeping, and a Safe Culture
  - Subtheme 4.1: Emergent teacher leaders recognize and respect the egalitarianism and seniority structure of the teaching profession.
  - Subtheme 4.2: Administrators act as gatekeepers of leadership in the school.
  - Subtheme 4.3: Emergent teacher leaders proceed with their leadership if the culture is safe.

- **Theme 5.0:** Teacher Agency is brought to Life by Building Learning Communities
  - Subtheme 5.1: Teacher leaders engage administrators in the learning community.
  - Subtheme 5.2: Teacher leaders go outside their contractual obligations as a teacher and share leadership with their administrators.
  - Subtheme 5.3: Teacher leaders positively and collegially communicate and collaborate with their fellow teachers and administrators.
  - Subtheme 5.4: Teacher leaders engage others in accomplishing their work.

- **Theme 6.0:** Teacher Leaders Engage Themselves and Others in Positive Change in the School

- **Theme 7.0:** Teacher Leadership can occur at any Point in a Teacher’s Career

In Chapter V, I take these themes and provide a theoretical model, a grounded theory, of the process of becoming a teacher leader and how teacher leadership is
distributed within a school. In addition to my grounded theory, I also discuss the implications it has for both researchers and practitioners.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

My study sought to determine the process of becoming a teacher leader and how teacher leadership becomes distributed within a school. The eight teacher leaders in my study shared their own experiences through an in-depth interview and multiple e-mail follow-up correspondences over a three-month period. The results of my grounded theory study are provided within this chapter, culminating in my major findings, and are connected to my conceptual framework, research questions, literature review, resulting themes and subthemes, and grounded theory model. In addition, I provide a brief, representative, and hypothetical example of teacher leadership as related to my major findings and grounded theory. I also outline my recommendations for practitioners, policy makers, and researchers. Finally, I provide my own insights on teacher leadership as a crucial concept in the field of educational leadership and for the field of education on the whole.

Research Question Results

This section reviews my research questions and the resulting themes that emerged from my study. I offer an explanation of each of the findings, complete with salient examples from teacher leaders in my study.
Research Question 1: What is the Process (Progression/Evolution) by Which a Teacher Becomes a Teacher Leader?

The process, progression and/or evolution of a classroom teacher to a teacher leader is multi-layered and involves many aspects. As the research literature and my conceptual framework point out, this question necessitates narrowed sub questions in order to fully understand the processes at play for an emergent teacher leader. What follows are the results of my study pertaining to this main question, and as it relates to its subparts.

Research Question 1a: What elements of the process of becoming a teacher leader indicate top-down and/or bottom-up teacher leadership development as is operationally defined in this study?

In Chapter I, I asked, “Is true teacher leadership an outgrowth of a teacher’s ability and willingness to lead (a bottom-up approach)? Is it a function of hierarchical leadership inviting and encouraging teachers to become leaders (a top-down approach)? Or, is it some sort of combination of factors that may or may not yet be clearly identified?” As my results reveal, a combination of factors is at play in the emergence and development of a teacher leader.

All teacher leaders in my study were initially asked by their administrator to enter into teacher leadership through some form of formalized role. However, the teacher leaders in my study also had to navigate the other structures within the school, namely egalitarianism and seniority before they could act upon their positive desires for students in the school (theme 4.0, and subthemes 4.1, and 4.2). Emergent teacher leaders respond
to a hierarchical leader’s asking, but they are also cautious and savvy enough to vet this foray into new territory with their colleagues, as in the cases of David, Kent, Rick, Liz and Michael who measured the culture of their school before proceeding with their teacher leadership. Metaphorically speaking, an emergent teacher leader dips his/her toe into the cultural, egalitarian, and seniority-laden waters of the school. While outright permission is not granted from more senior teachers, nor the staff on the whole through something akin to a vote, emergent teacher leaders gauge if, how, and when to proceed—even when an administrator asks them to enter into a leadership function at the outset. In short, and to provide one more metaphor, the path to teacher leadership is rarely (if ever) one, straight, narrow, and clearly lit road.

Also crucial to each teacher leader’s development is introspection concerning his/her emergent and developing role(s) as a teacher leader (theme 3.0 and subtheme 3.4). Self-reflection on the part of the emergent teacher leader allows him/her to evaluate if and how to proceed with budding teacher leadership. Emergent teacher leaders begin to determine what he/she would like to accomplish with this role and how to potentially proceed. Jenna sums up this realization by asserting that teacher leaders are change agents in the school. This introspection also allows an emergent teacher to reflect on how to navigate the peer and administrative structures that I have described. For example, Betty shared how she convinced a colleague to get involved in a professional development opportunity, while Ellen related how she engaged her principal about a concerning event. Naturally, both positive and negative feelings surface during this phase; additionally, fears emerge. However, teacher leaders are born out of this process
of introspection, as fears are overcome and action is taken toward agency, given a safe culture in which to proceed.

**Research Question 1b: What internal and/or external factors motivate and guide a teacher in the process of becoming a teacher leader?**

Both internal and external factors affect if and how a teacher leader emerges (theme 3.0, and subthemes 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4). Teacher leaders engage in introspective thoughts about their desires and the processes at play. It is not a question of whether a particular internal or external factor (or set of factors) makes a difference on whether or not a teacher emerges as a teacher leader. Rather, it is how these factors interplay with one another in order for a teacher to emerge toward action and agency as a teacher leader.

In my study, I find that introspection helps to guide an emergent teacher leader through the becoming phase of teacher leadership. For example, Michael realizes through introspection that there is a more positive culture at the middle school than what he experienced at the high school. This realization made a positive difference in his emergent leadership. Thus, introspection such as Michael’s can result in both positive and negative feelings for the emergent teacher leader, depending on the circumstances in which they are involved. The positive feelings naturally lead a teacher leader to continue his/her work, while the negative feelings often result in fears that must be overcome in order for an emergent teacher leader to continue his/her work. Finally, as Liz reminds us, being collegial is key in this emergent teacher leader process. The external factors at play in the becoming phase of teacher leadership are more fully described in my response to
Research Questions 1a, as well as in Research Question 1c where I find that both peers and administrators influence teacher leaders.

**Research Question 1c: What happens to a teacher’s interactions with other teachers, the principal, students, and parents as they emerge and form as a teacher leader?**

Interactions between an emergent teacher leader and their fellow teachers follow the egalitarian structure of the profession. That is, teachers interact with one another, generally speaking, in professional and equal ways. They view one another as teammates, or trench mates, as it were. As David would put it, all teachers are on the same team. Once a teacher steps forward with an intention to improve the school, processes, and/or others, a skeptical eye can be trained on the emergent teacher leader by his/her peers, especially with regard to contractual limitations and perceived alliances with administration. This is detailed quite clearly in the 23 fears described by the teacher leaders in my study. However, as is evidenced in my research, the positivity and the focus on students allows an emergent teacher leader to proceed with his/her actions and agency—namely, the building of a learning community within the school (theme 4.0, and subthemes 4.1 and 4.3; theme 5.0). As Ellen points out about her mentoring a novice teacher, the resulting learning community benefits all involved—including the teacher leader.

As for interactions with administration, the emergent teacher leader seeks to communicate and serve as a bridge between teachers and administrators in the building. As Kent points out, this bridging can be about topics like processes within the school,
schedules, initiatives that the teachers are interested in pursuing, and funding sources for those initiatives. The emergent teacher leader leverages these conversations and connections with administration about relatively simpler topics into larger and more complex learning community concepts that focus on students and their learning (theme 5.0, and subthemes 5.1, 5.3, and 5.4). Rick finds this particularly important because administrators are not in the classrooms day-in and day-out and therefore may not realize the needs and complexities of teachers. Therefore, teachers and administrators collaborate together for the benefit of student learning in the school by focusing on curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment topics, concepts, and initiatives. Furthermore, the teachers and administrators, working together, begin to implement initiatives developed collaboratively in the learning community. In the experience of Liz, the processes of a learning community have become embedded in the school, thereby transcending individuals in classroom teacher and/or administrative roles. By bringing the administrators and teachers together, the emergent teacher leader is more fully able to accomplish the goals (either implicit or explicit) they wish to accomplish—and enters the realm of teacher leadership through his/her agency (theme 6.0).

The agency of building, sustaining, and maintaining a learning community and its associated goals and relationships at times requires a teacher leader to operate outside of the traditional contractual obligations of a classroom teacher. Examples abound from my study, including: Kent working with students at lunchtime; Jenna volunteering in the office to help students and the secretaries after school; and Rick attending and leading voluntary PLC meetings after school. The teacher leader goes outside of his/her
contractual obligations freely, willingly, and largely without roadblocks from peers, due
to the focus on students and the potential improvement that the work of the learning
community could bring to the school (theme 5.0, and subtheme 5.2). That being said, the
teacher leader continues to be introspective about his/her role, especially as he/she
navigates the unique complexities and newness of the learning community dynamics
within the school, and overcomes many newfound fears in the process (theme 3.0, and
subthemes 3.2 and 3.4). Jenna sums this up nicely by relating that she engages in many
things she is not “supposed” to do, but she does so anyway because she believes that her
work is important for students.

Interestingly, the interactions between a teacher leader and students and parents
stay largely the same. As Rick explains, a teacher leader may find him/herself out of the
classroom more often to do the work of teacher leadership (e.g., attend conferences, lead
committees, or travel); however, he/she interacts with students in the exact same caring,
passionate, and giving manner. Students, after all, are the focus of a teacher leader’s
work, as is evidenced by each teacher leader in my study. As for parents, teacher leaders
believe that they see the teacher advocating for their children and doing the work
traditionally associated with a classroom teacher. Therefore, there is no significant
difference in how a teacher leader interacts with students or parents while engaging in
his/her work.
Research Question 2: How Do Teacher Leaders Make the Connection Between Becoming a Teacher Leader and Being a Teacher Leader?

