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Leading Between the Lines: Exploring the Development of Identity Among Literacy Specialists

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LEADING BETWEEN THE LINES:

EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY AMONG LITERACY SPECIALISTS

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation study addresses the phenomenon of literacy leadership. Through a multiple case study, the stories and experiences of four practicing veteran literacy specialists suggest how they developed identities as leaders. Using qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, namely extensive interviews and the Voice Centered Relational Method, respectively, narrative portraits of each participant are presented and reveal themes related to their role, their preparation for and ongoing development of their practice as well as models of leadership in their schools. In addition, the portraits suggested how the social context of their schools impacted the development of their identity, particularly in the relationships they built among colleagues and principals. With a theoretical framework of social learning theory, cultural relational theory, and transformational learning theory, the study implies that when a school expands its concept of leadership and validates distributed models that value relationships and interpersonal interaction, literacy specialists are able to develop identities as leaders, experience both a professional and personal transformation, and make an impact on the teachers and children in their communities. Recommendations for further study and future practice are made to address the formation of literacy specialists through a more in depth study of leadership and a greater participation in collaborative networks of colleagues.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As an adult who learns through social interaction and recognizes the importance of context in learning, I acknowledge the many people who have influenced me throughout this study and my doctoral program.

First, I am grateful to the faculty and staff in the Adult Learning and Development doctoral program at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. They created an environment that encouraged me to grow both personally and professionally and supported my learning and development in so many ways.

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I am thankful for my colleagues in the 2011 Doctoral Cohort who have walked throughout this process with me. From our residencies on campus to Skype meeting throughout the year, my colleagues became my community of practice and modeled how adults learn.

I recognize the influence and inspiration of all of my teachers, past and present. From those who taught me how read and write in elementary school to those who taught

me how to conduct research and think critically in graduate school, all of them have made a difference for which I am thankful.

I am fortunate to work in a community that values the teaching and learning of both children and adults. Throughout my career as a teacher, literacy specialist, principal, and district leader, the people of the Westbrook, Maine School Department, particularly my teaching and administrative colleagues, have mentored and nurtured me as a professional.

Finally, I recognize my first and most important influences: my family. My parents, Joan and Benny, who continue to teach me; my children Julia, Joey, and Andrea who enjoyed the fact that Daddy was also doing homework and who sat beside me writing their own papers and books every weekend; and especially my wife Carolyn who encouraged and enabled me to realize this and the many other dreams I never had thought were possible.

Peter J. Lancia
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

As schools across the country engage in initiatives intended to increase student achievement and promote educator effectiveness, people look to their educational leaders to initiate, guide, and realize meaningful and lasting change. While discussions of school improvement often promote distributed leadership models (Darling-Hammond, Rothman, & Alliance for Excellent, 2011; Elmore, 2000; Lieberman & Miller, 2004; Reeves, 2006, 2008) that include teacher leaders such as disciplinary content specialists, researchers, scholars, mentors, and coaches as catalysts for transforming the culture of school (Fullan, 1995), the more traditional hierarchy of administrative leadership remains prevalent in most public school organizations. Still, a layer of teacher leadership has emerged as an essential and popular component of school improvement that impacts administrative leaders, teachers, and ultimately children.

Problem

Literacy specialists are among those teacher leaders who work in our public schools as catalysts for the improvement of learning. The International Reading Association, one of the largest and most influential organization in the world focused on literacy education, published several position papers in the last three decades, including a description of the role of the literacy specialist (2000), a specific description of the role of the reading coach (2004, 2006), standards of professional practice for literacy professionals (2010), and competencies for degree programs that prepare them (1986). However, a universal understanding of what a literacy specialist, the most general of job

titles, is and does remains vague, particularly in their capacity as leaders. Predominantly women, they are neither classroom teachers nor school administrators and work in a leadership role that is in between the more traditional layers of a school organizational structure which often presents a personal and professional challenge. They typically have advanced degrees and professional licensure in literacy education, but have limited credentials or experiences in educational leadership. They may have been outstanding classroom teachers who chose to make a career transition while others may have been asked to accept or are assigned to these new roles. Specialists who are given various leadership responsibilities such as providing supervision, developing and monitoring programs, and advising programmatic decisions may see themselves as leaders but struggle because colleagues, administrators, and students do not recognize them in this capacity. Many want to have influence and contribute to their school's ongoing improvement efforts but lack the validation and acceptance of their colleagues. Their voices of are often ignored, overlooked, or silenced because of authoritarian leadership structures. This may cause frustration and complicate the development of their identity within their roles, particularly among those who see themselves as leaders.

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation project is to explore the ways that a veteran literacy specialist develops an identity as a leader within the contexts of their schools. In a role that is transformative in nature, literacy specialists are expected to contribute to the capacity of the faculty and the learning of the students. They are directed to lead literacy initiatives, plan programs, provide professional development, coach colleagues in order to improve their instructional practice, and mentor novice teachers. However, little

attention is paid to their own transformation and their personal development as leaders. This lack of attention presents challenges for schools as well as the professional organizations and universities that prepare and support them. This study is intended to address the problem by sharing the experiences of practicing, veteran literacy specialists in order to better understand their role, development, and contributions to their schools as leaders.

Research Approach

This project emerged from a doctoral program in education with a concentration in adult learning and development. Throughout the program, I wrestled with identifying my own world view, negotiating my identities as an adult, an educator, and a researcher (Mertens, 2010). I am most closely aligned with the social constructivist paradigm which asserts that learning is a continuous process of constructing meaning and searches for an understanding of the world in which one lives and works (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). I appreciate how experience leads to meaning and how active participation in learning results in understanding. I also understand that learning affects both the individual and the people around them, suggesting an alignment with the humanist paradigm as well (Merriam, et al., 2007). Having studied a number of adult learning theories, read countless research, and written pages of reflection, I realize that the paradigm from which I approach this project is mixed. I have come to understand that as people learn, they construct meaning within a social context and become personally fulfilled (Merriam, et al., 2007).

Working from this perspective, I constructed a project that primarily followed a case study approach but included aspects of phenomenology. As a case study, this project explored the phenomenon of literacy leadership through the experiences of four literacy specialists in public elementary schools, or "cases within a bounded system" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Through multiple sources of information, I explored the "lived experiences" (Creswell, 2007, p. 59) of my participants and described the "universal essence" (p. 58) of literacy leadership.

Dissertation Questions

In this project, I posed the following primary question which will be referenced throughout this dissertation: How does a literacy specialist in a public elementary school construct an identity as a leader? In addition, based on my prior knowledge and experience with the topic and my assumptions as a researcher, I also asked the supportive questions: What personal, social, and environmental factors have influenced their transition into their roles and development as professionals? Do they develop a leader identity and if so, how? How does their identity as a leader contribute to their personal development along with the transformation of the schools in which they work?

Personal Connections to the Topic

I became interested in literacy leaders almost twenty years ago when I completed my Master's degree in literacy education and earned an endorsement as a literacy specialist. Since then, I have followed trends in the literature and in practice that revealed a constantly changing role with varying degrees of impact. While I encountered a fair amount of research that describes the practices of literacy leaders, specialists, and

instructional coaches, I found very little that documents the way that they learn or that discusses their developing identities. I have also taught pre-service literacy leaders in graduate courses and for several years supervised them as the director and instructor of their clinical practicum. Their paths to leadership are typically unique, some intending to stay in the classroom teaching children while most aspire to leadership roles in which they work with both children and teachers, perhaps exclusively. My reading and experience have led to my research interest in literacy leaders.

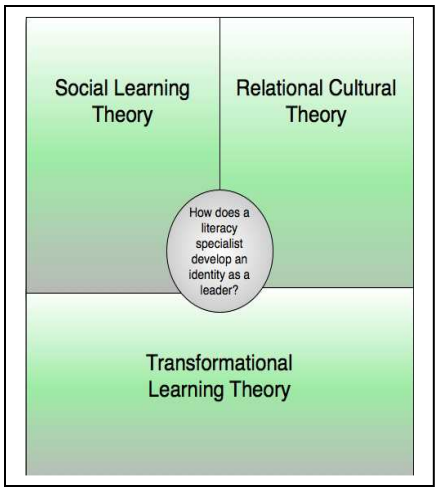
I have also been passionate about reading and writing since I was a child. Learning to read was easy for me and I remember reading constantly. My parents and teachers provided me with countless opportunities to read both at home and at school, introducing me to books by dozens of authors on countless subjects. Similarly, I remember writing since I was a young child as well. In fact, I created my first book when I was three years old, a retelling of a favorite picture book, *I Was Mad That Day*. I wrote as much as I read, wandering through a world filled with words. I realized that my thinking process was constructed through reading and writing and was enhanced by sharing it with other people. Throughout my school years, my interests shifted from narrative to information, a preference that continued through my undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral education. While much of my reading and writing is focused and purposeful, typically connected to my professional or academic work, it is continuous and is a source of satisfaction for me.

My own experience led me to develop my adult life and career around literacy. As a parent, teacher, literacy specialist, principal, assistant superintendent, adjunct university instructor, and workshop presenter, I am an advocate for empowering others through

literacy. Even before I earned a Master's degree in literacy education, I immersed my second grade students in reading and writing, working to engage them as deeply in literacy as I had been as a child. As a parent, I read and wrote with my children daily, provided opportunities for them to interact with language, and engaged them in conversations about countless topics. As a literacy specialist, administrator, and adult educator, I supported teachers in developing the knowledge and skills of effective literacy instruction in order to impact the students they taught, extending my influence beyond my own students. I experienced the transformative nature of literacy (Freire & Macedo, 1987) and worked to empower others to be transformed by literacy as well.

This project is a natural next step in my own development as an advocate for literacy. In this project, I hope to support those who are working as literacy specialists by sharing the stories of practitioners, recognizing patterns in their experiences, and suggesting themes to be considered in helping them strengthen their professional practice. The stories of their development have also led me to explore the contemporary debate about public education which calls for a broad transformation of our schools in order to improve the experiences of our students. Central to that debate is the structure of leadership. While models of school leadership that incorporate more democratic principles are preferable, most schools continue to function within a top down, authoritarian organization. While sharing leadership among a team is recommended, authority typically remains with a single administrator which threatens to silence the voices of other leaders who also impact schools and their students.

Theoretical Framework



In addressing the topic of this study, the ways that a literacy specialist develops an identity as a leader, three theoretical perspectives are important to explore, as illustrated in the above diagram. They provide a lens of adult learning and development through which I interpreted the findings of this study and addressed the phenomenon of literacy leadership.

Social Learning Theory

The literature suggests that as schools work to transform teaching and learning, democratic models of leadership are essential. Such models suggest that leadership is a social construction (Fullan, 2001) and is dependent upon the relationships among leaders and followers. These relationships are essential as leaders develop throughout their careers (Ghosh, Haynes, & Kram, 2012). Collaborative networks, including professional learning communities (Dufour, 1998) and communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) support the development of leaders and the growth of a school. Indeed, practices and theories of social learning provide an important lens for understanding leadership.

Social Learning Theories claim that learning takes place within the social context. Bandura (1986) suggested that people learn by observing and interacting with others which takes place within social settings. A person's interaction with the environment

supports his or her ability to learn. This occurs when they observe models of behavior and the consequences that are a result. He separates observation from imitation, however, proposing that one can learn without imitating what was observed (Merriam, et al., 2007), suggesting that any vicarious experience can provide opportunities for learning.

These experiences illustrate the concept of legitimate peripheral participation (Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson, & Unwin, 2005) and the theory of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) which suggests that learning takes place within the same social context in which it is applied. It allows individuals to learn through observation and imitation, as in social learning theory, as well as by socializing with others in a community of practice. The contexts in which learning is situated must be authentic and readily applicable, as is the case with classroom based coaching. Learning is also the result of interactions between mentors and apprentices (Lave, 1977, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991) who learn together and make meaning collaboratively as both play important roles in the social context (Caldwell & Carter, 1993; Daloz, 1999).

Because the social context is an essential component of learning and leadership, this theory concerns "the whole person acting in the world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 49). It operates from a relational perspective, as have many leadership cases discussed above, and contribute to the development of the learner's identity as was the case in Lave's important study of apprentice tailors (1977). The community of practice which results provides support for individuals in learning and development, the knowledge and skills of everyday practice and the social relationships, processes, and activities of the greater community (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2003; Lambson, 2010; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). This is important for literacy specialists and other teacher leaders

who facilitate the learning of others within the social context of their schools (Rainville & Jones, 2008).

Relational Cultural Theory

Stemming from the work of Baker-Miller (1986) which explored to dynamics of dominance and subordination and developed a psychology of women that was focused on relationships, Relational Cultural Theory emerged as an important feminist theory which recognized the importance of relationships and voice in human development (www.jbmti.org). It suggests that people grow through and toward relationships throughout their lives, and that culture has an impact on their development. Isolation is regarded as a source of suffering in a person's life, so any movement toward mutuality or connectedness enhances a person's sense of well being. This theory also explores the disconnect between the dominant and marginalized cultures at a societal level suggesting that only when there is a relationship established by mutual respect coupled with action can people and groups develop and make progress. Indeed, "in order for one person to grow in a relationship, people have to grow together" (Jean Baker Miller Training Institute, 2014).

Relationships, the connections people make with others, help them to navigate the uncertainties and complexities of change. The power to move others and to effect change (i.e. leadership) is rooted in a strong relationship. Miller identified five characteristics of a growth-fostering relationship: vitality, empowerment, clarity, worth, and a desire for future relationships (in Jordan & Hartling, 2002). A relationship such as this results in mutual empowerment and empathy. While every relationship faces conflict, the strength

of one's connections enhances their ability to solve problems and manage change (Jordan & Hartling, 2002). These ideas are similar to Kegan and Lahey's work which argues that change is difficult but can be managed within the social context (2009).

Relational Cultural Theory also claims that women and others who have been historically marginalized express their voices through the social context. By connecting with others, they develop an openness to collaborative influence, mutual respect, and growth-enhancing relationships. When people come together in this kind of relationship, they build communities of resistance and resilience where people support each other, become agents of change, and lessen their feelings of marginalization (Jordan & Hartling, 2002).

Other feminist theories explore the role of relationships in learning, particularly through the development of voice and therefore influence. The work of Gilligan (1982, 1993) explored the expression of voice in adolescent girls and challenged Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Recognizing a masculine bias in the theory, Gilligan developed a feminist perspective, suggesting that women think, act, and speak differently than men and exhibit an "ethic of care" when confronting ethical dilemmas and problems (Gilligan, 1982, 1993). She argued that this was more personal and relational than the conventionally masculine and impersonal ethic of justice. While this stance was not limited to women, she argued that the female voice must be developed and heard within all social contexts, creating balanced approaches within an environment. This is especially significant in considering leadership development which may not acknowledge these qualities when establishing both influence and power.

Belenky et. al. (1997) identified and described an epistemology, or ways of knowing, based on their research with a diverse group of women which revealed perceptions of themselves and of the world around them. They generalized different stages, or points in women's cognitive development, that revealed conceptions about their own identity, the nature of their relationships with others, and their understanding of authority. The first epistemology, "women of silence," is a stance where the women felt disconnected from their own lives and their community. The second, "women of received knowledge," revealed the women's complete dependence on others. The third group, "subjective knowers," believed that knowledge was a personal experience while the fourth group, "procedural knowers" relied on external authority. Finally, "constructed knowledge" integrated intuitive and learned experiences to support their construction of meaning. Through interactions with others, women establish and use their voices to construct an identity and become connected to others.

Coupled with Relational Cultural Theory, a convincing argument for interpersonal connection within the social context emerges as an important consideration in my study. Indeed, the focus on building relationships and the expression of voice supports the very nature of literacy and leadership and leads a literacy specialist to develop identity. By sharing knowledge and experience, literacy specialists contribute to a collaborative culture centered around a common vision of literacy, learning, and leadership.

Transformative Learning Theory

In the context of this study, Transformative Learning Theory creates a link between the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of my study. Mezirow (2000) claims

that transformative learning has both individual and social dimensions. He encourages people to be aware of creativity and to value their own perspectives. He encourages people to challenge their frames of reference to make them more capable of change, participate in constructive discourse and critical thinking with others, and determine actions based on the resulting insight (2000). Leadership in the knowledge age promotes transformation, and literacy specialists have an opportunity to facilitate this process through continuous interaction and inspiration. Leaders promote transformation, and those who work as coaches, including literacy leaders, have an opportunity to facilitate this process through continuous interaction and inspiration.

Kegan (1994, 2000), whose stages of development, orders of consciousness and constructive developmental theory have had considerable influence in adult education, psychology, and leadership studies, considers transformational learning as an essential component of navigating change, the challenges of complex organizations, and the demands of the contemporary life. Indeed, transformative learning is not merely about changing one's mind, but about changing one's thinking and has the potential of influencing one's life and that of his community.