Once a teacher enters the agency of teacher leadership by forming and engaging themselves and others in a learning community, he/she still is not likely to identify as a leader within the school. There is an overall reluctance of teacher leaders to consider themselves leaders at all (theme 2.0). When confronted with the concept that they are actually leaders within their school, Liz takes the stance that she never wants “those roles” and Betty quips, “why me?” This is largely due to the traditional roles and definitions of teachers and leaders in the school (as described in Chapter II). In addition, this phenomenon is likely due to the egalitarian nature of the teaching profession. Equality matters to teachers, and referring to them as a leader, even devoid of a formal title, is not something that teacher leaders are interested in. Finally, any teacher can become a teacher leader at any point in their career. This is clearly shown in sample of teacher leaders in my study, with one teacher leader having five years experience and the most senior teacher having 37 years experience. At any years of experience, teacher leaders can engage in positive change through the agency of a learning community that focuses on curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment for the benefit of students and the school (themes 1.0 and 7.0).

As described in Research Question 1.0, and sub questions 1a, 1b, and 1c, introspection continues to be a major factor in how and teacher leaders carry out their role (theme 3.0, and subthemes 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4). Egalitarianism, seniority, and administrative gatekeeping help to define how teachers become teacher leaders. From
there, teacher leaders engage in agency to carry out their role through the vehicle of a learning community. Through each of these recursive processes of becoming and being a teacher leader, teacher leaders continuously evaluate how and why they enter and carry out their role, through the parallel process of introspection. That introspection does not concern a title or usually even a contractual advantage for the teacher leader. Instead, the focus remains on the students and how to improve the school for the benefit of the students (theme 4.0, and subthemes 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3; theme 6.0; theme 7.0).

There is not a clear distinction in the research literature or in practice between becoming and being a teacher leader. Once emergent teacher leaders navigate past, through, or around egalitarianism, seniority, and/or administrative gatekeeping, they progress to the agency of building a learning community. In short, teacher leaders simply do the work and do not consider the work in which they are engaged as leadership, per se. Instead, teacher leaders believe that it is simply the right work to do for students.

**Research Question 3: How Do Teacher Leaders View Their Role in Impacting Students’ Educational Experiences and/or Outcomes?**

Teacher leaders have a limited view of how they actually impact students’ educational experiences and/or outcomes. Each teacher leader in my study described what they *hoped* they were accomplishing through their actions and agency, especially with regard to assessment results for students. Each teacher leader was engaging in work that was positive, collegial, and focused on curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment. That work, they believe, will culminate in positive results for their students, colleagues, and the school (theme 1.0). However, objective measurement of these results is not
something that these teacher leaders have yet regularly engaged in with their peers, administrators, or even themselves through introspection. David best relays this concept when he describes his greatest hope for his teacher leadership as something that is “life impacting.” To be certain, there is no objective measure for that.

Teacher leaders, with regard to relationships in the school, describe positive change. The learning community brings teachers and administrators together for the sake of the students. A focus on curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment gives common language and common voice for the traditional hierarchy and the egalitarian teachers. More senior members provide their wisdom and sometimes even their teacher leadership to the process. Ellen is a prime example in that she used to look toward her more senior colleagues for advice, and now she has entered into teacher leadership as she advances in seniority. Teacher leaders also engage administrators so they might leverage their authority to expend the necessary resources (e.g., time and money) toward the goals and initiatives of the learning community (theme 5.0, and subtheme 5.1). Kent does not hesitate, for example, to bring his needs and the needs of his peers to his administrator for funding purposes. In a parallel manner, Liz invites her administrators to be part of the learning community planning processes in order to more efficiently and collegially progress in implementation of their goals. In essence, the positive change is the positive engagement and functioning of the learning community itself (theme 6.0).
Research Question 4: How Do Teacher Leaders Describe Any Changes in the Culture or Processes of Leadership Within the School as They Evolved as a Teacher Leader?

The culture and processes of leadership in the school are reciprocal and aided by the work of the teacher leader. Without a healthy peer and administrative culture that encourages teachers to take risks and lead in action and agency, teacher leadership cannot even begin, much less survive or thrive (theme 4.0 and subtheme 4.3). David is adamant that his work is not about him as a teacher and Jenna reminds us that the work of a teacher leader must be carried out positively no matter who is involved in the process. However, a school culture that is ripe for teacher leadership does not necessarily bear fruit unless a classroom teacher ventures beyond the literal and proverbial classroom walls (theme 6.0). Research Question 1, sub questions 1a, 1b, 1c, Research Question 2, and Research Question 3 all describe how the changes in culture plays out, both in the emergence and in the agency of teacher leadership.

As is evidenced in the previous paragraph, teacher leaders in my study described their portion of this reciprocal cultural evolution in humble fashion. They all described being hopeful that their work helps students and teachers alike (although they may have related this concept through their fears), and that their efforts result in positive experiences and assessment gains for the students. By working together, the culture of the school evolves to increased positivity and focus, all aimed toward a goal of improving the school for the students (theme 6.0).

Egalitarianism in the ideal learning community extends to both teachers and administrators. Likewise, seniority and administrative authority are transformed into
shared wisdom and collective access to resources to meet the goals of the learning community. In short, teacher leaders enable teachers and administrators to work together in a learning community. The intent is to get all involved positively, collegially, and collaboratively for the benefit of students (theme 4.0 and subthemes 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3; theme 5.0 and subthemes 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4).

Table 4 summarizes my key themes and how each has helped address my research questions in the study.

Sanocki’s Grounded Theory: The Process of How Teachers Become Teacher Leaders and How Teacher Leadership is Distributed within a School

While much of the research literature focuses on what teacher leadership is and how it is carried out, my study sought to understand how teachers become teacher leaders and how they distribute their leadership within a school. In this section, I connect the themes from my study with previous research. As part of this process, I have also created my own grounded theory model including a characterization of teacher leadership that encompasses the recursive and introspective processes of becoming, being, and distributing teacher leadership. Figure 2 is my resulting grounded theory as developed from the data collected. Please note that all of the arrows in this model are double-headed. Thus, there is a recursiveness to the theory presented of how teachers become, experience, implement, and distribute teacher leadership within a school.

The grounded theory I have developed begins with the desire of an emergent teacher leader to positively affect others within and beyond his/her classroom (see the top of figure 1). As this notion develops within a prospective teacher leader, a steadfast
## Table 4
### Connection of Themes and Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes &amp; Subthemes</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0: Emergent Teacher Leaders Desire to Positively Affect Others Within and Outside of their Classroom while Students Continue to be the Primary Focus of their Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0: Teacher Leaders Do Not Always See Themselves as Leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0: Introspection is an Important Part of a Teacher Leader’s Recognition &amp; Experience of Becoming and Being a Teacher Leader</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1: Teacher leaders recognize their positive and negative feelings associated with their teacher leader role, and in the process overcome their fears.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2: Teacher Leaders continue to be Introspective throughout Recursive Becoming &amp; Being Phases of Teacher Leadership Development</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3: Teacher leaders begin to realize the unique aspects of their teacher leadership role.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4: Introspection allows teacher leaders to realize what they want to accomplish, what processes might allow them to accomplish their goals, and pushes them toward agency.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0: Road to a Teacher Leader’s Action and Agency Involves Egalitarianism, Seniority, Administrative Gatekeeping, &amp; Safe Culture</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1: Emergent teacher leaders recognize and respect the egalitarianism and seniority structure of the teaching profession.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2: Administrators act as gatekeepers of leadership in the school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3: Emergent teacher leaders proceed with their leadership if the culture is safe.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0: Teacher Agency is brought to Life by Building Learning Communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1: Teacher leaders engage administrators in the learning community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2: Teacher leaders go outside contractual obligations as a teacher &amp; share leadership with administrators.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3: Teacher leaders positively &amp; collegially communicate &amp; collaborate with fellow teachers &amp; administrators.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4: Teacher leaders engage others in accomplishing their work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0: Teacher Leaders Engage Themselves and Others in Positive Change in the School</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.0: Teacher Leadership can occur at any Point in a Teacher’s Career</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2. Teacher Leadership Grounded Theory Model (Sanocki, 2013).
belief that students need to be the focus of any efforts within the school sets the tone for the leadership he/she may embark upon. Emergent teacher leaders want to be a positive influence to all they encounter in their work as an educator. They believe and act upon the premise that all of their work, whether as a typical classroom teacher or a teacher leader, is focused on students. Theme 1.0 confirms Olson (2005) and Crowther et al.’s (2002) findings that teacher leaders work formally and informally for the success of students and the school. A teacher leader’s continual focus on students is crucial to the work they carry out in the school.

Furthermore, theme 2.0 confirms Danielson’s (2006) work that teacher leaders see themselves as teachers first. They have no real desire to be considered a hierarchical manager of any sort, which is how teachers typically envision leadership within a school. This overall reluctance does not inhibit the work of an emergent teacher leader; however, it was a universal theme for the teachers in my study. Teachers still view the concept of leadership in the school as something that comes with formal titles and roles. As a teacher begins his/her journey into teacher leadership, introspection plays its first role in the process.

Introspection, which is detailed in my model as a process within itself (see the top right of figure 1), begins with a self-recognition of an emergent teacher leader’s attributes that are guiding them down a path toward leadership agency. Theme 3.0 and subtheme 3.3 go hand-in-hand, as they confirm Lambert (1998) and Lieberman and Friedrich’s (2010) work that shows that identity plays a role in how teacher leaders view themselves and their roles. Specifically, emergent teacher leaders begin to realize that teacher
leadership is unique and somehow different than a typical classroom teacher role. Teacher leaders reflect on the who, what, where, when, and why of their work as they become and actually take on the role of a teacher leader in the school.