Drago-Severson (2004) who applied constructive-developmental theory to her own research, concluded that learners not only acquired skills, but also developed the abilities to manage their complex lives within a supportive environment that leads to transformation. Leaders in an organization, therefore, must create an environment that attends to the needs of adults by acknowledging their different ways of knowing. This shapes how they view their roles and responsibilities, perceive of themselves and their work, develop an identity, and learn and refine their practice. She offers four practices

that must exist within a supportive environment that enhances adult learning and development, and therefore transformation: opportunities to work in teams, share leadership roles, engage in collegial inquiry, and mentor others. Each of these practices center on collaboration, anticipate relationships among adults, and promote reflective practice that enhances professional and personal growth.

Phipps explores a connection between constructive-developmental theory and servant leaderships, a concept that defines leadership as consistently and deliberatively choosing to serve others in a "transformational approach to life and work, in essence, a way of being" (2010, p. 151). She suggests that both are derived from a consistent belief about the process of making meaning. This has significant implications for leadership development, particularly teacher leader development. Personal transformation is possible for leaders at any stage who develop the qualities and capacities as servant leaders which allows them to better navigate the challenges of the modern world. By engaging with others in meaningful ways, creating collaborative relationships built on service, leaders are better able to create an environment that enables transformation.

Summary

Throughout this study, indeed throughout my career as an educator and life as a learner, I have come to understand that adults learn within a social context. Constructed and spontaneous interactions with other people build relationships that challenge and sustain adults. Similarly, authentic situations within the social environment provide a setting for growth and development. Both enable an adult to make meaning, learn their practice, and develop an identity. Social learning theory, relational cultural theory, and

transformative learning theory serve as a foundation for not only this study but also for my own learning and professional work.

Definition of Terms

Throughout the text, I will refer to a number of key terms. Since many terms can be interpreted in different ways, I offer the following definitions to support my readers.

Case Study –Both a methodology and a philosophy in qualitative research. It is "the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context)" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73).

Identity – A broad concept widely explored in the literature. For this study, a recent definition states that identity is "about being a person in the world, one who experiences being, and how one relates to and wants to be experienced by others" (Illeris, 2014, p. 1).

Leadership – A transactional process set in a social setting where some people act as leaders and some followers. Leaders are people with influence that is based on knowledge, skill, and personal qualities.

Literacy Specialist – The job title of an educator who focuses on literacy in public schools. The term is used throughout this study as it is the broadest definition of the role. Other titles in the literature, and used interchangeably, including reading specialist (primarily teaching children,) literacy or reading coach (primarily teaching teachers,) literacy interventionist (analyzing data, teaching and assessing children, and monitoring progress,) literacy coordinator (managing programs and providing professional

development,) and reading or literacy consultant (supporting teachers and systems.) Literacy Specialists may teach children, provide coaching and professional development for teachers, conduct assessment and evaluation, analyze achievement data, manage literacy programs, and participate in school leadership teams. It is also the name of the professional endorsement or license that the participants in my study are required to hold.

Portrait – In the context of this study, I define the term as a narrative written to describe a person who has experienced a phenomenon. It relates information about my participants' lives through their stories along with their beliefs and attitudes.

Overview of Each Chapter

This dissertation project is organized into six chapters, followed by a list of references and appendices containing documents used in the project.

In Chapter One, I presented an overview of the topic, the problem and questions being explored, personal connections to the topic, and a theoretical framework from which the study was developed.

Chapter Two provides a brief review of the literature connected to the topic. While a gap in the literature exists concerning the identity development and literacy leaders, I will discuss three topics that construct a contextual framework: the role of the literacy specialist, identity development, and leadership.

Chapter Three describes the methodology I followed to conduct this study.

Chapter Four is the heart of this study. In it, I present narrative portraits in which I retell the stories of each of my four participants, based on information I learned through

interviews, document review, and observation. I use their words as often as possible throughout the narrative as well as excerpts from I-Poems that were constructed through my use of the Voice Centered Relational Method (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003). These portraits provide the cases for this study.

In Chapter Five, I describe my process for analyzing the information I gathered about my participants which allowed me to construct each portrait. I discuss common themes found across cases as well as unique themes that emerge from their stories.

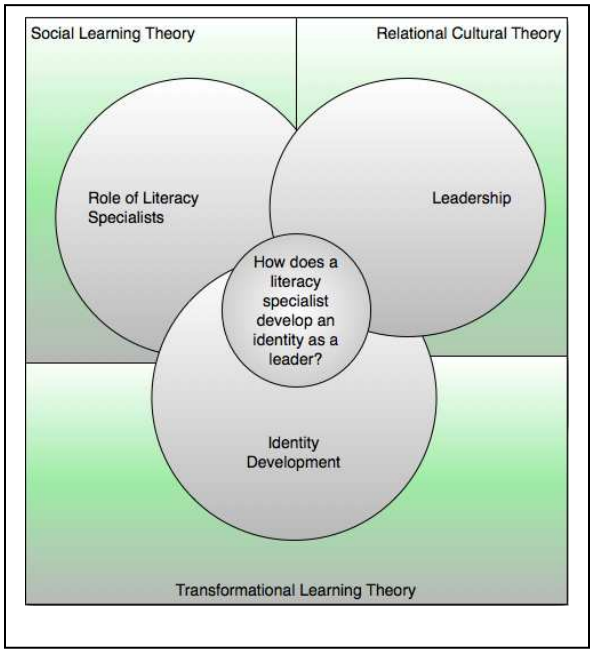
In Chapter Six, I conclude by discussing what I have learned through my continuing analysis of the cases. I connect these implications to my theoretical and conceptual frameworks in order to contribute to the scholarship in the field. I also make recommendations for further research as well as suggestions for support of literacy specialists as they develop identities as leaders.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a review of the literature connected to my research question: How does a literacy specialist in a public elementary school develop an identity as a leader? The literature was collected from peer reviewed journals, books, and online resources and represents theory, research studies, and practical applications. The review is organized into three major topics – the role of the literacy specialist, leadership, and identity development - that are drawn directly from my question and address literacy specialists, identity, and leadership. These topics provide a conceptual framework for my study and are connected to the theoretical framework described in the previous chapter. Both frameworks provide a foundation for interpreting the findings of the study. The following diagram represents the topics considered in this review and the theoretical foundation that support and bring meaning to my findings.



Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework for this study, discussed in Chapter One, suggests the significance of Social Learning Theory, Relational Cultural Theory, and Transformative Learning Theory. These theories imply the social nature of literacy leadership, the significance of relationships in developing their practice, and the transformative impact that literacy specialists have on their colleagues, their schools, and their own lives. In addition to theory, a conceptual framework of research is necessary to provide a foundation for the study. The following sections address these areas.

Who are Literacy Specialists and What Do They Do?

I use the term *literacy specialist* as a general, inclusive term that also refers to and is used interchangeably with other commonly used titles including *literacy coach, reading specialist, reading consultant, and literacy interventionist,* among others. The role and identity of the literacy specialist is as curious and ambiguous as its multiple titles. They do not fit into simple, easily defined roles. The International Reading Association (IRA) (2000) and Bean (2004, 2009) offer a foundational description of the role of literacy specialists that involves leadership within the school and community, instruction of children and adults, and assessment and diagnosis of reading difficulties. Acting in a leadership capacity, specialists develop and coordinate literacy instructional programming, provide staff development for teachers, and supply resources for teacher, administrators, and parents. They promote positive change in instructional practice throughout the school. While recognized, their leadership is often informal and occurs

within the context of specific situations in which they focus on tasks or actions rather than imperatives. As instructors, reading specialists may teach adults, children, or both. They collaborate with teachers to authentically improve teaching practice through modeling, collaboration, and coaching. They demonstrate ways to conduct lessons, analyze assessment data, and engage in a cycle improvement by observing teaching. They also provide specialized support for students outside of the classroom that supplements what they are learning in their primary classroom. As diagnosticians of learning difficulties and assessors of student progress, reading specialists administer and interpret specialized assessments that they develop and coordinate instructional plans that address identified deficiencies with individual students, classrooms, and the entire school. Separate position statements about coaches (International Reading Association, 2004, 2006) and standards for professional practice (2010; 2006) have also been published to further clarify their roles.

Research studies have been published in peer reviewed journals and books have been written by scholars in the field to define the responsibilities of literacy specialists and to suggest their impact on school communities (Bean, 2004; Blachowicz et al., 2010; McCombs & Marsh, 2009; Quatroche, Bean, & Hamilton, 2001; Quatroche & Wepner, 2008; Roller, 2006; Steckel, 2009; Stover, Kissel, Haag, & Shoniker, 2011; Vogt & Shearer, 2011) along with recommendations for specialists and the schools in which they work (Frost, Buhle, & Blanchowicz, 2009; Puig & Froelich, 2011; Toll, 2005; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). Little has been written to describe ways that literacy specialists develop identities as leaders even though they are expected to function in this capacity.

Bean documents the history of literacy leadership in her foundational book The reading specialist: Leadership for the classroom, school, and community (2004). As early as the 1930s, reading specialists have worked in schools, primarily supporting children who struggled with learning to read. They also have served as consultants who advised and supervised teachers as they were charged with improving classroom reading instruction (2004, p. 2). Since the 1960s, specialists began to emerge in schools across the country in response to the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act (ESEA) which provided for supplemental instruction in reading for schools in high-poverty communities and later because of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Those hired took on multiple roles in supporting children through their instruction and their teachers through consultation and coaching (Bean, 2004; Bean, Wilson, & International Reading Association, 1981; Vogt & Shearer, 2011). Specialists were restricted to working only with children who qualified for targeted instruction outside of their regular classroom because of a documented need for remediation. They taught specialized lessons with a goal of advancing their achievement. Positions were typically funded by the federal government through the Title I program of the ESEA. Not surprisingly, students who attended schools with more teachers who had a stronger background in literacy had higher achievement in reading (Quattroche, Bean, & Hamilton, 1998).

Over the years, the titles of literacy specialists changed, including reading specialist, reading coach, literacy coach, instructional coach, reading consultant, and literacy interventionist. Their responsibilities varied, from teaching children to teaching teachers to supervising programs. The International Reading Association provided guidance over the years about the responsibilities of reading professionals beginning in

1986, when it identified five primary roles: diagnostic/remedial specialist, developmental reading/study skills specialist, reading consultant/ reading resource teacher, reading coordinator/supervisor, and reading professor. In 1992, it shortened the list to include three responsibilities: teacher or clinician, consultant/coordinator, and teacher educator/researcher (Vogt & Shearer, 2011). While guidance from the professional organization was helpful in defining job descriptions, it was not practical or strictly followed. Because of reductions to federal and local funding for schools and the elimination of many reading specialist positions, the roles were restructured and became dependent on the context, setting, and needs of each school or district. Several commissions sponsored by IRA studied and discovered that the roles, responsibilities, and working conditions of people identified with one of these titles varied, although three typical roles emerged: they provided assessment and instruction for children in general classrooms and small separate settings; they supplied resources and professional development for teachers; and they conducted administrative tasks connected to literacy programming, such as Title I, including supervision (Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, & Wallis, 2002).

In 2002, the Reading First initiative, which provided considerable funding for restructuring reading instructional programs to schools who were awarded a highly competitive federal grant, increased the demand for literacy specialists, particularly in their role as a coach. They became important contributors to school improvement and reform initiatives and were expected to improve reading achievement through their modeling and direct instruction of expected practices, mentoring of teachers, use of resources, and monitoring of program compliance (Vogt & Shearer, 2011). The demand

surpassed the number of qualified literacy specialists and many new coaches were appointed with limited experience or support. Their responsibilities were dependent on the context of their schools and the desired outcomes of school reform initiatives which were largely viewed as administrative mandates. This maintained a vagueness of their role because of their changing responsibilities and created a suspicion about their motives in changing standing instructional practices.

Literacy specialists served as reading coaches and monitored teachers in adhering to required scientifically-based instructional programming in school districts that received federal funding. Again, practices and responsibilities differed, although most were involved in accountability and administrative responsibilities. According to L'Allier and Elish-Piper (2012) , coaches spent on average 53 to 65 percent of their time working directly with teachers; their remaining time was spent on managerial and administrative tasks. Roller suggested even less time was spent working directly with teachers, only 2-4 hours over week observing, demonstrating, and reflecting on instruction (Roller, 2006).

In response to this disparity, the IRA offered a position paper to better define the role of coaches and included recommended qualifications (2004) and standards of professional practice (2006) that envisioned reading coaches as professional developers, mentors, instructional coaches, and leaders rather than supervisors of compliance for teachers in their schools and across their district. IRA contends that they must have an in-depth knowledge of literacy development and practice, as well as teaching experience and the ability to communicate with and teach adults. In other words, coaches would need a solid level of expertise in their discipline in order to establish relationships that would influence their colleagues and ultimately students at their school (J. E. Taylor, 2008).

They also needed a school environment that would allow them to continuously develop knowledge and skills to serve as an instructional coach and as leaders of adults (International Reading Association, 2004) in order to meet high standards of professional practice.

While general classroom teachers, special educators, administrators, and other educators may hold a literacy specialist's license, those who work under this the title of literacy specialist typically, have three responsibilities: they work with struggling readers; they support teachers' learning as a literacy or reading coach; and they are leading, developing, and supervising school or district literacy programs. Their stance is more systemic and have a more formal, or "quasi-administrative" leadership role within the culture of a school (Vogt & Shearer, 2011, p. 37). Literacy or reading coaches, on the other hand, focus primarily on teachers in an effort to improve teaching and learning. They demonstrate lessons in classrooms, observe and provide feedback to teachers, and facilitate meetings and workshops. They may assume administrative responsibilities, but are most commonly expected to work in a supportive role contributing to the entire school team. Vogt and Shearer believe this to be an increasingly significant role in achieving the goals of school reform (2011, p. 43).

The IRA continued to affirm its expectations, standards, and purposes of reading professionals (Bean, et al., 2002; International Reading Association, 2000) as three areas of responsibility for the reading specialist: leadership, instruction, and diagnosis and assessment.

Acting in a leadership capacity, reading specialists develop and coordinate literacy instructional programming, provide staff development for teachers, and supply resources for teacher, administrators, and parents. They promote and negotiate positive changes in instructional practice among their colleagues throughout the school. Bean cautioned that reading specialists may need to assume leadership roles informally and within the context of specific situations in which they focus on tasks or actions rather than imperatives (2004).

As instructors, reading specialists may teach adults, children, or both. They collaborate with teachers to authentically improve teaching practice through modeling, collaboration, and coaching (2009). They demonstrate ways to conduct lessons, analyze assessment data, and engage in a cycle improvement by observing teaching. They also provide specialized support for students outside of the classroom that supplements what they are learning in their primary classroom.

As diagnosticians of learning difficulties and assessors of student progress, reading specialists administer and interpret specialized assessments that they develop and coordinate instructional plans that address identified deficiencies with individual students, classrooms, and the entire school (Bean, 2009).

While the expectations for what literacy specialists would do appeared clear, a number of scholars expressed concerns about the ways that schools were hiring or appointing literacy coaches, some without specialization in literacy education and many with little or no classroom teaching experience (Toll, 2009; Walpole, McKenna, & Morrill, 2011). Blanchowicz (2010) suggests strategies to ensure the high quality of

literacy coaches and the roles they fill that include maintaining and expanding a strong knowledge base about literacy development and instruction, mentoring novice and pre-service coaches. Similarly others (Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010; Mraz, Algozzine, & Watson, 2008) offer suggestions for developing instructional coaches in pedagogy and practice in order to enhance an understanding of their roles as well as their abilities to coach and support change.

It became necessary to support coaches in the practice of coaching and adult learning. Different coaching models emerged in practice (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, & Schock, 2009; Showers, 1985; J. E. Taylor, 2008; R. T. Taylor, Moxley, Chanter, & Boulware, 2007; Toll, 2009; Vogt & Shearer, 2011, pp. 43-45), including both formal and informal methods. A typical model involved a traditional coaching method based on a gradual release of responsibility (Vygotsky, 1978) which involves modeling, co-teaching, and observations of practice coupled with continuous feedback. Another involved mentoring to support teachers on meeting specific goals of improved instruction with an emphasis on self-reflection and growth. A more formal model, that of clinical supervision which involves the evaluation of lessons along with formal feedback in a primarily administrative capacity, was applied in situations where accountability was an important outcome. There appeared to be no universal model of coaching. Rather, the type of coaching model used was dependent upon the contextual factors in the school at which a coach worked work (M. M. Mangin, 2009).