Individual experiences and the very process of becoming a teacher leader interplay with the positive and negative feelings occurring within the emergent teacher leader. Fears first surface at this stage, and must eventually be overcome for the teacher to continue on the path toward the action and agency of teacher leadership. My new findings (subthemes 3.1, 3.2, and 3.4) show that teacher leaders recognize that their feelings are both positive and negative, and that many fears are conjured up in the process (subtheme 3.1). Teachers who become and remain teacher leaders overcome these fears as they arise (subtheme 3.2). Of course, this is a never-ending process as they encounter new challenges in their role on a daily basis. Finally, introspection allows teacher leaders to realize what they want to accomplish through their budding teacher leadership, what processes might allow them to accomplish their goals, and pushes them toward action and agency (subtheme 3.4).

Before a teacher can proceed to active teacher leadership, however, there are two major roadblocks that may stand in their way. My theoretical model shows one path that leads to egalitarianism and/or seniority being the first stop along the teacher leader’s proverbial path (see the middle split within figure 1). The other path leads to an administrator being a gatekeeper of leadership within the school (theme 4.0). While one path or another may solely lead to action on the part of the teacher leader, both paths may actually interplay with one another in the process. The notions of equality within the
teaching ranks, deference to more senior teachers, and recognition of administrators as having the positional power to distribute leadership functions and authority all potentially stand in the way of an emergent teacher leader’s efforts.

Subtheme 4.1 confirms Robins and Zirinsky (1996), Stone et al. (1997), Calabrese (2002), Spillane et al. (2003), Danielson (2006), and Donaldson et al.’s (2008) findings that it is necessary for teacher leaders to recognize egalitarianism and seniority. Emergent teacher leaders are expected to defer to more senior members, all the while respecting the equality of all teachers no matter their ranking in seniority. Teacher leaders who recognize these structures and navigate them successfully can move more freely and efficiently into their teacher leadership roles. That is, if administrators allow the progression of the emergent teacher leader’s work as well.

Subtheme 4.2 confirms Leithwood et al. (1999), Spillane et al. (2003), Frost and Harris (2003), Lambert (2003), and Mangin’s (2007) findings that teacher leadership in a school is a direct result of hierarchical leadership’s understanding of and involvement in the process. Subtheme 4.3 confirms Stone et al.’s (1997) findings that teacher leaders get a “nod” from both their colleagues and administrators before proceeding with their work. Once these potential roadblocks are navigated successfully, teacher leadership can begin through teacher agency in the school.

Once egalitarian, seniority, and administrative hurdles are successfully navigated, the emergent teacher leader proceeds to action if the overall culture of the school is safe. However, this action is more than just an acceptance of a role or permission to proceed with an idea. Instead, the teacher is now entering the realm of “Being a Teacher Leader”
and becomes engaged in the agency of building a learning community (theme 5.0). While this learning community may very well be formalized as a Professional Learning Community (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010), it is not a prerequisite. However, the concepts are very much the same as the teacher leader seeks to improve, change, and/or begin work within the realms of curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment.

Subtheme 5.1 confirms Blase and Blase (2006), Spillane (2006), Reeves (2008), and Crowther et al. (2002), that collaborative interactions are important to teacher leadership. Specifically, teacher leaders engage their administrators in their work as relevant members of the learning community in the school. In addition, they share leadership with their administrators, but also have to work outside of their contractual obligations to get the job done (subtheme 5.2). This is confirmed by the work of Spillane (2006), Reeves’s (2008), and Crowther et al. (2002) in that collaborative interactions are crucial for distributed leadership in a school—even if those interactions have to play out beyond the contractual day.

As teacher leaders do their work in and for the learning community, communication is key. Subtheme 5.3 confirms Blase and Blase (2006), Peckover et al. (2006), Spillane (2006), Muijs and Harris (2007), Reeves (2008), Crowther et al. (2002), and Lieberman and Friedrich’s (2010) findings that collaborative interactions such as finding commonalities, building on diversity, providing feedback, and building a community of caring and trust are important to teacher leadership in a school. In addition, subtheme 5.4 shows that teacher leaders engage others in their work and confirms Middlebrooks’s (2004), and Spillane’s (2006) findings that teacher leaders are
agents of distributed leadership through their interactions within the school. According to Crowther et al. (2002), this includes facilitating learning communities. Once again, introspection (theme 3.0) plays a crucial role in the life of a teacher leader. Throughout these ongoing processes of becoming and being, teacher leaders realize what they want to accomplish and how to go about accomplishing those goals in their unique situation within the school. A teacher leader consistently evaluates, recognizes, experiences, feels, and overcomes what he/she encounters in the role(s) of a teacher leader. Specifically, he/she engages with colleagues and administrators to positively affect student learning. In addition, he/she shares leadership with their administrators and includes them in the learning community as well. Communication, collaboration, and collegiality are crucial to this portion of the process (subtheme 5.3). The teacher leader helps to facilitate this learning community in a positive fashion. Finally, in order to accomplish the goals that the teacher leader and the learning community develop and begin to implement, the teacher leader consistently goes beyond the contractual obligations of a classroom teacher (subtheme 5.2).

The results and the distribution of teacher leadership come from the very processes of teacher agency, namely the building and functioning of a learning community. Involved in this phase of my model, described as “Distributing Teacher Leadership,” is a diverse set of educational professionals engaging in positive change within the school, all of which is focused on students. Through their work, teacher leaders engage themselves and others in positive change in the school. Theme 6.0 is confirmed by Lieberman et al. (2000; 1998), Middlebrooks (2004), Crowther et al.
(2002), which show that teacher leaders are change agents that engage and encourage others in the learning community. This work (and this finding) is crucial for the distribution of teacher leadership in a school.

In progressing positively and collaboratively, teacher leaders are likely a positive influence on others involved in the change and/or improvement processes within the school. Theme 7.0 posits that teacher leadership can occur at any point in a teacher’s career. The research literature is rather silent on this issue, save Leithwood et al. (1999) who generalized that teacher leaders are usually young women elementary teachers. My study, which focuses on middle school teachers of both sexes, with an age range of 32 years, challenges this generalization. Therefore, teacher leadership is likely to emerge in a new individual, and the process of becoming, being, and distributing teacher leadership begins anew.

Table 5 offers a summary of the resulting themes in my study as connected to the previous literature as previously described in this section.

Let us now turn to some key major take-away findings from my work. In providing these major findings, I am taking my work to a more focused plane in order to make sense of my grounded theory as it applies to the real-world experiences of teacher leaders, as well as to the broader worlds of educational leadership, policy, and academic research.
Table 5
Comparison of Sanocki’s Themes and Subthemes with Previous Research Involving Teacher Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanocki’s (2013) Themes</th>
<th>Previous Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1.0:</strong> Emergent teacher leaders desire to positively affect others within and outside of their classroom while students continue to be the primary focus of their work.</td>
<td>Confirms Olson (2005) and Crowther et al.’s (2002) findings that teacher leaders work formally and informally for the success of students and the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 2.0:</strong> Teacher leaders do not always see themselves as leaders.</td>
<td>Confirms Danielson’s (2006) findings that teacher leaders see themselves as teachers first. They have no real desire to be considered a hierarchical manager of any sort, which is what their idea of leadership is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 3.0:</strong> Introspection is an Important Part of a Teacher Leader’s Recognition and Experience of Becoming and Being a Teacher Leader</td>
<td>Confirms Lambert (1998) and Lieberman and Friedrich’s (2010) findings that identity plays a role in how teacher leaders view themselves and their roles (specifically for Subtheme 3.1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 3.1: Teacher leaders recognize their positive and negative feelings associated with their teacher leader role, and in the process overcome their fears.</td>
<td>No previous research found in this regard, thus Sanocki (2013) is a new finding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 3.2: Teacher Leaders continue to be introspective throughout the recursive becoming and being phases of teacher leadership development.</td>
<td>No previous research found in this regard, thus Sanocki (2013) is a new finding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 3.3: Teacher leaders begin to realize the unique aspects of their teacher leadership role.</td>
<td>Confirms Lambert (1998) and Lieberman and Friedrich’s (2010) findings that identity plays a role in how teacher leaders view themselves and their roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 3.4: Introspection allows teacher leaders to realize what they want to accomplish through their teacher leadership, what processes might allow them to accomplish their goals, and pushes them toward agency.</td>
<td>No previous research found in this regard, thus Sanocki (2013) is a new finding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 4.0:</strong> The road to a teacher leader’s action and agency involves egalitarianism, seniority, administrative gatekeeping, and a safe culture.</td>
<td>Confirms Robins and Zirinsky (1996), Stone et al. (1997), Leithwood et al. (1999), Calabrese (2002), Spillane et al. (2003), Frost and Harris (2003), Lambert (2003), Danielson (2006), Mangin (2007), and Donaldson et al. (2008). Each of these is more fully detailed in Subthemes 4.1 – 4.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 4.1: Emergent teacher leaders recognize and respect the egalitarianism and seniority structure of the teaching profession.</td>
<td>Confirms Robins and Zirinsky (1996), Stone et al. (1997), Calabrese (2002), Spillane et al. (2003), Danielson (2006), and Donaldson et al. (2008) findings that it is necessary for teacher leaders to recognize egalitarianism and seniority.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanocki’s (2013) Themes</th>
<th>Previous Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 4.2: Administrators act as gatekeepers of leadership in the school.</td>
<td>Confirms Leithwood et al. (1999), Spillane et al. (2003), Frost and Harris (2003), Lambert (2003), and Mangin’s (2007) findings that teacher leadership in a school is a direct result of hierarchical leadership’s understanding of and involvement in the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 4.3: Emergent teacher leaders proceed with their leadership if the culture is safe.</td>
<td>Confirms Stone et al.’s (1997) findings that teacher leaders get a “nod” from both their colleagues and administrators before proceeding with their work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5.0: Teacher agency is brought to life by building learning communities.</td>
<td>Confirms Middlebrooks (2004), Blase and Blase (2006), Peckover et al. (2006), Spillane (2006), Muijs and Harris (2007), Reeves (2008), Crowther et al. (2002), and Lieberman and Friedrich (2010). Details are provided in Subthemes 5.1 – 5.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 5.1: Teacher leaders engage administrators in the learning community.</td>
<td>Confirms Blase and Blase (2006), Spillane (2006), Reeves (2008), and Crowther et al. (2002), that collaborative interactions are important to teacher leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 5.2: Teacher leaders go outside their contractual obligations as a teacher and share leadership with their administrators.</td>
<td>Confirms Spillane (2006), Reeves’s (2008), and Crowther et al. (2002) findings that collaborative interactions are crucial for distributed leadership in a school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 5.3: Teacher leaders positively and collegially communicate and collaborate with their fellow teachers and administrators.</td>
<td>Confirms Blase and Blase (2006), Peckover et al. (2006), Spillane (2006), Muijs and Harris (2007), Reeves (2008), Crowther et al. (2002), and Lieberman and Friedrich’s (2010) findings that collaborative interactions such as finding commonalities, building on diversity, providing feedback, and building a community of caring and trust are important to teacher leadership in a school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme 5.4: Teacher leaders engage others in accomplishing their work.</td>
<td>Confirms Middlebrooks’s (2004), and Spillane’s (2006) findings that teacher leaders are agents of distributed leadership through their interactions within the school. According to Crowther et al. (2002), this includes facilitating the learning communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6.0: Teacher Leaders Engage Themselves and Others in Positive Change in the School</td>
<td>Confirms Lieberman et al. (2000; 1998), Middlebrooks’s (2004), Crowther et al. (2002) that teacher leaders are change agents that engage and encourage others in the learning community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 7.0: Teacher Leadership can occur at any Point in a Teacher’s Career</td>
<td>No previous research found in this regard, thus Sanocki (2013) is a new finding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sanocki’s (2013) Major Findings and Hypothetical Example