The day to day activities of literacy coaches are extensive but well documented in the literature as case studies and narratives describing best professional practice. From answering questions via e-mail and locating resource material to modeling lessons and

facilitating meetings (DiMeglio & Mangin, 2010), literacy leaders were documented to provide customized responses to needs within a school's context (Stover, et al., 2011). As agents of change, coaches potentially impacted instruction, culture, shared beliefs, and school organization (Steckel, 2009) and enhanced a culture of adult learning (Stover, et al., 2011).

Literacy leaders help to provide environments and opportunities for teachers to learn and develop capacity to teach children literacy skills and strategies and ways to use them as their foundation for learning (Bean & Dagen, 2012). As professional developers, literacy specialists and coaches facilitate study groups, workshops, and classes, demonstrate lessons in classrooms, coach colleagues in developing strategies, assist in the analysis of achievement data, mentor novice teachers, and suggest resources for professional growth.

While literacy leaders are described as necessary agents of school improvement, a number of factors limit the scope of their roles (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010). A clear definition of the roles, time to complete their expectations, and administrative support are potential challenges. In addition, teacher resistance may hinder a coach's effectiveness particularly when the presumption of change is obvious. This can be overcome when there is an intentional focus on establishing peer relationships through personal communication strategies that clarify the expectations of all (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010)

Literacy leaders, serving as specialists who work primarily with children and as instructional coaches working primarily with teachers, may have different roles but they serve a common purpose: the improvement of student literacy achievement. The IRA

recognizes that coaching is a necessary form of professional development that will increase the achievement of students (2004) and assist in the transformation of schools. While much attention has been paid in the literature to the roles and responsibilities of coaches, the discipline is only beginning to identify the impact on schools and communities.

Literacy leaders are intended to serve as agents of change. They have the potential to make an impact on the school community, particularly on instruction, culture, shared beliefs, and the school organization (Blachowicz, Obrochta, & Fogelberg, 2005; M. M. Mangin, 2009; Steckel, 2009) as well as student achievement (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Showers, 1985), although there appears to be little formal research that supports this claim (M. M. Mangin, 2009).

Perhaps the two greatest and most observable outcomes of a literacy coach's work are evidenced in the school culture and the professional learning of teachers. In her study, Steckel (2009) cited observable changes within the school environment as revealed by informants in her case studies of four literacy leaders in Massachusetts and New York. These included: an openness to coaches working in classrooms alongside teachers demonstrating and co-teaching lessons, collaboration through peer observation, common planning, and inquiry groups, and an increase in risk taking and reflective practice, all of which increased the potential for and culture of adult learning (2009). A culture of respect and teacher empowerment, demonstrated through collaborative leadership, was developing and had become a vital part of the school (2009).

Similarly, Stover, Kissel, Haag, and Shoniker (2011) described how three professional development practices applied in a differentiated way enhanced the culture of the school in which they worked: reflective writing in daybooks, surveys fostering reflection through individualized professional development, and videotaping of lessons followed by reflective conversations. Citing Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, and Schock (2009), they suggest that the ultimate goal in professional development, indeed in coaching, is to deepen understanding of teaching and learning through self-reflection. This led to more intentional instructional decisions which in turn would have an impact on student achievement.

Basile, Olson, and Nathenson-Mejia (2003) describe how reflective coaching is a form of problem-based learning in a constructivist model of teacher development. It combined principles of cognitive coaching through specific questions of practice with a process of inquiry into patterns of observed behavior. Reflective conversations were discussed within the context of teaching and created a meaningful, authentic means of reflection. This too supported a culture of learning among teachers.

A culture of collaboration is essential in establishing a strong learning community, indeed in developing any school (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Collaboration allows practitioners to focus on common issues, ideas, and initiatives, and coupled with differentiated coaching, it engages individuals in the work of progress. A coach is always thinking of ways to support colleagues who are working toward common goals. They build upon a teacher's prior experience and knowledge in order to coach them and support their growth through reflection (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Through professional development, literacy leaders provide ongoing, job embedded professional development

that affects the school's culture, moves its reform processes forward, improves teaching practice, and anticipates increased student learning (Drago-Severson, 2004).

Typically, literacy leaders move into new roles because they have demonstrated outstanding classroom practice in teaching of reading and writing. This initially affords them respect and validates the suggestions they make based on an established reputation. Still, the role of the literacy specialist exists between the roles of a classroom teacher and a school administrator, presenting a challenge to a clear professional identity.

Identity Development

Identity is widely discussed in the literature in developmental psychology and sociology. Often described by stage theories (Erikson, 1963, 1968, 1978, 1980; Gee, 2001; Kegan, 1982a, 1994, 2000; Kegan & Lahey, 2001; Marcia, 1966) in which individual pass developmental milestones that are dependent upon various crises, accomplishments, internal forces, and external influences, identity develops over time and is established through one's interaction with his or her environment (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Baxter-Magolda's self-authoring theory (2000, 2003; 2004) links identity development with learning by assuming that identity plays a central role in developing knowledge which is socially constructed and built collaboratively by sharing expertise and experience with others. Learning that is situated within specific contexts and within interpersonal associations leads one to identity, self-authorship, and transformation.

Theories of personal and social identity address the need for people to find meaning in social contexts. As identity develops, people classify themselves and others

into categories, groups, and organizational memberships and begin to define themselves by the characteristics of other with a similar associations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This eventually leads to behaviors in accordance with the commonly held beliefs and values, definitions rooted in a particular environment, such as a workplace, and an identity that is aligned with the group.

The concept of professional identity involves both personal and social development. It involves an understanding of how people perceive themselves, how others perceive them, and how they assume various roles within an organization. It is not a stable entity as it attempts to carefully balance self-image with external role expectations which may contribute to the existence of multiple identities that may or may not be completely aligned (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000). The development of professional identity among educators has been explored in a number of ways in the literature for both school leaders and teachers. Leadership education, a common pathway for educators, has been discussed in terms of socialization into school administration and particular cultures of schools (Brody, Vissa, & Weathers, 2010; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Grodzki, 2011; Komives et al., 2009; Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006; J. Moller, 2012) which can be enhanced through mentoring and induction programs in graduate schools of education and in school districts. Professional identity is best developed in practice once a leader has begun to experience her new role, including its many challenges and struggles. The transition from the role of teacher to school leader invites considerable challenge, risk, and dissonance (Brody, et al., 2010). It involves a broadening of skill, an acceptance of a new set of values consistent with established professional norms and expectations for the role, and developing a confidence in seeing

oneself as a leader. Both a personal and social identity must be developed which requires time and effort from the individual and his entire community.

Considerable research has been conducted about teacher identity development (Beijaard, et al., 2004; Beijaard, et al., 2000; Chong, Low, & Goh, 2011; Exton, 2008; Fuller & Brown, 1975; Hale, 2005; Olsen, 2008, 2010; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2010), all of which point to the importance of nurturing personal identity within the social context. By focusing on how people become teachers and assume the qualities and characteristics valued by the organization, the research suggests a transformative result for individuals, their organizations, and the profession. Novices develop an identity as teachers through everyday practice, the guidance of mentors, interactions with colleagues, and a negotiation within the context of the school environment.

Few studies discuss literacy specialist identity development, although studies about other transitions (Rainville & Jones, 2008; Schlossberg, 1981, 1997) suggest that identity resides within the context of the culture, indeed within specific situations, people, and contexts. Typically, literacy leaders move into new roles because they have demonstrated outstanding classroom practice in teaching reading and writing. This initially affords them respect and validates the suggestions they make based on an established reputation. Role transitions are often influenced by past experiences which affect the outcome (Ferraro, 2001), and prior work establishes varied expectations of both the leader and his or her colleagues. However, the transition from classroom teaching to leadership is not always smooth and is worthy of further exploration.

Any transition involves an event that results in a changed routine, relationship, assumption, or role (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998) and leads to a new identity. Literacy leaders, especially novices, face barriers that affect their transitions to leadership. This includes a lack of role definition, uneven support and involvement of school principals, resistance of teachers, too many schools to serve, and limited resources (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010). Even in models of distributed leadership, instructional leaders work to gain acceptance among their colleagues as they negotiate the context of the school environment (J. Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). They look to supports within the environment and in the context of their schools for support, clarity, and affirmation. In overcoming the barriers to personal and professional success and the potential for impacting the school community, the literacy leader establishes and maintains positive interpersonal relationships among the faculty in order to establish collegiality and trust, (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010) and in turn power.

The literature offers many models to support the development of professional identity, including apprenticeship and mentoring (Daloz, 1999; Lave, 1977, 2011; Lave & Wenger, 1991), learning environments such as communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), and frameworks and conditions for adult learning (Baxter-Magolda & King, 2004; Cambourne, 2002; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). These models contribute to the development of both personal and social identities within the context of everyday work and life and suggest structures and strategies that will enable them to function within their roles with satisfaction and success.

Leadership

The concept of leadership is complex and widely discussed in many settings, including education. To support the conceptual framework of this study, it is important to consider different definitions and models of leadership. Northouse (2010, p. 3) defines leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal." Similarly, Yukl (2006, p. 7) calls leadership "the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done." Kotter (1998, p. 37) refers to leadership as "most fundamentally, about changes." Rowe and Guerrero define leadership as a process, a "transactional event that happens between leaders and followers" (2012). While a simple definition is impossible to provide, all of these brief yet powerful statements offer a view of leadership that suggest the importance of relationships among people, some of whom are leaders and some of whom are followers, that are focused on the initiatives at hand. This view is foundational to my study.

While appropriate in this context, these definitions run counter to conventional views of leadership in public schools. Grounded in ideas about authority and legitimate power, school leadership usually involves a patriarchal hierarchy that manage a complex bureaucracy and maintains a "technology of control" (Bates in Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009, p. 29). Leaders typically follow an authoritarian leadership style where clear expectations are set by those with power and control and are carried out by well-defined followers (Northouse, 2012). Participative, or democratic, leadership which encourages shared decision making and input from all members in a group, is considered to be a most appealing leadership style (Northouse, 2012). While appealing, it is often not realistic given the demands of leadership roles in a school environment (Lieberman & Miller, 1999).

Administrative leadership roles in a school system are understood to include three layers and have been previously explored in literature (Elmore, 2000; L. Porter & McLaughlin, 2006; Wallace Foundation, 2011). First, superintendents of schools control, organize, and direct an entire educational organization, much as would a Chief Executive Officer or Executive Director, and is accountable to an elected body of community members. Second, a cabinet of district level administrators, such as assistant superintendents, special education directors, curriculum directors, and business managers, direct specific aspects of the organization. Third, principals and assistant principals manage the functions of specific schools, including academic, fiscal, personnel, and student management. All of these roles involve the supervision and evaluation of other people who are subordinate to them. Collaboration that is focused on common goals lead to effective district level leadership and seeks to provide a model for schools to follow (Marzano & Waters, 2009; Samuels, 2012).

Much attention has been given to the development and role of school principals in the literature (Baeza, 2010; Grodzki, 2011; Johnson, 2010; NASSP & NAESP, 2013; National Staff Development Council, 2000; Sawyer, 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2011). Strong connections have been argued to exist between the qualities of an effective principal and the success of students at his or her school (NASSP & NAESP, 2013; Wallace Foundation, 2011). Principals are encouraged to be instructional leaders, but are only able to do so "between the cracks and around the corners of the job" (Lieberman & Miller, 1999, p. 39) because of the ever mounting demands of their role. While they acknowledge an awareness of what they ought to be doing, they are more focused on other issues of management and are forced to sacrifice their personal vision for a more

pragmatic view of school (Lieberman & Miller, 1999). Other barriers prevent principals from being instructional leaders as well, including a disconnect with district leadership resulting in authoritative expectations and mandates that stifle autonomy, insufficient preparation for specific tasks they will be expected to do, and ineffective forms of evaluation that provide little feedback for improvement (NASSP & NAESP, 2013).

Principals are especially significant in schools that are considered to be failing because of low student achievement (Baeza, 2010; Johnson, 2010; R. T. Taylor, 2010). These so-called turnaround schools, particular those with federal School Improvement Grants (SIG), often replace veteran principals with other leaders imported from other communities and states. Focused on innovative interventions and immediate results, a turnaround principals is essential, particularly in engaging the faculty in the work of school improvement (Kowal & Hassel, 2011). This allows him or her to assemble a team that she directs, typically working from an authoritarian stance, working swiftly toward achieving common goals. While immediately effective, this leadership perspective is often short lived and does not impact the greater culture of an organization. A singular focus on goals and results is grounded in industrial age leadership theory (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & Mckelvey, 2007). This model is no longer effective given the expectations of a 21st century environment.

Leadership in today's so-called knowledge age is far more complex and traditional authoritative or bureaucratic models are no longer as effective as others. Complexity Leadership Theory (Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Uhl-Bien, et al., 2007) proposes a paradigm that focuses on the learning, creative, and adaptive capacities of complex organizations, such as schools. It suggests a balance of administrative, adaptive,

and enabling leadership that exist in an environment of change which require innovative new learning and patterns of behavior. It is deeply embedded in the context of the organization, distinguishes between individual leaders and the process of leadership, and separates the concepts of leadership and management. Leadership plays an important role in enabling this and expands the "locus of leadership from the isolated, role-based actions of individuals to the innovative, contextual interactions that occur across an entire social system" (Lichtenstein, et al., 2006, p. 2). Indeed, it moves beyond interpersonal relationships and focuses on enabling conditions that foster creativity and flexibility. It does not abandon people in an organization, but rather builds patterns of interaction that invite a more collaborative style by introducing interdependency. It also considers the ways that people respond to leadership actions and the constructive process of collective action which builds a broader support for initiatives outside of the organization as well.

Distributed Leadership also invites collaboration and interaction in the leadership process (A. Harris & Spillane, 2008; M. M. Mangin, 2005; J. Spillane, et al., 2001; J. P. Spillane, 2005). In this model, leadership practices are spread among leaders who work separately but interdependently. The contributions of all participants are valued and diverse types of expertise are recognized which is essential in a complex organization such as a school where a single leader cannot, and should not, possess all of the knowledge (A. Harris & Spillane, 2008).

Similarly, Parallel Leadership (Crowther, et al., 2009) invites collective action to build capacity. It anticipates mutual trust, shared purpose, and an allowance for individual expression as leaders and followers collaborate for the good of their organization and work toward change. In schools, this calls for a new understanding of

leadership roles, particularly that of the principal. Based in a democratic leadership style, this approach recognizes the need for shared leadership but also admits the day-to-day demands of school management.

This also represents a shift from leadership that involves informational learning, or the knowledge and skills that can change attitudes and competencies, to that of transformational learning which helps adults better manage the complexities of modern life by building a confidence in their beliefs and values (Collay & Cooper, 2008; Drago-Severson, 2004; Kegan, 2000). Self-authorship in an individual (Baxter-Magolda, 1998, 2000) is the result which develops a person's identity and allows him or her to make meaning of one's experience and develop the qualities of and an identity as a leader (Collay & Cooper, 2008).

To support the development of this kind of leadership, schools have created a layer of teacher leadership which has emerged as a concept that works alongside administrative leadership in advancing the school's common mission and collective action. Teacher leadership is defined by York-Barr and Duke as "the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement" (2004). Referred to as the "sleeping giant" in a school, teacher leadership can help lead improvement initiatives and impact lasting change (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Literacy specialists are among these teacher leaders who navigate their roles between conventional teaching and school administration with a keen focus on improving student achievement by building capacity throughout the organization of their school.

Titles such as coach, facilitator, facilitator, and committee member are assigned, but positions of teacher leadership remain mostly informal (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998). Their responsibilities and activities typically fall into four categories: working with individual teachers about classroom practice, working with groups of teachers in professional development, working with diverse groups of educators on committees and meetings, and working with various constituents on a variety of initiatives (R. Harris, Sockwell, & Follett, 2009). For the purposes of this study, teacher leadership in the area of instruction is essential. These teacher leaders work (M. Mangin & Stoelinga, 2011) to help teachers build knowledge and skills to improve their teaching practices Literacy specialists fall into this role of teacher leadership.

A complex and rather recent concept (Cortez-Ford, 2008; Stoelinga & Mangin, 2010), teacher leadership is deeply rooted in the context of every school and is dependent upon the needs each school presents. While most teachers do not participate in or have formal titles of leadership, many exhibit qualities of leadership within their classrooms and school communities (Cortez-Ford, 2008; Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000). However, their experiences in the classroom may not have prepared them for critical conversations about instruction that is needed for improvement (M. Mangin & Stoelinga, 2011). Those who have formal leadership responsibilities and titles, such as literacy specialists, typically make decisions about teaching and learning (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998), mentor other teachers, and contribute to school improvement (Cortez-Ford, 2008). Their role is paradoxical; while they want to maintain themselves as a supportive peer, they need to give feedback about instruction that may at times be difficult (M. Mangin &

Stoelinga, 2011). Because of this, teacher leaders often avoid this responsibility and are hesitant to identify themselves as leaders (G. Moller & Katzenmeyer, 1996).

Teacher leadership is also adaptive, a metaphor Heifetz borrows from biology where the ultimate objective of is survival (1994). Similarly, adaptive leadership focuses on solving problems that challenge and threaten the organization. Only through collaboration and the creativity and expertise of the different participants involved can the organization survive when challenges persist.

Teacher leadership is suggested as a means of revitalizing the teaching profession (Crowther, et al., 2009) as it fosters engagement through collaboration in the leadership of the school. It is deeply rooted in a collaborative school culture (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). However, teacher leadership depends upon supportive conditions in the school environment, particularly the involvement of a principal who understand their role and engages them in working toward the vision and mission of the school (Crowther, et al., 2009; Lieberman & Miller, 1999). Principals must encourage teacher leadership and be clear about their collective mission.

Teacher leadership depends upon and is legitimized by the network of relationships that are constructed within a school. It involves collaboration, knowledge, continuous learning, improvement of instruction, promoting the use of data, improving communication, and advocating for students and the profession (Standards, 2012). It promotes a model of collective leadership where many individuals accept responsibilities in order to make a difference in student learning (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

This collaborative or relational model of leadership suggests a connection to the literature about women and leadership. Since most elementary educators in the United States are women, and approximately 85% of literacy specialists are women, it is appropriate to consider this literature. In general, women's leadership in schools and districts suggest an emphasis on diverse perspectives. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) suggest five ways that women lead: relational leadership where interactions are horizontal rather than hierarchical; leadership for social justice and a moral purpose of their work; spiritual leadership which provides a source of personal strength as well as a means for understanding the connectedness of people; leadership for learning and the improvement of instruction; and balanced leadership that involves maintaining responsibilities at their homes and offices and channeling their energies effectively. They go on to argue that "women's lived experiences as leaders are different from men's" (2011, p. 37) and call for a different understanding of leadership than the patriarchal structures in most schools.

Teacher leaders, while expected to participate in the transformation of a school, may lack the authority or confidence to express themselves or may work in a hierarchical structure that does not deeply value their contribution. The absence of their voices is reminiscent of the experiences of marginalized people that is explored in the work of scholars including Gilligan (1982, 1993), hooks (1994), and Belenky et. al. (1997). The expression of their voices which would affirm their identity is typically silenced in a patriarchal structure. It is within a collaborative leadership structure and through the relationships that exist within the social context that individuals are most able to make meaning, develop an identity, and have a greater potential of influence.

Leadership, when shaped by a feminist perspective, is a model of authentic human reactions (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011) in which all voices are heard. While the leadership qualities of nurturing, organizing, motivating, and listening have been overlooked and often "marginalized and diminished" (2011, p. 84), leadership that recognizes its feminist qualities are transformative as it "seeks to empower and enhance the effectiveness of one's team members while striving to improve the lives and social conditions of all stakeholders" (N. Porter & Daniel, 2007, p. 249).

Teacher leadership suggests a deeper moral purpose and mission in its role as an agent of transforming a school and individuals within it. It is reminiscent of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Phipps, 2010; Spears, 2005), a philosophy and set of practices that hold leadership to a higher standard, that of service for the common good. Greenleaf believes that "the great leader is seen as a servant first" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 21) which allows him or her to sustain trust in their leadership. Spears (2005) lists ten characteristics of servant leaders: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. Power is attributed to service and a horizontal leadership structure where all participants collaborate to build capacity and support those in their care, as are the teachers and students who are supported by literacy specialists and other teacher leaders.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed three important areas in the literature that have helped me address my research question. I reviewed the literature about the role of the literacy

specialist, theories of identity development, and concepts about leadership to create a conceptual framework which ground the study and my interest. It compliments the theoretical framework that surrounds the study, much of which is revealed through the analysis of my data, including Social and Situated Learning Theories, Relational Cultural Theory, and Transformative Learning Theory, all of which have helped me to interpret my findings.

Three discoveries arose from this review. First, I realized a gap in the literature concerning the development of literacy specialists as leaders. While considerable research exists about the role and practices of literacy specialists, nothing exists that describes their development. Similarly, while the literature has explored the identity development of teachers and administrative leaders, studies regarding the identity of literacy specialists are few or non-existent. While their roles are described as important, relatively little attention is paid to their development as adult learners.

Second, the literature supports my belief that literacy specialists are essential participants in any effort to refine or improve instruction and student learning. However, their impact may not be realized because of patriarchal structures that exist within school organizations, particularly those with authoritative leadership models, an abundance of mandates, or required school improvement initiatives. It affirmed the necessity for educators working in these roles to collaborate within the context of the school community in order to support the growth of their school, their colleagues, and themselves. This realization develops over time as they pass through stages of development (Drago-Severson, 2009; Kegan, 1982b) within the context of their school environments and their identity becomes more established.

Finally, this review affirmed my theoretical framework. It affirms the social context of learning, demonstrating through past studies the collaborative nature of literacy leadership. It speaks to the importance of interpersonal relationships and the expression of voice among participants in learning which develop identity and a deeper concept of self. It also supports the transformative nature of literacy leadership, particularly in the ways that literacy specialist support the growth of colleagues which impact the school environment and ultimately the students they serve.

In the next chapter, I will describe and offer a rationale for the methodology I used to conduct this study which included interviews, document review, and observations to collect data, and the Voice Centered Relational Method and thematic coding to analyze and make meaning of what I learned throughout the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe how I designed a qualitative multiple case study to understand the phenomenon of literacy specialist identity development. Conducted over a four month period in 2013 in four small cities in New England, the study explored the ways that literacy specialists in elementary schools conducted themselves in their roles, had claims to influence and power within their school communities, and developed personal and professional identities as leaders. Grounded in a constructivist paradigm and following a multiple case study methodology (Mertens, 2010), my study sought to express the stories of their experiences and explore how the conditions, contexts, and cultures of their schools contributed to their learning and development. By listening to the voices of experienced literacy specialists, I was able to explore leader identity and consider the influence of personal, social, and environmental factors that enabled, enhanced, and challenged its construction.

As someone who has worked with pre-service and practicing literacy specialists for many years, and who worked as a literacy specialist himself, I am aware of the need to develop leadership identity in order to function successfully in the role and experience a higher level of satisfaction in their work. This project, therefore, intends to understand, inform, and support the role of the literacy specialist as a leader.

Often ambiguous and confusing, the role is not commonly understood, even in the literature and by the International Reading Association (2000). Literacy specialists often

work alone in a school and have many responsibilities that involve influence and require the skills, perceptions, and stance of leadership although they do not typically have a formal leadership title. As teacher leaders, literacy specialists are neither classroom teachers nor school administrators. They are likely to have been successful teachers of children, ones who have demonstrated exceptional instructional practices and whom colleagues consider to have expertise in reading and writing. They may have left classroom teaching in search of a new challenge with great confidence, stepping into their new roles for which they may be prepared academically but not socially or emotionally. They assume a supportive role that builds capacity for the good of the school in which they coach teachers in instructional practices, design programs, analyze achievement data, offer professional development, and only teach children in very small groups, if at all. Their work is typically behind-the-scenes which contributes to the vagueness of their roles, a challenge to their influence, and the potential barrier of establishing a personal and social identity. They are arguably important people with the culture of a school, particularly in schools with aggressive school improvement initiatives, but are caught between traditional, well-defined roles such as teachers and principals.

This project gives voice to literacy specialists as leaders in their schools and communities. While influential, they are not often invited to speak with the same authority assigned to other leadership roles. They must establish themselves in other ways, often battling the perceptions that colleagues and superiors may have of them and that they may have of themselves. Their voices are not always as audible as others in a school setting because they form a population that lacks formal authority, even though they have the potential to greatly impact and transform learning at their schools.

While generalizations are typically avoided in case study research (Stake, 1995), particularly with a small sample, my project searched for themes about teacher leadership through the stories of experienced literacy specialists and the ways that they developed identities as leaders. It also explored themes within the contexts of each school, suggesting common ways to develop environments that support the ongoing development of literacy specialists and teacher leaders as well as adult learning. The stories of my participants, each revealed as unique cases and their collective experiences revealed through my cross-case analysis, expressed the voices of veteran practitioners who have established themselves as leaders and have influenced the people with whom they work.

This project also addresses a gap in the literature which is predominantly focused on job responsibilities and best practices rather than the ways that literacy specialists learn or the development of their identity as leaders. While teacher and administrative leader identity has been explored in research, there appears to be a few studies about teacher leader identity. Similarly, while a great deal has been written about what literacy specialists do, there is little research about how they develop. While my participants describe the work that they do, the focus of the study is leadership development, particularly within the contexts of their schools and communities.

Rationale for Research Approach

I approached my research from a social constructivist paradigm which claims that knowledge is socially constructed through the active participation of people who make meaning subjectively because of their experiences (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Mertens, 2010). Through their social interaction, people construct knowledge that

is personally meaningful and significant to those around them. It is a "value-bound rather than value free" process in that it is influenced by my participation as the researcher who positions myself as an insider, acknowledging my own experience with the subject (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). In this approach, knowledge and meaning emerge from the research question, presenting the essence of the topic, which lead to themes and patterns which may be surprising to the researcher.

Because of this paradigm, acknowledging that meaning would be created in this research study between myself as the researcher and my participants (Hatch, 2002), I sought a naturalistic qualitative methodology that would allow me to deeply investigate the stories and experiences of my participants in order to understand how their role identity developed. I chose case study methodology because it leads the researcher to "an exploration of a boundless system or a case over time through in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information in rich context" (Creswell, 2003, p. 6). Literacy specialists, as a distinct social group with distinct roles and responsibilities within a school, form both individual and collective cases which serve as the units of analysis in this project. Cases are bounded by both time and context as well which influence the development of the individual's identity. The interpretation and analysis of their stories create meaning, a "target collection" or an "umbrella" (Stake, 2006, p. 6) of stories that bring meaning through multiple case study analysis.

A naturalistic, multiple case study approach from a social constructivist paradigm is an appropriate perspective from which to investigate the question at hand as it asked how literacy specialists construct an identity within the contexts of their schools. Each of the cases express unique narratives of experience, but collectively they present evidence

from multiple cases that is often considered more compelling" (Yin, 1984, p. 45). As I explored how literacy specialists develop identities as leaders, I acknowledged my own connection to the topic as I related the stories of my participants, and connected their cases, in order to understand the phenomenon of literacy leadership identity.

Research Questions

In this project, I posed the primary question: How does a literacy specialist in public elementary schools construct an identity of leadership within their roles? I also posed the following supportive questions: What personal, social, and environmental factors have influenced their transition into their roles and development as professionals? Do they develop a leader identity within their defined roles, and if so, how? Is constructing an identity as a leader necessary for their roles?

Design Overview

This project followed a multiple case study format (Yin, 1984) in which I conducted qualitative research and analysis in order to express the individual stories of four practicing literacy specialists and suggests themes about the phenomenon of literacy specialist leader identity. I collected data in three ways: interviews, document review, and observation. Each method was selected in order to help me explore the perceptual, demographic, and contextual factors in each individual case and ultimately discern themes in their experiences through cross case analysis, which Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) recommend that researchers consider when planning qualitative projects. Their framework led me to identify the kind of information that I needed to collect, including these factors as well as social, personal, and environmental information that would allow

me to explore my question. The framework helped me plan my project, determine questions that supported my problem, develop the methodology, and determine the most insightful ways to analyze data. I also identified a to learn about the contexts of the schools in which they worked and the perceptions others had about them, including teachers and principals.

Type of Information	What Researcher Requires	Collection & Analysis
CONTEXTUAL	School: Organization chart, history, mission, vision, values, culture, leadership, staff info, site Person: Academic background, work space, interaction with others, work, personal interests, family background	School: Document review via website; thematic analysis Person: Questionnaire; Observation, other people, thematic analysis
DEMOGRAPHIC	School: location, size, faculty, socio-economic status, ethnicity, achievement, school leadership, professional development plans, professional growth system	School: Document review; thematic analysis Person: Questionnaire; thematic analysis

I originally considered involving ten literacy specialists from elementary and secondary schools around the country in my study, but decided to limit my data collection to just four participants from elementary schools in New England. I did so intentionally. While a larger sample would have been more thorough and could have led to more generalizable results, practicality prohibited a broader study in the way I wanted to design it. My sample was one of geographic convenience, as I live in a New England state, and was drawn in a snowballing method in which I relied upon recommendations from colleagues. I am also most familiar with the roles of elementary literacy specialists having worked in elementary schools as a teacher and leader for two decades. All of my

participants are women which corresponds to the statistic that over eighty percent of elementary teachers are female. I also knew that I wanted to develop a deep understanding of my participants, listen to their stories, and express their experiences in my research. I would not have been able to meet with all of them for multiple interviews with a larger sample. Having a small number of participants allowed me to develop a deep familiarity with each of them and has provided for thick description with which to develop a case study.

Much of my data collection surrounded and was connected to three semi-structured interviews and follow-up conversations with each participant. Documents about the context of the school and community were reviewed prior to and after interviews. Observations were conducted in the schools of three of my four participants as well as during the interviews while touring their schools, meeting with principals and teachers, visiting their work spaces, and observing them in practice. I recorded observation notes and reflections about my participants in my research journal. All of this data led me to create narrative portraits of each participant, illustrated by their experiences and their voices, which explore the phenomenon of leadership identity which is at the center of my study.

Participants

I recruited my participants through professional contacts I had with other literacy specialists, teachers, and administrators, creating a purposeful sample. I selected them according to the following criteria: they worked as a literacy specialist, literacy coach, or in a role with a similar title; they did not directly work with children; they held a literacy

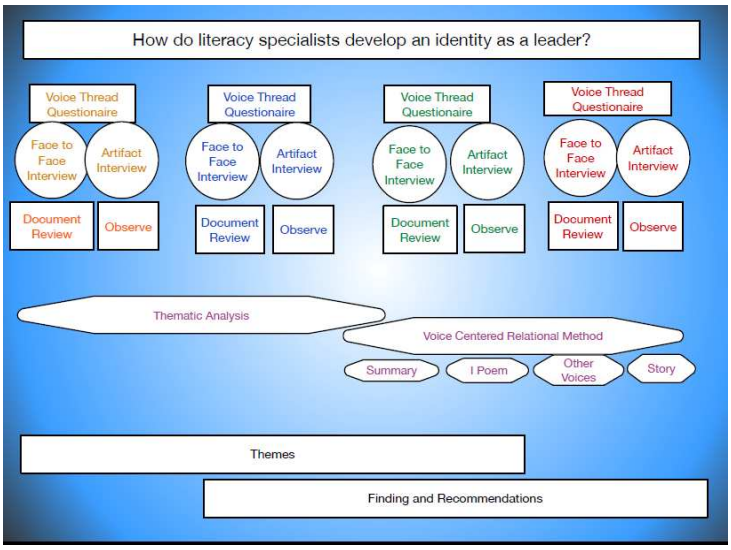
specialist certification; they worked in public urban elementary schools; and they had worked as a literacy specialist for at least five years. I also selected literacy specialists with whom I had never worked in the past or present, were not presently enrolled in courses I taught, and were not close acquaintances of mine, although I knew two of them from graduate work at the University of Southern Maine. They were all white women who had worked in education for over twenty years, held advanced degrees, and currently worked at elementary schools with major school improvement initiatives.

	Terri*	Amanda	Kim	Kate
Age	Mid 40s (46)	Early 40s (44)	Mid 40s (43)	Late 50s (58)
Male/female	F	F	F	F
Ethnicity	W	W	W	W
Current Job Title	Literacy Coach	Literacy Coach	Literacy Specialist and Title I Director	Literacy Specialist
School	River Meadow Elementary 3/5 time; O'Donnell Elementary 2/5 time	Holmes Elementary ½ time; Ross Elementary ½ time	School District Office; Waterview Elementary	Simpson Elementary
Years in Current Job	14 at River Meadow; 1 at O'Donnell	14 at Holmes and Ross	1 at district 5 at Waterview	8 at Simpson
Total Years in Education	24	23	21	35
Undergraduate Degree	BS Elementary Education, Public University	BA Math Education, Private University	BS Elementary Education, Public University	BS Elementary Education, Private Liberal Arts College
Graduate Degree/ College	MS Ed Literacy Education, Public University	MS Literacy Education, Public University	MS Literacy Education, Public University	MS Exceptionality and Gifted Education, Public University
Post Graduate Degree/ College	Literacy and Coaching, Private University	None	Ed Leadership, Public University	None
Personal	Unmarried, no children	Married, 2 adolescent children	Married, 1 middle and 1 high school	Married, 2 adult daughters

Interests	Reading, hiking, walking, kayaking, traveling	Running, baking, gardening, reading, writing	Reading, children's literature, writing, her kids' activities	Outdoors hiking, biking, camping, skiing, snow shoeing

*pseudonyms for participants and schools

I explained the focus of my study and asked my participants to sign a letter of agreement to participate along with a statement of authentication of responses because some data was to be collected asynchronously online (Appendix). I provided a written overview of the research project introducing myself, the parts of the project, and what would be asked of them as participants. The document included the following diagram that illustrated the entire of the study.