The major findings in this section offer what Charmaz (2006) refers to as “reaching down to fundamentals and up to abstractions [while] prob[ing] into experience” (p. 135). Within this section, Table 6 lists these major findings, and provides a representation of how I combined the detailed themes and subthemes of my study (the experience), which are crucial to each portion of my grounded theory model (the abstraction), and extrapolated them to the six major findings of my study (the fundamentals). Following this, I offer a hypothetical example of how this might play out in the aggregate for teacher leaders.

Major Findings

Through my study, and in consultation with the research literature, I have further delineated the meaning of teacher leadership as embedded in the very processes of becoming a teacher leader, being a teacher leader, and distributing teacher leadership. Sanocki’s (2013) grounded theory characterizes teacher leadership as follows: teacher leaders are classroom teachers who are engaged in the recursive and introspective processes of becoming, being, and distributing teacher leadership. Specifically, teacher leadership unfolds in six major ways.

From the beginning of their journey, teacher leaders are classroom teachers first, who are primarily focused on positively impacting students (major finding 1). They went into the teaching profession for students and this basic fact drives them in their
leadership. In short, they are not interested in efforts that do not positively affect students.

As they progress on their journey of becoming, being, and distributing their leadership, teacher leaders are introspective about their roles (major finding 2). This introspection includes thinking about the positives and negatives they encounter as a teacher leader. Especially important, however, is the fact that teacher leaders overcome their fears that arise out of their introspection (major finding 3). By overcoming these fears, teacher leaders continue with their leadership in the school.

Teacher leaders also successfully navigate egalitarianism, seniority, and administrative gatekeeping on their path to action and agency (major finding 4). Teacher leaders must determine how to best go about their work in light of the fact that teachers traditionally consider themselves equal to one another, while giving deference to those with more years’ experience. In addition, teacher leaders often must operate within the traditional hierarchical school leadership structure. Once a teacher leader understands the unique dynamics of the leadership structure in his/her school, and successfully navigates the explicit and implicit requirements of that leadership structure, he/she can continue the work of a teacher leader.

As their work and journey continues, teacher leaders positively build, maintain, function, and communicate in a learning community (major finding 5). This learning community focuses on curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment in order to help students succeed. In the process, they communicate with their colleagues and administrators, all-the-while bridging the gap between these two groups. Through their
work, teacher leaders engage themselves and others in positive change within the school (major finding 6).

Table 6 lists my core take-aways from my study.

Table 6

Sanocki’s (2013) Major Findings and Connection to Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Findings</th>
<th>Associated Themes and Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Teacher leaders are classroom teachers first, who are primarily focused on</td>
<td>Themes 1.0 and 2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positively impacting students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Teacher leaders are introspective about their roles.</td>
<td>Themes 3.0 and subthemes 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Teacher leaders overcome their fears.</td>
<td>Subtheme 3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Teacher leaders successfully navigate egalitarianism, seniority, and</td>
<td>Themes 4.0 and subthemes 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administrative gatekeeping on their path to action and agency.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Teacher leaders positively build, maintain, function and communicate in a</td>
<td>Theme 5.0 and subthemes 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning community.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Teacher leaders engage themselves and others in positive change within the</td>
<td>Themes 6.0 and 7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Given that my six major findings are based upon the experiences of my study participants, my resulting themes and subthemes, my review and application of the relevant research literature, and my grounded theory in both word and visual model form, I have developed a focused and representative hypothetical example of my characterization of the process of how teachers become teacher leaders and how teacher leadership becomes distributed within a school. My hypothetical example is not intended to represent the only way that this process can occur. Rather, it is designed to aid
practitioners, policy makers, and researchers in understanding my grounded theory in a plausible, concise, and real-world context that reflects the kinds of examples I encountered in my study and in my review of the research literature. My hypothetical example relates the experience of a classroom teacher named Teacher A, who develops as a teacher leader in the manner as described by my grounded theory, and highlights the major findings from my work.

**Progression from Classroom Teacher to a Teacher Leader: A Brief, Representative, and Hypothetical Example**

Teacher A is a 6th grade language arts and social studies teacher who works in a suburban middle school. She has been teaching for 18 years and holds a Master’s degree in Educational Leadership.

Teacher A has always wanted to be a teacher, and she prides herself in serving the needs of her students. She gives of her own time by volunteering to run a tutor room after school on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays for any students in the middle school who need extra help in any subject. She says she goes above and beyond her contractual obligations for her students because she cares about them and their progress. Teacher A explains, “If I don’t give them this opportunity, then who will? I care about these kids. I want them to learn. I want them to succeed. I’ll do whatever it takes to make that happen” (major finding #1).

In thinking about her tutor room experiences, Teacher A recognized a need for reading comprehension improvement for many students in the middle school (major finding #2). Based upon this hunch, she took a few of her lunch breaks to look at the
school-wide assessment data concerning reading comprehension and found that there was a significant deficiency in this area. Teacher A mentioned her findings at the next language arts team meeting. The reception she received was less than enthusiastic by one of her teammates, to say the least.

While Teacher A has been teaching for 18 years, she is not the most senior member of her language arts team. A colleague who has been teaching 7th grade language arts at the school for 32 years, notes: “What do you mean you looked at the data on your lunch break…You shouldn’t be doing that on lunch. It’s nice and all. And you’re right, our kids can’t comprehend a lick. But you really shouldn’t do this work on your own time. And don’t get me started on your tutor room volunteering.” A different colleague, who is Teacher A’s closest colleague and has been a classroom teacher for five years, jumped into the conversation. “This is great information! What do you think we can do to help our students improve their reading comprehension?” Teacher A froze in her tracks, not certain how to answer either of her colleagues. She got that funny pit in the bottom of her stomach, and stopped short of responding to either of them. She simply smiled and changed the subject—for now.

Teacher A took the long way home from school. She needed to clear her head and think about how she wanted to proceed with this whole reading comprehension issue. As she drove, Teacher A could not help but notice the giant “help wanted” sign outside of the local grocery store. “Help wanted,” she thought. “How are our kids going to ever get the jobs they want (or need) if they don’t understand what they’re reading? We can provide the help these kids need now, so they are successful later, too” (major finding
#2). When Teacher A got home she wrote a short e-mail to her principal (major finding #4). The e-mail said,

Dear Principal,

I noticed that our school’s reading comprehension scores could use some work. Do you mind if the language arts team takes a planning day sometime soon to see what we can do to address this problem? If you agree, you are more than welcome to attend—we would love your input, too! [major finding #6]

Sincerely,

Teacher A

“There, this might work” she thought. “I know my colleague with lost of years of experience is a good teacher. To be honest, he is pretty intimidating. On the other hand, I know he is just looking out for me and the rest of the teachers. Maybe by asking for a day to actually look at this data together, during school hours, he will come on board with my closest teacher colleague and me [major findings #3 and #4]. We simply have to do something for these kids” (major finding #1). In essence, Teacher A just began the process of developing a focused learning community centered on reading comprehension (major finding #5).

As it turns out, the principal allowed the language arts team to meet the next Thursday (major finding #4). The principal was able to attend for a while, and offered that improving reading comprehension could be a key to improving other content area scores on the MEAP. Other teachers brought many ideas to the table as well. As the day wound down, Teacher A invited her colleagues and the principal to the tutor room after school to get a sense of exactly who was attending, and what their needs were (major finding #5). Her closest teacher colleague and the principal said they could stop by for a
while today and the other noted that he would try to make it sometime next week, if he had the time (major finding #6).