I asked my participants to select pseudonyms for me to use in the study in order to protect their anonymity, although I knew their names. Similarly, I disguised the identities of their schools, communities, and geographic location with pseudonyms and the generic location of "a small city in New England" because the demographic information could reveal the location of the school and could identify my participants. However, this information was important to exploring and understanding the context of each case.

Methods and Procedures for Data Collection

I collected data from three sources: three kinds of layered interviews, document review, and observation. By coupling multiple layered interviews with document review of school and community demographics, and observation of practice, I came to know my participants deeply, was able to address my question from different perspectives, and triangulate the data. This ensured that my collection contained thick description (Geertz, 1973), told a complete story of each person, and thus enhanced authenticity.

Source I – Interviews

The first source of my data collection involved three phases of interviews, or personal interactions, with my participants: an asynchronous on-line questionnaire, a face-to-face private semi-structured interview, and a second one-on-one structured interview in which we discussed an artifact that represented their leadership.

I conducted the first phase, an asynchronous on-line questionnaire, by using Voice Thread, a free internet based application that facilitates a focused, private electronic meeting. On-line interviews are becoming a popular means of gathering qualitative and quantitative data. Following the same ethical boundaries as traditional data gathering techniques, researchers use e-mail, blogs, forums, wikis, social networks, and websites to prepare for, collect information, and follow up with clarifying questions (James, 2007; James & Busher, 2006; Salmons, 2012). A benefit of using asynchronous electronic communication tools is the ease and immediacy of an interaction as it eliminates the need for travel and a negotiation of schedules. However, the impact of personal contact is lessened, non-verbal communication is limited, and responses may

appear to be less spontaneous and rehearsed. For this study, however, I wanted to explore this means of data collection to satisfy a personal curiosity and to make my initial communication with my participants more convenient for them.

I selected Voice Thread which operates like a blog in which one person initiates a conversation by inviting others to participate which, in this case, involved just myself and each participant individually. I had used this application with other adults in courses I had taken as a doctoral student and in a previous pilot study, and I found it to be a good means of communication around prompted topics. Participants were required to speak their responses which allowed them to express their voices and allowed me to me to listen to their responses Because it is asynchronous, participants were able to participate at any time depending on their personal schedules and availability. It simulated a conversation although in a less spontaneous way because participants record their responses with as much time as they would like to think about and compose their thoughts.

I created the questionnaire by first developing a Power Point presentation of slides which I uploaded to the Voice Thread application. I then recorded my voice reading each slide. The questions were intended to initiate our conversation about literacy, leadership, and identity and provide a foundation for the second phase of the study. The prompts on the slides addressed three themes: personal and professional background information about each participant, a description of their jobs and responsibilities, and their concept of and experience with being a leader. The following chart provides the questions that appeared on each slide.

Voice Thread Questions
1. Please tell a bit about yourself... Age range (20-30, 31-50, 51-70, 70+) Undergraduate college, degree, and major Graduate college, degree, and subject Other advanced degrees or certifications Number of years you have worked in education Number of years you have worked as a literacy specialist 2. Tell me about yourself, your background, your family, your personal interests. What role has literacy played in your life? 3. Why did you become a literacy specialist? 4. Tell me about what you do in your job. What is your job title? What kind of activities do you do most often? What kind of activities do you wish you did not have to do? What would you like to do more of? 5. What does being a leader mean to you? 6. Tell a story about time that you served as a leader.

Before initiating the Voice Thread questionnaire, I informed each participant about the technical requirement of the application, namely an internet connection, flash capability, and an internal or external digital microphone. Once certain of the requirements, I invited each participant to join the conversation through an automated e-mail generated by Voice Thread as well as an e-mail communication in which I provided them with information about how to log onto the site and instructions to read each prompt, think about their responses, and record in voice responses when they were ready. I gave them some parameters, including a suggested length of response of 500 words and a deadline of one week to complete the questionnaire. I also let them know that I was available for technical assistance if they needed help navigating the technology.

Once each participant completed the Voice Thread questionnaire, I accessed their responses in a layered methodology before applying thematic analysis. I first listened to the entire recording to develop a sense of their voice, transcribed their responses in order to catalogue their responses, and finally read through the conversation making notes about areas of particular interest and needs for further questions.

The second phase involved in-depth one-on-one interviews with each participant (Creswell, 2008) using a semi-structured format (Denscombe, 2010) with questions that addressed their identity as leaders, their reasons for becoming and remaining literacy specialists, and the communities in which they work. Seen below, the questions were similar to ones used in a previous pilot study.

Interview Framework Questions
1. What does the word "leader" mean to you? Where and how did you develop this concept? 2. Tell me about the leadership at your school. What kinds of leaders and leader-roles are in your school? 3. Do you see yourself as a leader in your school? Why? Examples of things you've done. Frustrations and successes. 4. Do teachers see you as a leader in your school? Why? Examples. When and how. 5. Do administrators see you as a leader in your school? Why? Examples. When and how? 6. Who or what has helped you become a leader? 7. What barriers have you encountered in becoming a leader? 8. What kind of influence do you have in your school? What kind of influence do you want to have? 9. What do you see yourself doing in five years? 10. Are you successful at what you do? Do you have to be a leader in order to be a successful literacy specialist?

The interviews were conducted in person and were audio recorded and later transcribed. Follow up questions were asked via email and phone.

The interviews were conducted at locations convenient to each participant. Three were held in the schools of the participant and one was held at a coffee shop. All four interviews began informally in order to break the ice, with brief discussions of their day, things going on at school including parent-teacher conferences, and an overview of my research process. The interviews were recorded using a simple voice recording application on a smart phone. While the tone was relaxed, I maintained the focus of an interview rather than a superficial conversation (Denscombe, 2010). One participant asked to look at the questions as I asked them, saying that it would help her formulate her responses. I allowed her to see the questions, although at the end of the interview, she realized that the conversation did not follow the framework closely. The interviews lasted approximately 75, 45, 95, and 50 minutes respectively. Because they were semi-structured, their formats were more conversational, although I remained conscious of minimizing and even eliminating my contribution to the conversation. I used clarifying and elaborating probes (Creswell, 2008) to redirect or expand our conversation.

I followed a similar layered process for documenting the one-on-one interviews as I did with the asynchronous questionnaires. I first listened to the recording of the interview and made notes in my journal about general impressions, connections to the Voice Thread questionnaire, and areas that would need to be clarified in a follow-up phone conversation. I then transcribed the interviews, some with the help of my wife as a transcriber who maintained confidentiality, which produced many pages of data. Transcripts were typed in a three-column format with the words of each participant on the

center, space for me to name codes on the left and suggest themes on the right. Finally, before conducting my formal analysis, I read through the transcriptions, listened to recordings, and made notes in my journal including questions as well as potential patterns and themes in their responses.

A second one-on-one interview was conducted within approximately one month of the first. Three of the four meetings were held at their schools, upon my request, in order to further develop the context in which they worked. One participant again preferred meeting at a coffee shop. For this meeting, I asked my participants to select and bring artifacts to the meeting that demonstrated their leadership within the school and community in which they worked. Often used with ethnographic research, artifacts, understood simply as anything people make or use (Geertz, 1973), provide data in the form of objects that represent patterns and themes within the context of everyday life. By asking my participants to select an artifact that represented her as a leader, I invited them to reflect on their work and discuss perceptions they had of their practice in a concrete way. While I did not prescribe the kind of artifact they should share, I suggested written plans, outlines, published writing, workshop agendas, notes and comments from colleagues and supervisors, other people, photographs, and videos. They each selected different types of artifacts and were eager to describe how they developed it and used it in their work as well as impressions others have of its impact on the school community.

	Terri	Amanda	Kim	Kate
Artifact (s)	Organizer / "Lesson" Planner	Article she wrote for an educational journal Principal with	Title I parent brochure	Reading Teacher Leaders' Project notebook

		whom she works		

They talked about their artifacts in a semi-structured interview format, which led them to describe the artifact and its meaning to them, but further led us to discuss the ways that they function within their schools and how literacy specialist functions in general. Notes about their artifacts were recorded in the following matrix:

Artifact
Who made it?
Purpose
Who uses it?
Who does not use it?
Is it a public document?
How does she use it?
How does she say it shows her leadership?
How else does it show her leadership?
Comments

By conducting three types of interviews with my participants, I built a broad description of my participants and created the thick description (Geertz, 1973; Merriam, 1997) that allowed me to listen to and interpret their words and construct portraits that contribute to an understanding of the case of leadership identity.

Source II -Document Review

In order to collect information about the background and context of the schools and the districts in which my participants work, I concluded with a document review by viewing school and community websites, local newspapers, school profiles, other school publications, and public documents written by my participants (Stake, 1995). These provided demographic and factual information about the school contexts in which my participants work (Creswell, 2008). Document review was a convenient source of information because it provided objective information needed in order to understand the comments of my participants. I collected the same data on each school and district and recorded it in the following charts:

SCHOOL INFORMATION
Participant
School
Urban/Suburban/Rural
Grade Levels at School
Number of Students
Ethnicity Breakdown
Free / Reduced Lunch Breakdown
Number of Teachers
Number/% of Novice (<5 years) Teachers
Number/% of Veteran (>20 years) Teachers
Number of Classroom Teachers
Number of Special Ed/Title I Teachers
Number of English as a Second Language Teachers
Number of Ed Techs
Number / Titles of Administrators

Administrator Years at the School
Administrator's years at the school
Leadership Structure
Number / Types of Teacher Leaders
School Vision
Core Reading Instructional Program
Intervention Reading Program/s
Achievement (% Proficient) in Reading 2012-13
Adequate Yearly Progress Status / 2013 School Grade
School Improvement Plan (Yes or No)
Improvement Plan Goals
Professional Development Activities
Mentoring for Novice Teachers
Interesting Facts about School

DISTRICT INFORMATION
Name
Cities Encompassing
Grade Levels
Number of Schools
Number of Elementary Schools
District Number of Students
Ethnicity Breakdown
Free / Reduced Lunch Breakdown
Number of Teachers
Number / Percentage of novice (<5 years) teachers
Number / Percentage of Veteran (>20 years) Teachers
Number / titles of District Administrators
District Administrator Most Closely Connected to Literacy

District Administrator's Years in the School
District Leadership Structure
School Board Structure
Number / Types of Teacher Leaders
District Vision
District Improvement Plan
District Budget
Percentage for Instruction
District Professional Development Activities
Other Interesting Facts About the District

This information, including socio-cultural, academic, financial, and demographic data, led me to ask clarifying questions and contributed to my engagement with the stories of my participants. The documents provided background information about the context and organizational structures of the schools.

Source III – Observation and Reflection

Throughout this project, I kept a research journal of notes, observations, and reflections about my participants and their schools (Borg, 2001). I found this to be a

valuable tool in triangulating my data, checking my understanding, and engaging in the topic myself. While cautious of bias because I ran the risk of allowing my personal perceptions about the topic to influence my interpretation, it allowed me to participate in the study more fully. Familiarity, past experiences, and a researcher's current state may be advantageous in conducting observations, but they can also blur the lines of objectivity and challenge believability (Denscombe, 2010). In order to remain objective and bracket my experience as a participant observer (Creswell, 2008), I observed situations in which three of my participants conducted their work, including their schools, classroom and office spaces and talked with their colleagues, teachers, and principals, with their permission, about their role in the school community. By recording my observation notes and reflections, I was able to add another layer of data collection with which to build the individual cases, construct portraits of each specialist, and conduct multiple case study analysis.

My data collection produced considerable information, including transcribed documents from Voice Thread and one-on-one interviews, notes from my document review, and observations in my research journal. Coupled with other reflective notes, I was able to analyze my data, attending to the voices of my participants, and eventually construct written portraits of four literacy specialists, telling their stories in order to influence others through their experience.

Methods and Procedures for Analysis

Because this project follows a multiple case study format, it was my intention for the stories of literacy specialists to construct a collective case about leadership identity.

By analyzing their individual stories and by conducting cross-case analysis, I was able to understand the importance of their personal experiences with leadership and suggest common themes that may support literacy specialists in the future.

I used two methods for analyzing my data: thematic analysis (Boyzatis, 1998) and the Voice Centered Relational Method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003). I used both concurrently which helped me to listen carefully to my participants and maintain my objectivity while leading me to recognize common themes that emerged from their stories. These were appropriate methods for my study as both have been used in previous case study and narrative research to reveal themes in life stories through the voices of the people expressing them, offering an authentic experience of a phenomenon.

I conducted thematic analysis by incorporating aspects of In Vivo coding as well as the process of "Theming the Data" (Saldana, 2013). This allowed me to begin by recognizing codes revealed in written transcripts which I grouped in recurring patterns and themes. I did not use a computer program, but rather used handwritten notes in different ways. I initially made in a three-column format in which I typed the written transcript in the middle column, initial codes, themes, and notes in the left column, and final themes and analysis in the right column (Saldana, 2013, p. 180). I then assembled a chart noting the codes identified in each case which allowed me to see commonalities across all four participants.

Summary of Codes	Terri	Kim	Kate	Amanda

Passion for reading and writing	X	X	X	X
Childhood Literacy	X	X	X	X
Role Definition	X	X	X	X
Teaching Tasks	X	X	X	X
Administrative Tasks	X	X	X	X
Coaching/PD Tasks	X	X	X	X
Leadership Opportunities	X	X	X	X
Visionary	X	X	X	X
Learning	X	X	X	X
Reflections	X	X	X	X
Validation	X	X	X	X
Relationships with Teachers	X	X	X	X
Relationships with Principals	X	X	X	X
Perceptions of Teachers	X	X	X	X
Perceptions of Principals	X	X	X	X
Perception of Self	X	X	X	X
Influences	X	X	X	X
Challenges / Barriers	X	X	X	X
Strengths / Advantages	X	X	X	X
Artifact	X	X	X	X
Story / Example	X	X	X	X
School Culture	X	X	X	X
Capacity Builder	X		X	X
Change Agent	X	X	X	X
Networks	X		X	
Respect	X		X	X
Accountability	X			
School Improvement	X	X	X	X
Personal Growth	X		X	X
Program Developer		X		
Aspirations		X		X
Collaborator	X	X	X	X
Transition: Coach to Supervisor		X	X	

Purpose	X		X	X
Teamwork			X	
Curriculum				X
Writing				X
Belonging	X	X		X
Space	X			X
Sustainability				X
Influence	X	X	X	X
Power				X

Finally, I collapsed the common codes into themes. These lead to the implications which I will make in the final chapter.

Common Themes
Personal experiences with literacy
Learning styles
Job responsibilities
Impacts of the school
Positive view of selves
Leadership within the social context

I also recorded analytic memos in my research journal throughout this phase (Borg, 2001) which helped me to think about my analysis through words and graphics throughout the study.

I used the Voice Centered Relational Method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, et al., 2003) as both an analysis technique and means for maintaining my own objectivity throughout the study. Because of my personal connections to the topic and potential

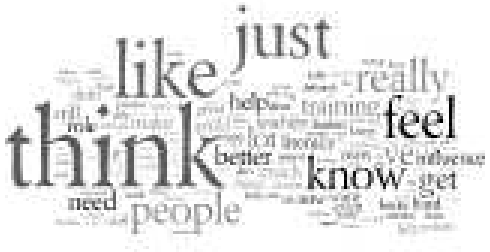
biases, I wanted to avoid making assumptions based on my own experience rather than those of my participants. Through the disciplined steps of this method, I was better able to concentrate on the voices in my study rather than my own. It also allowed me to express their stories as authentically as possible in their own voices which was most appropriate in a study whose focus was identity development. It allowed my participants to be heard which, I assumed, may not have always been the case in their school environments.

The Voice Centered Relational method involves four deliberate phases, all of which involve listening to the voices of participants with a different focus each time. In the first step, I listened to the audio recording while reading along with the written transcript of each interview. I began to note codes and themes on the transcripts and then wrote brief summaries of the interviews in my research journal. This provided a general understanding of their stories.

Next, I read the transcripts a second time on my laptop and isolated all of the first person statements, eliminating other comments regardless of how significant I may have considered them. This created what Gilligan et. al. call "I-Poems," (1992; 2003). This series of statements revealed the essence of my participants' voices and comments that were highly personal and provided insight into how they saw themselves. I revised the initial I-Poems, eliminating more words in order to focus on pronoun-verb statements. This second I-Poem illuminated their voices even more clearly and suggested a most authentic voice and led to an interpretation of their identity. Both I-Poems are included in the index. I used excerpts from the I-Poems as transitions between themes within the narrative portraits about each participant.