Before the next faculty meeting, Teacher A asked the principal if the language arts team could share their thoughts about what they learned from their planning day, especially since reading comprehension affected all subject areas (major findings #5 and #6). The principal agreed to give them a few minutes on the next meeting’s agenda.

Teacher A took the lead during the meeting and informally presented to the faculty what she and the other teachers had found on their planning day. At the end of their sharing, the principal thanked them for their insight and hard work, and offered that he would find room in the budget to offer the same type of planning day to other teams who wanted one (major finding #6).

The school’s culture and processes have improved through Teacher A’s teacher leadership. By focusing on students’ needs first, and by going outside of the norm to focus on curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment, the school can now more intentionally improve its practice for its students. Through Teacher A’s example, and the groundwork and precedent already set by the language arts learning community, the original “naysayer” colleague decided to head up a similar process for the social studies team, thereby continuing and expanding teacher leadership in the school (major finding #6).

This brief, representative, and hypothetical example allows for practitioners, policy makers, and researchers to envision the major findings of my grounded theory in a practical manner at the school level. The final section of my work provides my
recommendations for how each of these constituencies might apply my grounded theory to the broader practices of educational leadership, policy, and further research. Finally, I conclude with my reflections on teacher leadership.

**Recommendations**

In order for teacher leadership to be a positive, viable, and reliable force in schools, educational leaders, policy makers, and researchers must more fully understand teacher leadership and how to harness its potential. I offer the following recommendations as a springboard for others to continue my work, and the work that has come before me, so that students fully benefit from our collective work. Finally, I recognize that these recommendations stem from my experience as both a practitioner and researcher in Michigan at a time when, on the whole, third wave teacher leadership is emerging in the state and a contentious political climate creates shifting political and educational sands.

**Recommendations for Educational Leaders**

At this point, it should be abundantly clear from my work that an educational leader does not have to have a formal title or role bestowed upon him/her in order to lead. Therefore, these recommendations are for all people in education that want to effect positive change for the benefit of students.

Teacher leadership is not a new concept and it is time that we actively support individuals who want to lead in positive ways in our schools. I recommend that teachers,
administrators, and school communities encourage the building of learning communities in schools that are focused on students and work to examine and improve curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment. Positive, safe, and accepting school cultures that operate within a learning community, and that value and understand the need for introspection on the part of teacher leaders must be fostered so the important work for students can be accomplished.

For traditional hierarchical school leaders, this means creating a clear and open path to teacher leadership, including how administrative gatekeeping will operate within the organization. It also means fostering the creation and maintenance of practical and/or structural aides such as norms, funding and scheduling for the release time for teachers to engage in learning community work, and action planning guidelines for tracking the work of the learning community.

For teachers, this means that formal and informal seniority and egalitarian structures must be transparent to teachers and hierarchical leaders alike. This is especially true with regard to recognizing that teachers can lead from their station as classroom teachers. In fact, minimizing these potential roadblocks that teacher organizations and school hierarchies create is imperative for teacher leadership to begin and/or continue in a school. Positive collaboration and communication, centered on students and not on politics or self-interests, must become the norm.

For both teachers and administrators, it is crucial that the fears of emergent and active teacher leaders are recognized and handled proactively and in a safe environment. In Michigan, fears are becoming increasingly apparent within the context and climate
created by the recent passage of teacher evaluation and right to work laws. If these fears are not overcome, then teacher leadership agency stops for those teachers and those they serve. Processes and structures need to be developed where emergent teacher leaders, active teacher leaders, and administrators can openly and safely discuss the processes, interactions, fears, hopes, and goals that arise in the process of becoming, being, and distributing teacher leadership. While research needs to be conducted on how this type of dialogue might best be designed, current educational leaders can begin these processes immediately.

Educational leaders must create and actively maintain a safe culture for the monitoring of how the school is or is not meeting the goals the learning community sets out to accomplish. Teacher leaders are hesitant to enter this realm due to the fear of being evaluated negatively if their efforts do not pay dividends in student achievement test results. Since standardized test results do not appear to be going away any time soon, especially in light of the relatively recent changes in Michigan’s teacher evaluation laws, I urge educational leaders to openly examine school-based formative and summative assessments, in conjunction with criterion and norm-referenced assessments at the state and national levels, to help with triangulating the data necessary for learning communities to act upon.

In addition, I urge educational leaders to create learning communities that include policy makers in order to educate them on how teacher leaders and learning communities operate in schools. While quantifiable test results may be convenient vehicles for policy makers and voters to understand the progress or lack thereof for schools, it is incumbent
upon educational leaders to describe and qualify the intangible factors that are vital to student success.

**Recommendations for Policy Makers**

Policies such as NCLB and RTTT have precipitated teacher leadership in many schools and districts in the United States. As is evidenced in my study, these policies have also created many of the fears of teacher leaders regarding the consequences of not meeting the mandates and educational benchmarks set forth for schools to accomplish. Therefore, I respectfully submit that policy makers can and should not only fully understand the various forms and interpretations of student testing benchmarks and results that they have mandated, but they also must engage in dialogue with educational leaders concerning the broader implications of student, teacher, and administrative needs with regard to these policies. This is especially true with regard to teacher leadership and the resulting learning communities that are formed and function within schools.

Well-intentioned or not, standardized test results alone do not tell the entire story of students or schools. While educational leaders admittedly need to more fully examine these results and local assessment results in more active ways to determine the effectiveness of their curriculum design and instructional delivery, policy makers must understand that these results alone do not drive educators, including teacher leaders. It is my contention that more attention will be paid to assessment results by educators if policy makers more strongly support learning communities, as lead by teacher leaders, to engage in positive student and school cultural change and growth that includes both
quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and program implementation. Without this support by policy makers to include a more diversified approach to measure student success in the law, teachers and teacher leaders are likely to continue to be fearful of testing mandates and results, thus limiting teacher leadership in schools.

The political emphasis precipitated by educational improvement reforms such as NCLB and RTTT that focus on accountability measures and structures can be transformed into collective educational responsibility for student growth through the concept of teacher leadership. The distributive, collegial, and positive effort of teacher leadership and the resulting learning communities that they actively maintain through their agency will benefit individual school communities, the state of Michigan, and the entire nation, all of which are rightly intent on improving the education provided to students.

**Recommendations for Researchers**

Since introspection is hard to define, and is by definition a personal endeavor, I recommend that researchers further explore this phenomenon as it relates to a teacher leader’s development and/or continuance in the role. If introspection about teacher leadership can be more fully understood, then educational leaders could more easily provide supports for this introspection. For example, administrators could work with emergent and active teacher leaders to discuss the processes they are experiencing in their leadership roles in addition to what they are trying to accomplish. These structures could potentially assist a school in beginning and/or continuing teacher leadership.
Crucial to teacher leadership, through introspection, are the fears that must be overcome by each teacher leader in order for their leadership to begin and/or continue. A more in-depth research study concerning the fears of teacher leaders may shed more light on how to alleviate those fears so that teacher leaders can focus more of their efforts on their roles, functions, and goals, rather than on their fears. In addition, studies would be helpful that shed light on how emergent teacher leaders, active teacher leaders, and administrators can go about in engaging in dialogue that helps to address the fears and processes of teacher leadership.

Finally, I recommend that researchers focus on the interactions and/or lack thereof between policy makers and educational leaders such as teacher leaders. An understanding of the factors at play for both of these groups is crucial to understanding how true educational reform and/or improvement can occur at all levels of the governmental and school systems.

**Concluding Reflections on Teacher Leadership**

The experience of carrying out this study and in writing this dissertation has made it even more clear to me that teacher leadership needs to be fostered in all schools in this country. Too many antiquated structures and barriers stand in the way of the development of distributed leadership, and for no good reason. My assumption still remains, as it is borne out in my own study participants, that we are all this profession for one simple reason: the students. If this continues to be true, then we need to move beyond the school and union hierarchies, administrative gatekeeping, and political
posturing and blaming that inhibits our progress as a profession and ultimately limits the success of our students.

It is my belief that there is no more important profession than that of teacher in our society. They hold the very keys to success, or failure, for our children. It is not cliché to say that these students are our future; instead, it is just a fact. We can continue in our schools without teacher leadership, there is no doubt. Superintendents will direct principals, who in turn will give directives to teachers, who may or may not implement what was directed behind the closed door of the classroom. Or, we can engage one another professionally and collegially in something that we all value as educators: a learning community.

Teacher leaders are the key to making the bridge between the traditional school leadership hierarchy and classroom teachers. In the process of becoming, being, and distributing teacher leadership, introspection plays a huge role for teacher leaders. This introspection elicits both self-initiative and fears. The challenge for all educational leaders is to help feed that initiative and mitigate the fears so that teacher leadership might emerge and continue in schools.

Our students are counting on us, whether they know it or not, to provide the very best education possible. It is time we move beyond the comforts of our traditional boxes that we have built for ourselves in education. It is time for us to collectively lead for the benefit of our students. It is time for us to embrace, support, and encourage teacher leadership in our schools.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Administrator E-mail Invitation to Participate
Administrator E-mail Invitation to Participate

Date: [Specific Date Sent]

Dear [Specific Name of Administrator],

My name is Steve Sanocki and I am the principal at North Muskegon Elementary. I am writing to you with a request, as I am working on my dissertation regarding Teacher Leadership for partial fulfillment of my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership at Western Michigan University. As a fellow administrator, I know your time is valuable and rather scarce. Please accept my sincere gratitude for considering helping me with this request!

Specifically, I am asking for your assistance, along with other middle school administrators in the West Michigan area, in identifying teacher(s) within your school that demonstrate the definition (and associated descriptors) of teacher leadership as provided below. My study seeks to determine the process of how teachers become teacher leaders and the process by which teacher leadership becomes distributed in a school.

Once you have identified one or more teacher leaders, I am requesting that you e-mail to me the teacher leader’s publicly accessible school contact information by utilizing the chart below. Simply copy and paste the chart into an e-mail, fill in the information about the teacher leader, and send it to my e-mail address.

If I select teacher leaders you have identified as potential candidates for participation in my study, I would contact each teacher leader via e-mail with a description of my study and an invitation to participate based upon your identification/recommendation. My study with regard to the teacher leaders involves an approximately hour-long personal interview and multiple e-mail correspondences over the next two to three months. The total amount of time spent throughout the duration of my study will not exceed three to four hours.

If you would, please follow these steps:

1. Carefully read the following definition (and associated descriptors) of teacher leadership that I will use in my study:

   *Teacher leadership is not necessarily vested in a formal hierarchy or role description, and it reflects teacher agency through establishing relationships, breaking down barriers, and marshaling resources throughout the organization in an effort to improve students’ educational experiences and outcomes.*

   *In other words, a teacher leader is one who...*

   - positively affects others within and beyond his/her classroom;
   - takes initiative and/or accepts responsibility for roles beyond their teaching assignment
   - may or may not have a formal title and/or leadership role within the school or district;
- is able to form and maintain professional relationships with differing constituencies surrounding educational goals and purposes;

- is able to work through and navigate a wide variety of people, situations, and red tape;

- can find and utilize the time, talent, and treasure of those people and entities involved in an educational goal;

- is interested in making students’ experiences rich, meaningful, and academically rewarding.

2. Determine if any of the teachers in your school fit this definition and associated descriptors.

3. Contact me by [specific date] if you . . .*  
   a. have any teachers who are eligible to participate (by utilizing the chart as described above).

   b. have questions or concerns.

   * Note: Contact information is provided at the bottom of this e-mail.

Thank you again for considering this request. I appreciate your time and effort, and I wish you the best of luck in your continued efforts to educate your students!

Sincerely,

Steven J. Sanocki  
North Muskegon Elementary Principal  
WMU Educational Leadership Ph.D. Candidate

ssanocki@me.com

ssanocki@nmps.k12.mi.us

(231) 457-5226 (c)  
(231) 719-4202 (w)  
(231) 759-4271 (h)

Teacher Leaders Identified for Potential Inclusion in Steve Sanocki’s Study*:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Leader’s Name</th>
<th>School E-mail Address</th>
<th>School Phone Number</th>
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* Note: You may identify one or more teacher leaders.
Appendix B

Teacher Leader E-mail Invitation to Participate
Date: [Specific Date Sent]

Dear [Specific Name of Teacher Leader],

Congratulations! [Specific Name of Administrator] has identified you as a Teacher Leader in your school!

My name is Steve Sanocki and I am the principal at North Muskegon Elementary. I am writing to you with a request, as I am working on my dissertation regarding Teacher Leadership for partial fulfillment of my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership at Western Michigan University. As a fellow educator, I know your time is valuable and rather scarce. Please accept my sincere gratitude for considering helping me with this request!

Specifically, I am interested in the process of how teachers become teacher leaders and the process by which teacher leadership becomes distributed in a school. My study involves an approximately hour-long personal interview and multiple e-mail correspondences over the next two to three months. The total amount of time spent throughout the duration of my study will not exceed three to four hours.

There are several expected benefits from participating in this study. They are: (a) having the opportunity to reflect on your own experiences of becoming and being a teacher leader, (b) providing helpful information to educational practitioners who are learning how to integrate and foster teacher leadership in their schools, and (c) the ability for the researcher to participate in a qualitative study.

If you would, please contact me by [specific date] if you*

1. wish to learn more about participating in this study.
   a. At this point, we would schedule a specific date, time, and place to meet to review a consent document.

   b. If you agree to participate, and sign the consent document, we can proceed with the interview at that time. We would also establish a secure way to communicate via e-mail for follow-up activities, questions, and discussions throughout the duration of the study.

   c. Even though an administrator from your school helped to identify you as a potential participant, only I, as the researcher, will know of your participation or your decline of participation in this study.

2. have questions or concerns.

3. wish to decline participating in this study.

* Note: Contact information is provided at the bottom of this e-mail.
Thank you again for considering this request. I appreciate your time and effort, and I wish you the best of luck in your continued efforts to educate your students!

Sincerely,

Steven J. Sanocki
North Muskegon Elementary Principal
WMU Educational Leadership Ph.D. Candidate

ssanocki@me.com

ssanocki@nmps.k12.mi.us

(231) 457-5226 (c)
(231) 719-4202 (w)
(231) 759-4271 (h)
Appendix C

Follow-up E-mail to Teacher Leaders Who Did Not Respond
Date: [Specific Date Sent]

Dear [Specific Name of Teacher Leader],

On [specific date] I sent an e-mail to you requesting your participation in my study regarding Teacher Leadership. I apologize for contacting you again, but I wanted to be sure you received my original message. Thank you so much for considering this opportunity!

Please read below for the full text of the e-mail I sent to you. I look forward to hearing from you by [specific date] so I may proceed with either including or excluding you from my study.

Thank You!

Sincerely,

Steven J. Sanocki

Full Text of e-mail sent on [specific date]:

Date: [Specific Date Sent]

Dear [Specific Name of Teacher Leader],

Congratulations! [Specific Name of Administrator] has identified you as a Teacher Leader in your school!

My name is Steve Sanocki and I am the principal at North Muskegon Elementary. I am writing to you with a request, as I am working on my dissertation regarding Teacher Leadership for partial fulfillment of my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership at Western Michigan University. As a fellow educator, I know your time is valuable and rather scarce. Please accept my sincere gratitude for considering helping me with this request!

Specifically, I am interested in the process of how teachers become teacher leaders and the process by which teacher leadership becomes distributed in a school. My study involves an approximately hour-long personal interview and multiple e-mail correspondences over the next two to three months. The total amount of time spent throughout the duration of my study will not exceed three to four hours.

There are several expected benefits from participating in this study. They are: (a) having the opportunity to reflect on your own experiences of becoming and being a teacher
leader, (b) providing helpful information to educational practitioners who are learning how to integrate and foster teacher leadership in their schools, and (c) the ability for the researcher to participate in a qualitative study.

If you would, please contact me by [specific date] if you*:

1. wish to learn more about participating in this study.
   a. At this point, we would schedule a specific date, time, and place to meet to review a consent document.
   
   b. If you agree to participate, and sign the consent document, we can proceed with the interview at that time. We would also establish a secure way to communicate via e-mail for follow-up activities, questions, and discussions throughout the duration of the study.
   
   c. Even though an administrator from your school helped to identify you as a potential participant, only I, as the researcher, will know of your participation or your decline of participation in this study.

2. have questions or concerns.

3. wish to decline participating in this study.

* Note: Contact information is provided at the bottom of this e-mail

Thank you again for considering this request. I appreciate your time and effort, and I wish you the best of luck in your continued efforts to educate your students!

Sincerely,

Steven J. Sanocki
North Muskegon Elementary Principal
WMU Educational Leadership Ph.D. Candidate

ssanocki@me.com

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(231) 457-5226 (c)
(231) 719-4202 (w)
(231) 759-4271 (h)
Appendix D

Teacher Leader Consent Form
The purpose of this study is to examine the process of becoming a teacher leader and how teacher leadership becomes distributed within a school.

West Michigan middle school teacher leaders, as selected by their principals, are eligible to potentially participate in this study. Random drawings of all potential participants have/will occur until 10 teacher leader participants give their consent to participate. Multiple drawings may be necessary in an attempt to include only one teacher leader participant per district/school.

The face-to-face interview location will be arranged mutually between you and Steven J. Sanocki. This interview will take place in a private setting, likely within your school/district. E-mail correspondence can be conducted anywhere you choose.

The duration of this study will not last more than two to three months’ time and will require a maximum of three to four hours of active participation on your part.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to . . .

- engage in an approximately 90 minute face-to-face interview with Steven J. Sanocki. To ensure the accurate transcription of your responses, the interview will be recorded using a computer and/or iPhone recording device. You will be
able to ask the interviewer to turn off the audio recording equipment at any time during the interview.

- verify that the transcript of your interview is correct and complete. This activity will take place via e-mail correspondence. The anticipated time for this task is 60 minutes.

- respond to follow-up e-mail journaling correspondences regarding the concept of teacher leadership as the study unfolds. It is anticipated that approximately four journaling correspondences will occur over the course of the study and will take an anticipated 20 minutes per journal response (for a total of approximately 80 minutes).

What information is being measured during the study?
This study seeks to derive theory for the process of how teachers become teacher leaders and how teacher leadership becomes distributed within a school. Your participation, along with other teacher leaders’ participation, will allow for the collection of data through the interview, transcript verification, and e-mail journal correspondences.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
The time you take to participate in this study, up to four hours over two to three months’ time, can be considered a risk on your part. This risk is minimized through Steven J. Sanocki’s adherence to the activities and time approximates outlined in this consent form.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. On a broader scale, you could potentially provide helpful information to the academic discipline of educational leadership and/or educational practitioners who are learning how to integrate and foster teacher leadership in their schools.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
Other than your time, there are no costs to you for participating in this study.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
No one other than Steven J. Sanocki will know that you, specifically, have participated in this study. Your principal who selected you as a potential participant will not be notified should you choose to participate or should you choose to not participate. Furthermore, you will be referred to through the use of a pseudonym in the writing of the findings of the study. Your information (in pseudonym form), as part of the whole study, will be
shared in Steven J. Sanocki’s written dissertation, the oral defense of that dissertation, and at any time may be used as part of one or more publications.