I listened to the interview recordings again in the third step in the process to listen for "contrapuntal" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, et al., 2003) voices, or comments that revealed the influence of other people as well as alternate voices in their own narrative. This allowed me to see connections to the contexts of their schools, the people with whom they worked, and the influence they had on each participant. It also allowed me to identify personal dilemmas and contradictions within their comments. Again, I took notes on the printed transcripts and in my research journal.

To further explore the statements of my participants, I created a word cloud on the Wordle website (www.wordle.com). To do this, I pasted the entire text of the I- poems into the Wordle program which then automatically generates a semantic web of the words. Words recorded most often appeared in larger font which made them more striking and recognizable. This provided another means of focusing on their words and interpreting their significance, especially those recorded most often. The following is an example of one of the Wordle clouds:



Once I had completed the thematic analysis and Voice Centered Relational Method with each participant's story, I began to collect them as a whole, grouping similar themes and recognizing common ones as well as outliers, in order to complete cross case

analysis. I made notes in my research journal in order to help me synthesize and collapse the themes into categories, or findings, which are described below.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the study, I was keenly aware that I was conducting a form of backyard research in this project, given my knowledge of and experience with literacy specialists. I have worked as an elementary school literacy specialist, currently mentor and supervise literacy specialists in my professional role in my school district, and teach aspiring and practicing literacy specialists in the graduate courses I teach. Because of this, I acknowledge that I was a participant in the research and admit that I had preexisting biases about the role of literacy specialists and the ways that they develop leader identity based on my own experiences. Most significantly, I assumed that literacy specialists were school leaders who exhibited influence within their communities. Having worked with literacy specialists over the years, I saw first-hand how they have impacted students and teachers, particularly through professional development. I also assumed that literacy specialists developed an identity within the context of their schools. Again, having worked with literacy specialists in my own community as well as others in different cities, I have heard them admit that the culture of their schools have impacted their ability to function as leaders in their schools. It was impossible to completely bracket myself in the study. However, through the multiple case study approach which intrinsically includes the researcher in the collection and interpretation of data and my methods of analysis, particularly the Voice Centered Relational Method, I was able to focus on the stories of my participants, listening to them rather than to myself.

Because the literacy education community is relatively small, I was familiar with many practicing literacy specialists. Similarly, many literacy specialists were familiar with me and my work as well which presented a dilemma in selecting anonymous participants and in developing and maintaining a sense of objectivity. Again, I selected the methods of analysis in order to increase objectivity and position myself to listen to the stories of my participants.

To enhance believability within the study, I collected multiple sources of data in order to triangulate in search of patterns and themes. I selected the Voice Centered Relational Method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003) to support the validity of my analysis because it will direct me to listen to the voices of my participants rather than my own assumptions.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the methodology I followed in completing this qualitative multiple case study project in which I explored the ways that literacy specialists develop an identities as leaders. I offered a rationale for my four person sample, briefly described my participants, and identified the kind of information I would need to collect in order to explore my question. I described the phases of my data collection that involved three different kinds of interviews with my participants as well as a review of documents about the schools in which they worked and observations of and reflections about their work. I also admitted potential biases and connections to the topic and outlined deliberate precautions in my analysis that would assist in my objectivity and enhance my believability. The methodology provided for an informative and insightful discussion of

the experiences of individual literacy specialists and will suggest ways to enhance the development of leadership identity of literacy specialists in the future.

In the next chapter are detailed narrative portraits of each of my four participants. I express the stories of their lives and experiences using their voices as often as possible, including excerpts from I-Poems developed through my analysis of information shared during our interviews.

CHAPTER 4

PORTRAITS OF FOUR LITERACY SPECIALISTS

Introduction

In this chapter, I will present narrative portraits of my four participants- Terri, Kim, Kate, and Amanda- each of whom works as a literacy specialist at different public elementary schools in four cities in New England. Having conducted several rounds of layered interviews and observations in which I collected considerable information, and having gathered demographic information about the schools at which they work, I am able to construct each portrait, presented here as single cases which will eventually allow me to conduct cross case analysis and discuss the phenomenon of identity development among these literacy specialists. Some initial thematic coding (Saldana, 2013) helped me to organize the portraits and emerged through an analysis of transcripts and the development of I-Poems using Voice Centered Relational Method (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003).

I express their stories with their own words, including direct quotes in the narrative and excerpts from their I-poems as transitions between sections. I will include the names of each participant, other individuals named in their stories, schools, and communities, all pseudonyms, within the portraits. This will enhance the authenticity of the data and increase the believability of the narrative. I will describe the work that my participants do, the settings in which my participants work, and explore the context of their schools. Readers will meet the participants through my thick description and learn from their experiences, demonstrating an aspect of my theoretical framework that

supports social learning and the significance of relationships, revealed here through stories. Several themes emerge from across the narratives as well as implications about the phenomenon of literacy leader identity, both of which will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

Terri

I had been acquainted with Terri, a literacy specialist who works in two urban public elementary schools, from our common connection to a local university for several years. While we had never worked together, I knew of her work and reputation through other literacy specialists. Terri completed the Voice Thread questionnaire before we met in person for two lengthy interviews on two separate days at one of her schools. We talked as she showed me around the school, highlighting several successful literacy initiatives in different areas, and settled in her classroom for the formal interview. During both of my visits, students had been dismissed for the day, but many teachers were present, often interrupting us to ask Terri question or request a resource. This allowed me to observe Terri's interaction with others. I also met with the assistant principal at one of her schools who spoke about her work and the role she played in improving literacy. In the narrative portrait that follows, I will express Terri's story and experiences as a literacy specialist. Following a discussion of her background, her story will illustrate the context of her schools, her role as a literacy specialist, teacher, learner, relationship builder, and leader, her influence within her school, and her identity as a literacy leader.

Background

I have always had a passion and love for literacy.

I always felt that I had some knowledge.

I wanted to share it with other teachers.

Terri is a 46 year old white woman who works as a literacy coach at two large urban elementary schools in a culturally and economically diverse school district of 9,000 students in a small city in New England. She has worked in education for 24 years. She was hired as a first and second grade classroom teacher at River Meadow School, providing instruction in all subject areas, although her favorite time of day was when she was teaching reading. She left the classroom when she was appointed to the role of literacy specialist at her school eight years later and began working with small groups of primary age children who struggled with learning to read and write. She also worked with teachers as a consultant to support their literacy instruction and conducted diagnostic evaluations of students who had been referred for support services.

Terri's job title changed several times in sixteen years, sometimes during the school year, and included literacy specialist, reading consultant, literacy interventionist, and reading coach. Her responsibilities differed as well. At times, she was assigned to work exclusively with struggling readers, teaching remedial strategies to improve word identification and comprehension. At others, she provided coaching, training, and professional development to teachers in order to improve their literacy instruction in their classrooms. In some years, she was also assigned the job of collecting and analyzing achievement data in order to report progress on school improvement efforts.

Terri earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education at a large public university and later a Master of Science in Education in Literacy Education the year

before she left her classroom. She acknowledges professors in the program as being influential to her development, serving as mentors from whom she continues to seek guidance. She occasionally teaches courses as an adjunct instructor of reading instructional methods for students enrolled in teacher education programs at the same university and has presented workshops about early literacy instruction in schools and conferences across New England. Over the past three years, Terri has participated in courses and professional development at Teachers' College at Columbia University that are focused on instructional coaching and literacy leadership.

Terri credits a former school principal for convincing her to take on the role of literacy specialist, having offered her the position twice before she finally accepted it. "She offered it to me a couple of times before, but I was not ready to leave my classroom." It was a difficult decision for her because she loved teaching children how to read as well as the daily interaction with them and their families. However, she was drawn to the new role because of her growing desire to help other teachers with their reading and writing instruction. "I saw the need for professional development. I wanted to help more teachers and affect more students than the only ones in my classroom. I realized I needed to give it a try. I never looked back and I have been doing it ever since."

Terri's commitment to literacy was developed from a very young age. She grew up in a household with two married parents and remembers being read to by them and her grandparents, reading to them, writing her own books for them, trying to retell stories, going to the library, and carving out little nooks in their homes as places to read and write. She says that "from the time I was very little, literacy has played an important role in my life." She continues to love to read and write and enjoys spending time reading

with the children of her siblings who attend elementary and middle schools in neighboring cities. It is this same passion that she hopes to bring to children in her schools through their teachers to whom she also hopes to impart "a passion for teaching literacy."

Terri's Schools

I've always been passionate about literacy.
I've been asked to help make some big changes at my schools.

Terri works at two elementary schools within the same urban school district. River Meadow Elementary School, where she has worked for entire career, is considered to be one of the poorest and most culturally diverse schools in both the city and the state. Almost 80% of its students receive free or reduced price meals, a statistic that provides an indicator of a school's level of poverty, and almost 60% of its students are classified as English language learners, many of whom are recent immigrants and refugees. She has seen her school change over the years because of a dramatic increase in this population.

Terri describes River Meadow as a "vibrant and active" learning community. Examples of student writing hang on the walls, all of which demonstrate different levels of proficiency, as do different projects and photographs of students and staff. Flags from different countries indicate where students were born and notices are posted in several languages. A branch of the public library, a community health center, a recreational facility, and adult education programming are all housed within the large facility. Students arrive before school begins for tutoring and stay after school ends for structured learning-centered activities. The staff is large, numbering almost 90 teachers and

paraprofessionals, the majority of whom are new to the school community since a school improvement initiative in 2011 resulted in the transfer of two thirds of the staff at the time and the hiring of new teachers. Many staff members, mostly paraprofessionals, are recent immigrants and refugees from countries in Africa.

Terri's work-space serves as a resource center and professional development classroom. Housed next to the large school library, it is a full size classroom space, housing hundreds of books, both children's literature and professional education books, journals, and newspapers. Artifacts from recent professional development meetings hang on the walls, including charts Terri used as models when demonstrating lessons. Piles of books cover a large rectangular table, along with notebooks and folders filled with different resources. Terri has no desk, but rather works throughout her space and throughout the school. Her space is open and teachers stop by frequently to talk, gather resources, study, and work collaboratively. Terri says she is usually in her room before school starts and after school ends, but is typically in classrooms during the day and in the teacher's room during lunch.

Terri was assigned by the district's Assistant Superintendent who directs academic programming to work as the literacy coach at a second school during the most recent school year. O'Donnell Elementary is a slightly smaller, less economically and culturally diverse school that was required to initiate a comprehensive improvement plan in response to its designation as a failing school by the state's Department of Education. This designation is based on student performance on annual accountability tests in reading and mathematics that are required by the state and federal government. Located in a different part of the city than River Meadow, O'Donnell is an old building that is in

poor physical condition. Issues of mold and damage from an electrical fire forced the closure of a few classrooms causing parts of the school to be overcrowded. Student work hangs on hallway walls, including art work and interdisciplinary projects that are a hallmark of the school. Much of the faculty have taught there for many years and are highly regarded within the community. An active parent group raises funds for special projects, library books, and necessary materials and hosts well-attended events for families throughout the year. This strong sense of community supported the school when it received a failing grade with outraged parents holding rallies to affirm their teachers and school.

A small literacy office has been maintained at O'Donnell, even though a literacy specialist has not worked there since one retired three years ago. The space accumulated lots of clutter, among which were considerable resources which teachers frequently borrow. Terri prefers not to work out of the office, but rather meets with teachers in the school library, teacher's room, or their classrooms. She knew several teachers and administrators before coming to the school and was excited about the opportunity to begin an initiative at O'Donnell based on work she had done at River Meadow. She was assigned to continue working at River Meadow for three days each week and at O'Donnell for two days.

The assistant principal at O'Donnell, Mary Ann, worked closely with Terri and helped her become acclimated to her new school environment. The staff at O'Donnell is large, almost 60 educators, most of whom have worked at the school and within the school system for many years. The teachers were aware of the work Terri had accomplished at River Meadow, but skeptical of the administrative mandate to implement

a similar initiative at their school and were initially reluctant to embrace her as an agent of change. Mary Ann, also recently assigned to the school as an agent of change, offered guidance on how to engage them in this work and encouraged Terri to take time to get to know them, listen to their needs, and be "cautious" in mentioning her work at the other school, given their feelings about River Meadow. Terri spent time in their classrooms and provided whatever resources they requested. After several weeks, Terri said that she began to feel accepted. "I focused on building relationships with them."

Terri continued to make progress with many of the teachers. She spent time with them socially, getting to know them as individuals as well as professionals. Many teachers saw her as an expert, as someone who had both knowledge and expertise, and eagerly sought her out for coaching and collaboration. She focused her work with those teachers, but planned to offer resources for other teachers as well in an effort to gain their acceptance.

Terri's Role as a Literacy Specialist

I'm here to help you.
I just keep saying that over and over.
I might be here to observe you and give you feedback.
I know some of them get nervous.
I just want to remind them.
I've been there.
I haven't been asked to evaluate.
I'm here to help.
I think that's the kind of feedback that they should hear.
I think it's important for teachers to hear that.

When Terri was first appointed at River Meadow, her job title was that of literacy specialist. The job fell under the teachers' collective bargaining agreement and was considered a teaching position, similar to other instructional coaches or teaching consultants. It was not an administrative position and involved no supervisory or managerial responsibilities. Her salary was in line with other teachers with similar experience and education. She worked with struggling children for part of the day and supported teachers through mentoring, training, and program planning in the other. While she was always asked to help fellow teachers, her responsibilities changed from year to year which was frustrating at times but manageable. For the past three years, Terri's title "morphed into literacy coach," a role which finds her working exclusively with teachers and administrators as a job embedded professional developer. Her job remains within the teachers' union and is considered a teaching position. Terri describes her typical responsibilities as "observing teachers, giving feedback, coaching them, and offering professional development throughout the day and throughout the week." She works in classrooms alongside teachers, both veterans who ask for her help and novices to whom she is assigned during their first two years. Her job responsibilities are similar at both of her schools.

Terri follows a coaching cycle in which she models instructional practices. She typically begins by teaching a lesson to children in a teacher's classroom by herself while the teacher watches. Afterwards, they confer on what was accomplished and reflect on her instructional practices. Later, she co-teaches a similarly focused lesson with the teacher, collaborating on planning and instruction and again reflecting on the success of

the lesson, “dissecting it” and discussing its impact on the children. She finally observes the teacher teaching another lesson independently and offers focused feedback about her practice. She then offers herself as an example of reflective practice, admitting success and failure during the course of the lesson, and invites teachers to give her feedback in an effort to help them learn through her example. Eventually, teachers conduct lessons by themselves and report their feedback to Terri, after which she offers further suggestions for improving instruction, including a new coaching cycle. Terri also provides professional development for principals and administrators, collects and analyzes the reading and writing achievement data at her school, and facilitates the process by which teachers determine instructional interventions for students needing extra support.

As the literacy coach, Terri meets with groups of teachers at each school in their Professional Learning Communities (Dufour, 1998) during grade level meetings. The groups are comprised of all grade level teachers in each building who are required to meet for one forty-five minute period once a week during their common planning time or after school hours. Teachers may “lose that time to get ready for their next lesson, but at the same time it has made their teaching even stronger.” The groups focus on student learning and the improvement of their instruction. Agendas vary, but most involve examining student work samples, reviewing data, and learning strategies for instruction. Because not every meeting is focused on literacy, Terri only joins each group about once a month. When she does, the focus is on literacy and she creates a dedicated amount of time to focus on instructional practices. She invites them to discuss what is happening in their classrooms, share successes and frustrations, and ask for support. She does not see the meetings as opportunities for staff training based on an agenda set by her or the

administration, but rather an opportunity for direct instruction in topics of their choice. The meetings, coupled with classroom coaching, allow her to have an ongoing conversation with teachers about literacy teaching and learning. “We talk about how we can help each other with this or that. Because I think like a classroom teacher, they know I can help them.”

Terri’s Role as a Teacher of Teachers

I see them and I help them.

I talk with them.

I ask them to reflect.

I am a teacher of teachers.

Terri’s role as a literacy coach is closely aligned with that of a teacher. While she does not have her own classroom or small group of students that she works with daily, she works with children throughout her schools by demonstrating lessons for their teachers in their classrooms. In this way she feels like she influences children throughout the building in all grade levels. “I guess I have a really big classroom now.” Typically, she is asked to teach lessons on particular topics or strategies students need to learn, such as ways to write responses to literature, or model particular instructional practices that teachers have asked to see demonstrated, such as ways to organize a writing workshop in their classrooms. While individual lessons may last one hour, they often occur in a series and may span several successive days.

Just as she did in her own classroom, Terri attempts to customize her instruction based on the individual need of students, even in isolated strings of lessons. Similarly,

she attempts to meet the individual needs of her colleagues, providing them what they want and need to learn in order to improve their practice. As a teacher of teachers, Terri provides targeted instruction that responds to what they ask from her as well as what she perceives to be needed based on previous interaction, observation, and knowledge. “We talk about what I can do to help them. I’m like a clearinghouse of things.”

Terri sets goals with and for teachers. As part of their annual plans for professional growth, teachers at her schools establish goals with specific action steps, some of which list her as a resource for accomplishing them. She is happy to support her colleagues in areas that they identify as ones in which they need to improve. She also sets informal goals for her colleagues herself, most of which she keeps to herself. She does not intend to be secretive or evaluative, but by setting goals in this way, she is better able to focus her work and know what she needs to teach them.

For example, Terri had worked with Amy, a second grade teacher who had been reluctant to invite her into her classroom but who often asked for advice, for over a decade. One day, she and Amy were talking about how her students were struggling after a series of lessons on a topic. Amy said her students “just don’t get it.” Terri offered to model a lesson in her classroom and she accepted. They talked about what Amy wanted the children to learn and scheduled a period the very next day. “From our conversation, I knew what I needed to teach her, that she needed to adjust the amount of material she was trying to cover and to stop saying ‘They just don’t get it.” So, as Terri taught the lesson, she was very aware of the amount of material she was teaching and to what extent the students were engaged. After the lesson, Terri met with Amy and said, “You know, I think I taught too much. I was moving too fast and I forgot some important things that I

should have started with. No wonder they didn't get it." Amy replied, "Stop blaming yourself. The lesson was great." But Terri countered, "No, it's my fault. I was trying to do too much. Can I come back tomorrow and fix my mistake?" Amy agreed and when Terri started the next lesson, she said to the children with the teacher present, "Let's go back and slow down a bit. There was something I should have showed you but I was trying to give you so much other information, I forgot, so here it is." Terri intended this message for the teacher as much as for the children and when she and the teacher reflected, they talked about the pace of the lesson, what Terri had done to adjust her instruction, and the amount of material that was covered. Amy said to her, "Good thing you came back in." Terri continued to asses the progress of the teacher and began to notice changes in her practice and in her comments about her students. Reflecting on that experience, Terri said: "I knew I wanted her to think about her teaching. There was a lot of talk in her room and not a lot of student interaction. I asked her to time the components of her lessons. She did, and we talked about it. She began to see that she needed to slow down. That was a huge success." She concluded: "It was a great lesson for everyone. It showed the power of reflection." As a teacher, Terri recognized the accomplishments of her students, her colleagues, and of her work as their teacher, their coach.

Terri plans her coaching with teachers in the same way that she planned instruction for children. She developed a loose leaf notebook as a weekly planner. It is similar to one she used in her classroom which allowed her to target the individual needs of her students. She uses it to set goals and organize the work she is doing with every teacher. It helps her plan her time, instruction, and work she does throughout the school. When she models a lesson in a teacher's classroom, she records her plans in her

notebook, complete with directions for her to follow, materials she needs, and the goals for what she wants both children and teachers to learn. When she works with an individual teacher, she plans for an intended focus, but allows the conversation to be spontaneous as well. When she conducts a meeting or workshop, she similarly plans activities, strategies, and goals that allow for efficiency and focus. In this way, her notebook is a lesson planner that allows her to be both organized and intentional in her work.

Terri's notebook also includes a section where she records notes about her teachers, just as a teacher records notes about students. She created a section for each teacher and writes and dates notes after each time they collaborate. She writes down requests they have for materials or resources, successes in modeled lessons or private conversations, teachers within the building who can also model effective strategies, and next steps in what they need to learn. She takes notes about every interaction she has with teachers that allow her to step back into conversations with them and create an environment of ongoing learning. "That's how I can manage job embedded professional development."

As a teacher, Terri acknowledges the importance of building relationships with others that are generative and non-threatening. "One of my goals is that people will be comfortable working with me, seeing me as a coach and not an administrator or evaluator, as someone working with them to be the best that they can be." Through their interaction, her goal is to help them make their teaching better. "We go back and forth, talking about teaching, sharing ideas, and planning together. We talk about things I could share with them and come in to share with their children.' She teaches by sharing

reflections of her own practice, talking about examples of good and less effective practice. “After I demonstrate a lesson, we don’t talk about all the amazing things I did. That doesn’t help anyone. We talk about what I could do differently with the children.” She uses herself as an example, consciously modeling her own reflective process in order to show her teachers how to do so themselves. “I’ll say, ‘Oh, that was horrific! How could I do it better?’ or ‘How can I change things?’ Usually, teachers will say ‘Oh, you’re too hard on yourself, it was great,’ but I’ll press them to give me feedback.” She does this to encourage collaboration and conversation. It’s not about me teaching them, but of us learning together.”

Terri as a Learner

I’m always thinking I want to get better and better.
I am nowhere near where I should be, no where near where I want to be.
I feel like I still need practice.

While she always was passionate about literacy, especially teaching young children how to read and write, it was during her Master’s degree program that she realized that she needed to focus her work around literacy education. She began to share things she had read and learned about in her classes as well as ideas she had applied in her classroom. She credits the faculty at that university for guiding her, teaching her, and empowering her for the work she has been doing ever since. She remembers specific courses as being influential in her development as a learner, particularly those that were practical and encouraged her to apply new strategies and those that helped her to establish

a belief that teaching and learning should be intentional, focused, and above all, reflective.

Terri never returned to school to pursue another advanced degree, although a mentor had encouraged her to begin a doctoral program for several years. She continued her learning through workshops, institutes, and professional networks, as well as courses she taught at the public university at which she completed her Master's degree. She enjoyed getting to know both undergraduate and graduate students who were completing programs in teacher certification and always worked to make her courses practical and useful.

Terri acknowledges two particular opportunities that have supported her as a learner throughout her career: her work with Teacher's College at Columbia University and her collaboration with fellow literacy specialists in her district. When River Meadow developed its school improvement plan four years ago, the year before the principal Angela was hired, it developed as a significant action step to implement a new evidence based approach to literacy instruction, the Reading and Writing Workshop model developed by Lucy Calkins at Teacher's College at Columbia University. To accomplish this, the district recognized its need to provide ongoing, high-quality professional development in implementing the program. The school district contracted with The Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project ("The reading and writing project," 2010), an internationally recognized research and staff development organization, to established an ongoing affiliation and relationship with staff at River Meadow, work "shoulder to shoulder" with children, teachers, and school leaders in order to support the

implementation of the program, and provide training for Terri through its Coaching Institute to lead the school's efforts in improving literacy learning.

Terri traveled to New York for several weeks each year to work with the project's director, faculty, and consultants as well as literacy coaches from around the country who were also involved in this intense training. She also visited schools that were using the Reading and Writing Project's model of instruction, observed in classrooms, and consulted with coaches who worked at those schools. She watched the coaches in action, practiced their strategies when she returned home, reflected on her work, and was coached by faculty and consultants throughout the year. For Terri, reflection is an essential component of learning.

A consultant from outside of the school district was assigned to work with River Meadow for fifty days throughout the school year. However, she was, admittedly, "not the best fit" at their school. She provided "good content for us, but she was just hard to work with." It was challenging for Terri in particular because she had never had an on-site professional developer in her school before. She was used to providing all of the training herself "I wasn't sure what my role was all of a sudden. I would try to talk to her and ask 'What am I supposed to do while you're training?' She involved me, but she was definitely in charge." She was not interested in Terri's experience or background. "She didn't ask me what I knew about literacy, didn't have a clue about by knowledge and really didn't care to know. She definitely had an edge." In contract to Terri, she lacked an understanding of how adults learn. This proved to be challenging personally and professionally for Terri and created a culture of the school that was tenuous and "difficult."

However, a different on-site consultant worked with River Meadow the next year, providing two days per month of on-site consultation. She was "much more pleasant" and made a better impression on the faculty. To compliment her, the school district contracted with a private consultant as well, a woman who had been trained by Teacher's College but was not directly affiliated with them, lived locally, and had recently left a position in a local school district as a literacy coach to work privately. She provided weekly consultation, primarily for Terri. The second year was much more successful and both consultants helped Terri to refine her skills as a coach. Anne, the private consultant who had known Terri for many years, worked weekly with Terri and served as a personal coach. Anne observed Terri modeling lessons, conferring with teachers, and facilitating meetings. She consulted with her and helped her to reflect on her practice. "The greatest thing I've learned from Anne and Teacher's College is how to have a clear lens of looking at teacher instruction and how to provide clear, specific feedback to people." Anne asks Terri what she needs to focus on and targets her support accordingly, much like Terri does with teachers at her school. Because she and Anne worked as colleagues and even attended some graduate classes together, a trusting relationship had already been developed even though she was not working with her every day. "It was weird at first, her coaching me, but she made it very comfortable for me. I've learned a lot from her." Still, she values the time she spends at Teacher's College because it rejuvenates her. "When I go down there, for the next four or five months, my coaching is very strong. But then after awhile you lose some of what you just learned. Having Anne close by one on one coaching me is very helpful." She is grateful for the relationship she established with this mentor.

Terri wished she had more frequent opportunities to watch coaches at work, as she does when she is at Teacher's College. "All the coaches, we say that all the time. We help each other, but we sort of feel like we're blindly helping each other. We help each other with experiences, but it's almost like you need to see people coach. If you could just follow them around and watch them, see how they schedule, how they interact, how they get into classrooms, how they coach in the moment, it would be wonderful."

Terri also has learned and refined her practice through the network of literacy specialists in her school system. The district is fortunate to have six literacy specialists spread across its 18 schools at all grade levels. In previous years, the group met monthly for a meeting facilitated by the assistant superintendent where all of the participants discussed their coaching, shared dilemmas they faced with particular teachers, administrators, and content, and studied professional texts that would support coaching. All members shared their experiences with and knowledge about topics of discussion and they left the meetings "uplifted and feeling energized." Unfortunately, the meetings no longer exist and interaction is irregular, conducted through occasional e-mails or meetings outside of school hours. Terri misses these meetings because she learned from her colleagues and hopes they learned from her.

Terri also credits several mentors who have served as role models of effective teaching and leadership. "I think of certain people and I think about what they do that I can learn from to make me a better leader." These include a former principal and assistant superintendent, a literacy coach in another school district, and her current principal. She valued the gifts that each of them gave to her, including models of integrity, enthusiasm, and perseverance. She also credits her colleagues as important mentors, all of whom have

helped her learn through their interactions every day. “I realized that I rely on people to build capacity in the school and in doing so it makes me a better leader.” Terri is working on her people skills, learning how to work with people in order to engage them and encouraging everyone to participate. She seeks feedback from her principal, Anne, other coaches at Teacher’s College, and the teachers at her schools in order to hone her skills. “I’ve learned just by watching people. I’ve learned how to listen, how to take into consideration people’s needs, checking in, showing them that you support them in many ways. I feel like I’ve fine tuned, that I’ve been getting better having had some good role models.”

Terri as a Relationship Builder

I can see differences.
I can see them using my suggestions.
I see that they have the hang of it.
I can see my influence.

Terri has worked hard for twenty four years to build strong and positive relationships with teachers at River Meadow. She believes that teachers know that she has the experience and knowledge to support them in improving their literacy instruction and they trust her in helping them reflect on their practice. “They know that I know what its like to be in the classroom because I still am.” However, this has not always been the case. Some people saw her only as a first and second grade teacher or as a reading teacher rather than as someone who could coach and support teachers of all grade levels and subject areas. “Until a few years ago, some people didn’t even know I had a Master’s

degree." Her longevity and experience were initially barriers to her role as a coach. 'I was established, but that worked against me. The upper grades didn't have a lot of confidence in me working with their kids. When I started working with their kids, I got in a lot of practice with that age group. It's been long enough now and they know what I can do."

It was also not until she has participated in the extensive training at Teacher's College that others realized her capacity as a coach. "After eighteen weeks at Teacher's College, I guess they realized I could teach! It was this training that made them see me differently and build their respect for me." In some ways, it was disappointing to Terri that validation from an outside source was necessary for her colleagues to accept her in this role, although she is "just glad that it did."

She also credits Angela in helping establish her as the "go to" person in literacy. "All of a sudden, I had validation." Angela, River Meadow's principal, comes to Terri for advice and feedback and instructs others to do the same. This was not the case with previous administrators who did not understand her role or were unaware of the kind of work she could do with them. "I never had this kind of support before now. That made my role really difficult. Nobody was giving me an opportunity to be a leader and do the things that needed to be done. I didn't have the support, and that was big." Teachers now consult with Terri about literacy instruction and provide opportunities for her to work with them during the school day, things they asked for from Angela and that she was "thrilled" to provide. "They always saw me in a teaching role, which is good, but now they see that I could teach them too."

She hopes to do the same at O'Donnell. She saw an immediate difference in the culture of the two schools in that the teachers at O'Donnell were receptive, but cautious of her role. "They immediately started asking me questions and asking my advice." She was also careful not to "presume the worst and take time to get to know them." She asked them what they needed and what expertise they could share. "This put them at ease and showed I was interested in learning with them." The principal and assistant principal at O'Donnell are also supportive of Terri's work. "They keep asking me what I need from them. They also participate in my meetings and professional development. That's huge."

Terri's Influence

I have influence.
I feel good about where we are.
I can help them meet their goals.
I do believe that, definitely.

Terri described her colleagues as evidence of her success. "They are like my report card. If they are doing well, then I am doing well." She explained her professional goals which focused on the interpersonal qualities of leadership that she continues to develop. "One of my goals is that people will be comfortable working with me, seeing me in a coaching role and not as administrator or an evaluator, but as someone working with teachers to be the best that they can be." She senses her effectiveness as a leader in the fact that teachers now invite her into their rooms, something that did not happen widely three years ago. They ask her for feedback and ask her to reflect on their practice with them. "For me, having that level of comfort, that's a successful feeling. They feel

comfortable enough with me as a person that they ask me too help them and ultimately to help their students." Terri invites conversations about the coaching she conducts in classrooms. She talks about her classroom work during meetings with teachers, asking the teachers being coaches to explain what she did with their students. She feels that this validates her work, especially when a teacher with influence shares stories about their work together. "They'll say, 'Oh let me tell you about what we did,' and then others will ask me, 'Oh, can you come into my room too?' People hear about what I do from other teachers and at grade level meetings, and this is helpful. A lot of teachers would not have opened their doors. That's success."

Because Terri works at two schools and her time is split between the two, she is unable to provide the same level of support to River Meadow teachers as she had in the past. She focuses on eight first year teachers, helping them provide solid reading instruction, which she feels is the right priority at this time. However, teachers wonder why she has not been in their classroom as often. "It's just the opposite now, I guess. They're looking for me and I'm not available as much." She admits that she worries that some teachers wonder where she is and assume that her level of interest in them has diminished, which she says is far from the truth. "They know I'm at another school and that my priority is the new teachers. I know it's just me, but I hope they understand. I'm just one person."

Terri sees teachers using her suggestions throughout both of her schools. "This didn't happen a few years ago." For example, student writing is displayed at different stages of development and proficiency, which she credits to her emphasis on process and reflection. She was especially proud of a display by second graders whose teachers

recorded reflections about their writing on Post It notes and attached them to drafts on the walls for everyone to read. “I had taught the teachers how to do this!”

She is especially pleased to see her suggestions being used at O’Donnell where everything is new. “I can see my influence there. I can already see differences and I’ve only been there a short time. They are coming to me and asking me to come to their rooms. I walk around their classrooms and in the halls and I see that they have the hang of it.” She has had positive feedback from both administrators and teachers at O’Donnell, including a friend with who she worked at River Meadow who had transferred five years ago. “She told me how pleased and comfortable the teachers were with me. They felt like they could be open with me.” She is seeing a shift in attitudes about professional development and grade level meeting which, in the past, were cancelled frequently. There are plans to establish a Literacy Committee and set specific goals for improvement. Teachers are even asking to walk through or observe in each others’ classrooms. “They are opening their doors. They are working with each other. That’s a big change in culture.”

Terri believes that her influence is not measured in improved test scores but rather in a culture focused on teaching and learning that is built through relationships among teachers and between teachers and students. She has seen that when teachers are invested in the work that they are doing, set goals for continuous improvement, and have the time to reflect on and improve their teaching with trusted colleagues and coaches, improvements will happen, “and test scores will rise too. They have here.” In fact, the school received an award for such a dramatic improvement as measured by a particular standardized test over the course of one year in their turnaround model.

Terri as a Leader

I think about people who have inspired me.

I think of their characteristics.

I think of a leader, trying to build capacity as much as they can.

I think about what they do.

I can learn from them to make me a better leader.

I feel like I've fine tuned.

I've been getting better these last few years having had a good role model.