**What if you want to stop participating in this study?**
You can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study. The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the primary investigator, Dr. Louann Bierlein Palmer, at (269) 387-3596 or l.bierleinpalmer@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

___________________________________

Participant’s signature

___________________________________

Date

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Appendix E

Interview Questions for Teacher Leader Participants
Interview Conversation Guide

Date: _______________
Time: _______________
Location: ___________________________________________
Participant ID #: ___________________

*Note: These questions are representative of what will be asked within the interview and/or in the follow-up e-mail correspondences. In order to stay true to the qualitative tradition of research, prescriptive (closed) questioning cannot be guaranteed in an open-ended questioning procedure. I will, however, stay within the general realm and context of each of these questions – as guided by the research and my conceptual framework – when probing for more detail and/or in follow-up e-mail correspondences.

Opening Script for Interview:

Thank you for participating in this interview and follow-up e-mail correspondences. To maintain the integrity of the study, I’m going to utilize digital recording and speech recognition software as we talk. If you are comfortable, would you mind wearing this headset so the computer software can pick up your words more consistently? If you are not comfortable with wearing the headset, we can proceed with an open microphone. In addition, I will likely be typing notes as we talk. As you may remember, the purpose of this study is to explore how teachers become teacher leaders and how teacher leadership becomes distributed within a school. I will be asking questions regarding how you describe, perceive, and carry out this role. Please note, during the interview, I won’t be able to make any commentary on your responses. The reason for this is to reduce my influence on your answers as much as possible. As we proceed, I may ask you to clarify or expand upon your answers. Do you have any questions or concerns? May we begin?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Type</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
<th>Connections to Conceptual Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background of Participant</td>
<td>1. Briefly describe your personal background (e.g., where you grew up, family, etc.)</td>
<td>Becoming a Teacher Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Briefly describe your educational background. (e.g., where you went to school, what degrees you hold, etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Briefly describe your professional background (e.g., where you have worked – both inside and outside of education, what titles you have had or do have, etc.)</td>
<td>Being a Teacher Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Type</td>
<td>Prompts</td>
<td>Connections to Conceptual Framework</td>
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</table>
| Initial Thoughts on Teacher Leadership | 1. How do you describe the concept of teacher leadership?  
   a. Describe some examples of teacher leadership that you have been a part of or that you have witnessed.  
   2. Do you consider yourself a teacher leader?  
      a. If so, how so?  
      b. And, if not, why not?  
   3. As you know, your principal identified you as a teacher leader. What do you do, specifically, in your role as a teacher/employee that may have influenced your principal to identify you as a teacher leader? | Becoming a Teacher Leader  
Being a Teacher Leader |
| Research Question #1: | 1. You’ve been identified as a teacher leader, which includes affecting others in a positive way outside of the traditional/contractual role of a teacher.  
   a. What was it that you did differently?  
   b. Why did you do this?  
   2. Is there a formal process you went through to become a teacher leader in your school?  
      a. If so, describe that process in detail.  
      b. Has your role ever been formalized?  
      c. Will your role ever become formalized?  
      d. Is your role “pseudo-formalized”? That is, do you have a specific role in the school that everyone knows about and relies upon, but there is no title associated with it?  
   2. Did your _______________________ ask you to take on the role(s) of a teacher leader in your school?  
      a. principal (or another superior in the school/district)  
      b. teachers’ union leadership  
      c. If so, describe in detail how this occurred.  
      d. If not, why do you think that you were never formally asked to take on this role?  
   3. Were there informal processes you went through to become a teacher leader in your school?  
      a. If so, describe those processes in detail.  
   4. Did _______________________ ask you to take on the roles(s) of a teacher leader in your school?  
      a. colleagues within the school  
      b. students (yours or others in the school)  
      c. parents (your students’ or others in the school)  
      d. other constituents (e.g., board members, community members, etc.) | Teacher Agency  
Hierarchical Leadership Position  
Unofficial Leadership Position  
External Motivation |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question Type</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
<th>Connections to Conceptual Framework</th>
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<td></td>
<td>e. If so, describe in detail how this occurred.</td>
<td>Top Down Teacher Leadership Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. If not, why do you think that each of these constituencies never asked you to carry out your role?</td>
<td>External Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Did you take it upon yourself to take on the role(s) of a teacher leader in your school?</td>
<td>Bottom Up Teacher Leadership Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. If so, describe in detail how this occurred.</td>
<td>Internal Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. If not, why did you choose to accept the challenge to take on this role from other people?</td>
<td>External Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Why did you choose to take on the role(s) of teacher leadership?</td>
<td>Teacher Agency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question #2: How do teacher leaders make the connection between becoming a teacher leader and being a teacher leader?

1. Describe a typical “day-in-the-life” of you as a teacher leader.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Becoming a Teacher Leader           |
|               | 2. What aspects of teacher leadership do you enjoy the most?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Being a Teacher Leader              |
|               | 3. What aspects of teacher leadership do you enjoy the least?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                      |
|               | 4. What is your greatest hope as a teacher leader?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                      |
|               | 5. What is your greatest fear as a teacher leader?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                      |
|               | 6. What do most people not know about you/your role as a teacher leader?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                      |
|               | 7. If you had no limitations and/or barriers in your way, what would you change about your teacher leadership role?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                      |
|               | 8. What, without a doubt, will you keep doing with regard to your teacher leadership role?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                      |
|               | 9. What _____________ can you identify about being a teacher leader? Please provide details and examples.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                      |
|               | a. positives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                      |
|               | b. negatives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                      |
### Question Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question #3: How do teacher leaders view their role in impacting students' educational experiences and/or outcomes?</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
<th>Connections to Conceptual Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What resources do you need in order to carry out your role(s) as a teacher leader?</td>
<td>a. How do you get these resources? b. Who do you get these resources from? c. Are there barriers to obtaining these resources? d. Are there resources that you still need?</td>
<td>Marshalling Resources Throughout the Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do you think others perceive you and/or your role as a teacher leader? Specifically,</td>
<td>a. colleagues (peers) b. subordinates (if any) c. administrators (superiors) d. students (directly responsible to you) e. students (within the school as a whole) f. parents (directly related to your students) g. parents (within the school as a whole) h. other employees (e.g., kitchen staff, custodians, etc.) i. other constituent groups (e.g., the school board, the teachers’ union, community business leaders, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What results have you seen due to your work as a teacher leader?</td>
<td>a. Have there been changes in student outcomes? (e.g., assessment results, behavioral results, etc.) b. Have there been changes in students’ experiences? c. Have there been changes in school leadership processes? (e.g., how leadership is carried out within the school); d. Have there been changes in the school’s culture?</td>
<td>Changes in Student Outcomes Desire to Improve Students’ Educational Experiences Changes in School Leadership Processes Changes in School Culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question #4: How do teacher leaders describe any changes in the culture or processes of leadership within the school as they evolved as a teacher leader?</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
<th>Connections to Conceptual Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Describe how you established relationships in your role as teacher leader.</td>
<td>a. With whom did you establish relationships? b. Why did you establish these relationships? i. What kinds of relationships and/or interactions do you have with your __________ when carrying out your role as teacher leader? 1. colleagues (peers) 2. subordinates (if any) 3. administrators (superiors)</td>
<td>Establishing Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Type</td>
<td>Prompts</td>
<td>Connections to Conceptual Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. students (directly responsible to you)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. students (within the school as a whole)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. parents (directly related to your students)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. parents (within the school as a whole)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. other employees (e.g., kitchen staff, custodians, etc.)</td>
<td>Breaking Down Barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. other constituent groups (e.g., the school board, the teachers’ union, community business leaders, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Are there/were there barriers that you had to break down in order to become or be a teacher leader in your school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open-Ended Invitation to Expound on Teacher Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What haven’t I asked you about that you wish to tell me concerning your experiences of becoming and/or being a teacher leader?</td>
<td>Becoming a Teacher Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Being a Teacher Leader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Concluding Script for Interview:**

Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this interview. I will be contacting you in the near future, most likely via e-mail, for follow-up activities that will help me better understand your story of becoming and being a teacher leader. As a reminder, these activities will conclude no later than three months from today and will not require your direct participation for a total of more than four hours.
**Follow-up e-mail correspondence activities will include:**

a. Checking, verifying, and (if desired) expounding upon the transcript of this interview.

b. Writing at least one “reflection journal” on specific questions or concepts that flow from the study.

c. Writing responses to direct questions concerning teacher leadership.

*Do you have any questions or concerns at this time?*

*Finally, may I please confirm with you your preferred e-mail and phone contact information?*

**Preferred e-mail:**

______________________________________________________________________

**Preferred phone contact:** (   )

______________________________________________________________________
Appendix F

A Sample Coding Screen from HyperRESEARCH Software
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom-Up Teacher Leadership Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking Down Barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in School Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in School Leadership Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in Student Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to Improve Students' Educational Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical Leadership Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Thoughts on Teacher Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshalling Resources Throughout the Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Process of Becoming a Teacher Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top-Down Teacher Leadership Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unofficial Leadership Position</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

E-mail Invitation for Alternates
Dear [Specific Name of Teacher Leader],

Congratulations! [Specific Name of Administrator] has identified you as a Teacher Leader in your school!

My name is Steve Sanocki and I am the principal at North Muskegon Elementary. I am writing to you with a request, as I am working on my dissertation regarding Teacher Leadership for partial fulfillment of my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership at Western Michigan University. As a fellow educator, I know your time is valuable and rather scarce. Please accept my sincere gratitude for considering helping me with this request!

Specifically, I am interested in the process of how teachers become teacher leaders and the process by which teacher leadership becomes distributed in a school. My study involves an approximately 1.5 hour-long personal interview and multiple e-mail correspondences over the next two to three months. The total amount of time spent throughout the duration of my study will not exceed three to four hours.

There are several expected benefits from participating in this study. They are: (a) having the opportunity to reflect on your own experiences of becoming and being a teacher leader, (b) providing helpful information to educational practitioners who are learning how to integrate and foster teacher leadership in their schools, and (c) the ability for the researcher to participate in a qualitative study.

If you would, please contact me by [specific date] if you*

1. wish to learn more about participating in this study.
   a. At this point, we would schedule a specific date, time, and place to meet to review a consent document.
   
   b. If you agree to participate, and sign the consent document, we can proceed with the interview and/or determine what e-mail correspondence must be completed at that time. We would also establish a secure way to communicate via e-mail for follow-up activities, questions, and discussions throughout the duration of the study.
   
   c. Even though an administrator from your school helped to identify you as a potential participant, only I, as the researcher, will know of your participation or your decline of participation in this study.

2. have questions or concerns.

3. wish to decline participating in this study.

* Note: Contact information is provided at the bottom of this e-mail
Thank you again for considering this request. I appreciate your time and effort, and I wish you the best of luck in your continued efforts to educate your students!

Sincerely,

Steven J. Sanocki
North Muskegon Elementary Principal
WMU Educational Leadership Ph.D. Candidate

ssanocki@me.com

ssanocki@nmps.k12.mi.us

(231) 457-5226 (c)
(231) 719-4202 (w)
(231) 759-4271 (h)
Appendix H

Axial Codes in Comparison to a Representative Sample of Open Codes Contained in Axial Code
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Axial Code</th>
<th>Representative Sample of Open Codes Contained in Axial Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actions of a TL</td>
<td>Being involved; being mentored; being positive; coaching; collaborating; communicating; dealing with conflict; encouraging others; helping others be accountable; improving practice; inspiring others; keeping administrator informed; listening; measuring climate; motivating others; part of a PLC; problem-solving; respects more senior teachers; taking risks for students; teaching teachers; volunteering; working beyond contractual obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Administration as resource; administrators treat teachers professionally; being a bridge between administration and teachers; engaging administration; fear of being evaluated in TL role by administrators; feels empowered to be a TL; filling void that administrator is not filling; not wanting administrative roles; trust between TL and administration; wanting administrative roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age and Years Teaching</td>
<td>Age of TL; age or seniority or experience makes a difference; number of years teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributes of a TL</td>
<td>Ability to apologize; ability to have fun; approachable; being a go-to person; being a team player; being flexible; being humble; being involved; being open-minded; being positive; being supportive; being trustworthy; loves kids; loves teaching; shows the value of initiatives to others; wanting to be in the know; wanting to be successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a TL</td>
<td>Being asked by hierarchical leader to take on TL role; felt confident; felt daunted; not feeling like an expert in TL role; not knowing how TL role ever happened to me; not seeking TL role; overcoming fears; recognizing roles of TL; when teacher became a TL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Being frustrated; being overwhelmed; doing things that are not easy; emotionally exhausting; encountering complaining; encountering union issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Fear of adult drama; fear of being perceived as a kiss-up; fear of failure; fear of not making a difference; fear of not making connections with kids; fear of rejection; fear that others will think that I want to be the principal; fear that people will not come on board; felt intimidated; felt terrified; felt worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of TL</td>
<td>Descriptors of TL from synthesized definition; having a voice in decision-making; not feeling like an expert in the TL role; questioning what TL is; TL is lie a chicken and egg concept; working toward a common goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal TL</td>
<td>Administrators involve TL in decision-making; asked to take on formal TL role; asked to take on formal TL roles but declined; mentoring; speaking at conferences; views leadership as formal roles or titles; volunteered for formal TL role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>Affecting others within and beyond the classroom; age or seniority or experience makes a difference; approachable; being a go-to person; coaching; creating positive relationships; empowering others; encouraging others; inspiring others; positive communication; show value of initiatives to others; trying to make a difference; will go to bat for others; working at being successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal TL</td>
<td>First time teacher became a TL—Informal Role; getting to know colleagues; informal and natural collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other’s Perceptions</td>
<td>Age or seniority or experience makes a difference; being a go-to person; colleagues dismissed TL offerings; colleagues liked TL offerings; recognized by peers for TL role; respected; seeks positive perception within the school; society’s view of educators is often negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Family</td>
<td>Influenced by educators in the family; wife as support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positives</td>
<td>Give positives to parents; making school a happy place; opportunity; persevering; positive feedback; positive mindset; recognizing the positive attributes of others; recognizing the positive attributes of self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Administrators treat teachers professionally; bringing other teachers on board (collegial); building relationships; connecting people to each other; creating positive relationships in the school/district; don’t talk behind others’ backs; engaging community members; hoping to earn respect; making others feel comfortable; practice conflict resolution; respects administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Expands learning beyond the school; gather resources; resources are a barrier; resources are not a barrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards of a TL</td>
<td>Being compensated; being noticed for TL work; having a voice in decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles</td>
<td>Roles of a TL; taking on something new; teaching administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-awareness as a TL</td>
<td>Age or seniority or experience makes a difference; backing off when appropriate; being motherly; being open-minded; developing new ideas; likes to learn new things; likes being in charge; not forcing others; not understanding undue complaints of other teachers; others might not do TL role as well as me; pushes for things to get done; recognizing roles of TL; recognizing scope of TL; specifically choosing a positive culture to be a part of; thinking about TL roles and duties; wanting to be in the know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I

Refined Axial and Emergent Theoretical Codes Compared to My Conceptual Framework and Working Definition of Teacher Leadership
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refined Axial and Emergent Theoretical Codes</th>
<th>Connections to My Conceptual Frame or Working Definition of Teacher Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Desire to</strong> Positively Affect Others within and Beyond his/her Classroom</td>
<td>Positively affects others within and beyond his/her classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing Self-attributes as a Leader: Recognizes the self in relationship to experience, roles, wants, needs, etc. And that the positives outweigh any fears</td>
<td>Informal Path to Teacher Leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Recognition and Experience of Entering TL Role**  
  1. Recognizing feelings  
     a. Positive feelings  
     b. Negative feelings  
  2. Recognizing and Experiencing Processes  
  3. Recognizing Unique Aspects of TL Role  
  4. Being a Positive Influence through TL Role | Becoming; Being |
| Building a Learning Community  
  1. Positive intent  
  2. Positive actions  
  3. Positive relationship-building | Being; Distribution |
| Engaging in Positive Actions | Being; Distribution |
| Engaging with Colleagues | Being; Distribution |
| Communicating | Being; Distribution |
| Engaging in Positive Change: Brings self, teachers, administration, parents, community and students together into action for improving the school | Becoming; Being; Distribution |
| Focusing on Students: Brings self, teachers, administration, parents and students together into action for student achievement | Becoming; Being; Distribution |
| Sharing Leadership with Administration: Brings self together with hierarchical leaders to effect change in the school | Becoming; Being; Distribution |
| Going Beyond Contractual Obligations: Brings self as an example to colleagues with regard to dedication to making needed change | Becoming; Being; Distribution |
| Being Asked by a Hierarchical Leader to Take on TL Role | Formal Path to Teacher Leadership |
Appendix J

Approval Letter from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Date: July 16, 2012

To: Louann Bierlein Palmer, Principal Investigator
    Steven Sanocki, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 12-06-26

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “The Process of How Teachers Become Teacher Leaders and How Teacher Leadership Becomes Distributed within a School: A Grounded Theory Research Study” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under “Number of subjects you want to complete the study.”) Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

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

Approval Termination: July 16, 2013
Western Michigan University
Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology

Principal Investigator: Louann Bierlein Palmer, Ed.D.
Student Investigator: Steven J. Sanocki
Title of Study: The Process of Becoming a Teacher Leader and How Teacher Leadership Becomes Distributed within a School: A Grounded Theory Research Study

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "The Process of Becoming a Teacher Leader and How Teacher Leadership Becomes Distributed within a School: A Grounded Theory Research Study." This project will serve as Steven J. Sanocki’s dissertation project for the requirements of the Ph.D. in Educational Leadership. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
The purpose of this study is to examine the process of becoming a teacher leader and how teacher leadership becomes distributed within a school.

Who can participate in this study?
West Michigan middle school teacher leaders, as selected by their principals, are eligible to potentially participate in this study. Random drawings of all potential participants have/will occur until 10 teacher leader participants give their consent to participate. Multiple drawings may be necessary in an attempt to include only one teacher leader participant per district/school.

Where will this study take place?
The face-to-face interview location will be arranged mutually between you and Steven J. Sanocki. This interview will take place in a private setting, likely within your school/district. E-mail correspondence can be conducted anywhere you choose.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
The duration of this study will not last more than two to three months’ time and will require a maximum of three to four hours of active participation on your part.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to...

• engage in an approximately 90 minute face-to-face interview with Steven J. Sanocki. To ensure the accurate transcription of your responses, the interview will be recorded using a computer and/or iPhone recording device. You will be able to ask the interviewer to turn off the audio recording equipment at any time during the interview.
Western Michigan University
Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology

Principal Investigator: Louann Bierlein Palmer, Ed.D.
Student Investigator: Steven J. Sanocki
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- engage in an approximately 90 minute face-to-face interview with Steven J. Sanocki. To ensure the accurate transcription of your responses, the interview will be recorded using a computer and/or iPhone recording device. You will be able to ask the interviewer to turn off the audio recording equipment at any time during the interview.
Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the primary investigator, Dr. Louann Bierlein Palmer, at (269) 387-3596 or l.bierleinpalmer@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

__________________________________________________________________________

Participant's signature Date