Terri's concept of leadership has developed throughout her career. She has worked with several different principals and assistant principals at her schools, each of whom demonstrated different qualities of leadership. She recalls some being "top-down" in which everything she did was managed by her superiors. Others were "hands-off" where she was left on her own with little involvement or interest. She has also studied leadership at Teachers' College, primarily theories of shared and distributed leadership which promote collaboration and shared decision making.

Terri believes a leader is someone "who inspires people, who can move a group of people forward." She believes that leaders must be visionary who understand the importance of collaboration with others. "A good leader is someone who does not work in a vacuum, someone who realizes it takes a large group of people to make change." In doing so, she believes that a leader must be a good listener, someone who values the contribution of others, takes different points of view into consideration, and works

collaboratively to make a difference. A strong leader also knows how to empower others to be leaders as well.

Terri says that her current principal at River Meadow, Angela, is a strong leader. Hired as a "turnaround leader" who replaced a principal removed from her position along with one-third of the faculty as part of a major school restructuring project initiated after several consecutive years of poor student achievement, Angela practices a shared leadership model in which she involves teacher leaders like Terri, people with both knowledge and influence, in making decisions that impact management, teaching, learning, and parent engagement at the school. While she makes some decisions by herself, she does not work in isolation and involves others in all aspects of the school.

Angela has been principal at River Meadow for two years, having served as a principal at elementary schools with similar school improvement initiatives in other states for fifteen years. She was recruited to work at the school because of her strong reputation and because of her previous experience in the district, having begun her career as a special education teacher there over thirty years ago. Terri describes Angela as having a strong presence in the school, spending time in classrooms every day and knowing children, parents, and teachers by name. She holds teachers accountable by knowing what is going on in their classrooms, asking questions about student progress, and connecting people with resources as they need them. She listens to the needs of her staff and follows up with responses to questions or feedback. In fact, before she arrived, she surveyed every member of the staff electronically, asking them what they needed to bring the school forward. She looked seriously at everything they said and began to understand the needs of the school and of the staff. During her first year, she "made sure that she

implemented everything the staff asked for, almost to the point where it was like, careful what you wish for because you were going to get it."

Terri believes that this, coupled with her presence in classrooms, built Angela's credibility among the faculty. "People come to her which never happened before with a principal." She quickly engaged the teachers who remained at River Meadow after the restructuring who were originally skeptical of the turnaround initiative which involved the removal of the school's veteran principal, a woman who had also been a parent, paraprofessional, and teacher at the school, and transfer of over ten teachers to other district schools. Angela empowered the faculty to make change and instilled in them a confidence in their school, their students, and themselves. "Everybody just blossomed, that's the word for it, at least I know that I did," Terri said. "We finally had a leader who believed in us and listened to us and was here to work with us." She acknowledges that not everything was easy and that some teachers were initially uncomfortable with the "amount of rigor" involved in the turnaround initiative which included not only personnel changes but also new curriculum models, instructional practices, and schedules. But through a model of shared leadership, Angela navigated a change process, a top-down initiative directed by the school district as a mandate, by working with a team of teachers, parents, and administrators. Terri supports the initiative and believes it has made a huge impact on every aspect of school culture. Terri supports Angela as well, realizing that their concepts of leadership align. "I learned you have to have knowledge but you also have to put it into action."

Now that she works at O'Donnell School as well, Terri is very aware of the qualities of leadership she has learned and is working to apply them in this new

community. While the school improvement initiative at O'Donnell is not as drastic as the one at River Meadow and it has not replaced its principal or faculty, Terri has been charged by the district's assistant superintendent who oversees teaching and learning at all schools to "make change happen and move us forward." This places her in a difficult position because she does not want to challenge the principal's authority or be seen as an outsider brought in "tell them everything they are doing is bad and I have a better way." Following Angela's model, Terri began her work by asking teachers and administrators what they needed and providing them with immediate feedback. "I'm not making broad assumptions about them or underestimating what they already know." She also immediately established a regular presence in the school, working in as many classrooms as her schedule allowed, building relationships with students, teachers, and administrators in order to lead change. She is conscious that she is not the principal and is careful to be respectful of her and not "step on her toes." Terri met with the principal, Sandra, and assistant principal, Mary Ann, on several occasions before beginning her work. They talked extensively about their beliefs about literacy, leadership, and common mission as well as Terri's role at the school. Fortunately, their beliefs were aligned and both Sandra and Mary Ann are "excited" to have Terri working at her school. "They were very open to having me there, even though I was sent there" by the assistant superintendent. They saw this mandate as an opportunity to refine their work in literacy and assured Terri that they would provide whatever she needed from them to support her and her work. At O'Donnell, Terri felt like she was able to apply what she had learned.

Terri believes that building and district administrators have respect for her and acknowledge her as a leader. At River Meadow, she leads the school's literacy committee

which developed and monitors the school improvement initiative in literacy. She collects, organizes, and analyzes student achievement data to share with the team which strategizes area of continued progress. The entire team shares the responsibility for the plan, much of whose original goals have been successfully accomplished which allows them to work on more focused topics or concentrate on more specific areas. “Everybody makes the decisions” about what to focus on, based on different sources of data. She is proud that she is now able to share the facilitation with others on the team. “I can hold back now, they are running with it.” Still, Terri is perceived as the literacy leader of the school and is the first person with whom teachers consult about literacy instruction. “I think they are used to seeing me in that role and they come to me about anything. I think that they, I hope that they, see me as a leader.”

Terri also serves on the school’s Leadership Team, organized by the principal, and serves as a liaison to the Literacy Committee. The team meets monthly to discuss issues and initiatives involving both management and instructional leadership, making decisions collaboratively or advising the principal. Members include Terri and Angela, as well as one teacher from every grade level and specific departments like social services, English as a second language, special services, and unified arts. Angela delegates many things to Terri and gives her autonomy in making decisions that will impact literacy at the school. ‘She trusts me and she comes to me asking for advice. She will talk about the bigger issues at the school as well and want to know my opinion on things. She trusts my judgment and puts a lot of faith in me.”

Administrators in the greater school district trust her as well. Before starting her work at O’Donnell, the assistant superintendent confidentially shared with her the

difficulties the school faced in achievement, teaching, and leadership. He saw her as a change agent and explained how he saw her as a catalyst that could begin a transformation at the school.

Conclusion

I communicate.

I help.

I understand.

I do whatever it takes.

I think that they realize that.

Terri's abilities as a teacher of literacy are strong, as is her ability to share ideas and practices with other teachers. However, she has only recently become confident in her leadership role. In some ways, she says that she has never been completely comfortable with it, although she loves her job and would never leave it, especially since it was redefined three years ago. "I'm not a natural born leader. I know I need some training and I need some help. That's what I've been working on and that's why I feel as though the training I've been given in the last three years has helped me with my leadership skills a lot." She recognizes what is challenging to her, like "jumping into" a lesson to coach while a teacher is in the middle of teaching, a strategy that was introduced to her at Teacher's College. She wants to be respectful of her colleagues, but knows that there is a greater likelihood of learning in the moment rather than after the fact. She also recognizes the challenge of participating in a shared leadership model, although she has become comfortable with that given the example she has witnessed by her principal, Angela. She believes she has developed and continues to refine her abilities

and qualities as a leader. She has observed the qualities she admires in others and attempts to incorporate them into the perception she has of herself.

Terri sees herself as a leader who can "lift people up according to their strengths" and help others who have certain needs "just as we do with children." She has come to this over many years, developing her capacity which she said did not come naturally. She accomplishes this by being clear and focused in all that she does, especially in sharing the vision for the work they are attempting. "I feel that when you are leading a school into doing something you have to give them the big picture and the reasons why you are doing it." She knows the kind of impact a literacy specialist can have on a school. Terri found that this is true at a school like River Meadow with demographics of high poverty and cultural diversity coupled with a drastic reform initiative as well as at a school like O'Donnell with less socio-cultural diversity but with a faculty that is reluctant to embrace reform. Terri sees herself as a leader with considerable knowledge, experience, and influence, an identity which has been formed over time and continues to develop in the context of her school communities which empower her to continue learning, teaching, and leading.

I am no where near where I should be.
I still need practice, practice in how to be effective.
I think modeling is easy to do, but coaching is not.
I still struggle and want to get better.
I'm thinking.
I know my influence is needed.
I know I have influence as a leader.

Kim

I met with Kim twice for interviews. We had previously spoken on the telephone and she had completed the Voice Thread questionnaire. While I asked if we could meet at her school, she said that her office in the district's administrative building would be quieter and free of interruptions. Our conversation was focused around a framework of questions which Kim had asked to look at while we were talking. She spoke quietly, deliberately, and succinctly, elaborating only when prompted to do so. She chose her words carefully and confirmed her anonymity several times. Kim was recently given the administrative title of Title I Director along with an administrative contract and salary. The Title I program is funded by the federal government and provides specialized instruction in reading and math for struggling learners in school with high rates of poverty. Having previously served as a program manager under a teachers' contract, Amanda was well aware of the considerable amount of administration required in order to remain compliant to the grant. This new title included additional job responsibilities which presented a unique and challenging combination of expectations which now included supervision of teachers, something that literacy coaches do not typically do.

The portrait that follows describes the work Kim has done throughout her career, including successes and disappointments she experienced as a literacy coach, as well as her aspirations for future administrative leadership roles and the challenges and opportunities she has discovered in her current role. Her story is unique because of this as is her perspective on her role as a literacy specialist. Having seen her position as a coach eliminated twice in just five years, she believes the role to be important but "disposable", thus encouraging her to maintain a more stable position in school

administration. All of these experiences have contributed to the development of her identity as a leader.

Background

I am a daughter.

I am a wife.

I am a mother.

I am a reader.

Kim is a forty three years old married white woman who has worked in education as a classroom teacher, school literacy coach, and district administrator in two different school districts since 1993. Her work history has been varied, but always focused around literacy, a topic she describes as a "passion, more like a hobby than a job."

Literacy has always been an important part of Kim's life. As a child, she was read to by her parents and appreciated the experiences they provided her while growing up in a small fishing community on the New England coast. She recalls accompanying them on their lobster boats and still enjoys lobstering occasionally as an adult and finds peace whenever she is on the ocean. Today, she lives with her husband and two adolescent children near a small lake where they enjoy outdoor sports as well as "whatever activity my kids are in at the moment." She also loves to read, mostly children's books and professional literature, and write fiction, sharing her passion with family, friends, and colleagues whenever possible. She hopes to instill in her students the same love for reading and writing that she had as a child and throughout her life.

Kim's Roles in Education

I want to help kids succeed in school and beyond.

I see great things in our future.

Kim currently works as a part-time literacy coach and part-time administrator for her school district's Title IA program, a federally funded program intended to provide support for children who are struggling with reading at schools with high rates of poverty. Her district includes three communities: the state's capital city and two smaller towns, one a more affluent suburb and one a poor rural town. She spends part of every week at Waterview Elementary School in the city and part in her office as well as at other schools with Title IA programs. Her office is small and uncluttered. A bookcase filled with neatly labeled notebooks and a single file cabinet lined one wall. Her desk is neat as well with several file folders and legal pads open to current projects, although she is attempting to move paper files to electronic ones. The single window in her office overlooks a park, a view Kim says that she enjoys and appreciates on days when she is "tied to" her desk which she finds is happening more and more often.

Kim's held different positions throughout her career. For thirteen years, Kim worked in a large rural school district comprised of five small towns. Families in four of the five towns worked in service industries or as farm laborers; unemployment was high. Families in the fifth town typically held professional jobs, many of whom worked in the nearby state capital.

For nine years, Kim worked as a third grade teacher at Holmes School, a school of 150 students in one of the poorer communities within the district. It was during this

period that she completed a Master's degree in literacy education because she felt like she needed to learn how to teach reading to her third graders. "I realized how thoroughly unprepared I was to instruct children who came to me in the third grade and still did not know all their letters and didn't have the basic skills for learning how to read. I didn't have a large enough tool box to pull from." She used her newly developed skills and provided a solid instructional program.

In 2002, Mike, the principal at Northern Star School, the largest of the district's elementary schools, wrote and received a grant to hire a literacy specialist to support writing instruction because students at the time were struggling to achieve well on standardized tests. The assistant superintendent for instruction asked Kim to consider leaving her classroom at Holmes and take on the job at Northern Star. She did, and began to work as the school's first literacy coach. In that role, she concentrated on writing instruction, supporting teachers in their implementation of strategies to enhance student performance. Over the course of three years, Kim coached teachers in implementing a writing workshop approach and their students grew to exceed the state average on standardized tests.

When the grant ended, the position of Literacy Coach was eliminated and Kim became a Title IA reading teacher at the same school and worked with small groups of students who were struggling with reading and writing. Students at the school continued to meet or exceeded proficiency targets on standardized tests with 84% meeting or exceeding the state average on the most recent assessment. The school currently has fourteen classroom teachers as well as special educators, unified arts teachers, intervention teachers, but no literacy coach or specialist.

Kim enjoyed working as a Title IA teacher and using her skills as a literacy specialist, but began to grow "restless," having completed a certificate of advanced graduate study in educational leadership at a local public university. She missed working as a coach and was eager to find a position like that again, although she admits that "those jobs are often hard to find and, like at Northern Star, they are often the first to go. They are disposable when budgets are reduced." While unhappy about this realization, Kim said that she accepts it as a reality in public education.

In 2009, a neighboring city, the state's capital, established a position for a second elementary literacy coach who would work at its largest elementary school, Waterview. The position was intended to further the implementation of initiatives begun during a Reading First grant and compliment the work begun by a literacy coach who had worked there for several years. However, unlike the other position, the second position was funded locally and because of reductions in the local budget, it was eliminated a year later.

Kim returned to Northern Star in 2010, again as a third grade teacher. She taught for one year, but when her former district reestablished the coaching position in 2011, she applied and again returned as a part time literacy coach at Waterview and part time Title IA program manager for the district. She continued in both positions for two years until she was appointed full time Title IA Director, an administrative position, in 2013.

Kim's Work as a Literacy Specialist

I look at instruction and student achievement.
I feel like it's my job to make sure we're moving in a positive direction.

When Kim was in her second year of teaching third graders, she decided that she needed to become a literacy specialist. Her graduate program in literacy education, which she completed in four years, provided her with a state license as a literacy specialist and she initially envisioned using her knowledge in her own classroom, supporting her own students. “I knew I never wanted to be a principal, but I started to think about what else I could do to help others.” She soon began to think about how she could have an impact on even more students at her school. She shared ideas with her colleagues, principal, and assistant superintendent for instruction which led to her appointment as a literacy coach. She was able to focus on her passion for literacy and influence they ways that students learned throughout the school.

Kim’s role as literacy coach at Northern Star primarily involved supporting her colleagues in the teaching of writing. She analyzed achievement data, determined areas in need of improvement, and developed opportunities to teach her colleagues about writing. She conducted workshops and offered professional development. She modeled lessons in classrooms and invited reflection with her colleagues, asking them to gradually adopt the writing workshop model she was demonstrating in a gradual release model (Vygotsky, 1978). “It was very positive, fun, collaborative. I built relationships with students and staff.” She is proud of the positive changes she and her colleagues realized, and especially since those changes were sustained.

Kim believes her roles as a literacy coach have always been very clear. When she worked as a writing coach for three years at Northern Star, the faculty and administrators had a clear understanding of what she was going to be doing. The principal, Mike, had

been collaborative and very clear with the staff when proposing the grant to support writing instruction and validated the position long before Kim was appointed to it. “He trusted me to do what I knew was best, and the teachers did too. They welcomed me into their classrooms right away.” Because she had taught in the district, some of the teachers knew her, although none had every worked with her. She became part of the school community and even after her coaching role formally ended and she became a Title IA reading teacher, colleagues continued to ask her for suggestions and administrators asked her to lead workshops and committees around literacy initiatives, including a committee to develop a writing continuum. “I knew that they saw me as a leader, especially after I went back to the classroom with teachers I had been coaching. They kept coming to me. That was great.” While she enjoyed the opportunity to continue her coaching, she was frustrated because it “seemed much more haphazard and disorganized.” Coaching and collaboration happened primarily in classroom of her struggling students. She never presented herself as the expert but as one who “would ask the questions” in order to accomplish solutions together. “It was all about building relationships.”

Her experience at Waterview as a Reading First coach was different. It was taking longer to build relationships and teachers were “not in a good place, culturally.” There were challenges with the principal who was disinterested in her work and with teachers were not trusting of outsiders. The atmosphere was somewhat toxic and hard to navigate. “It’s always hard. It takes time. I think it takes two years to get established in a school, maybe three. I felt like I was just getting my momentum at Northern Star. I was just getting comfortable. Not staying in a position long enough is a barrier.”

Kim believes it is important that teachers see literacy coaches as leaders. “If they don’t see you as a leader, then there won’t be accountability. They need to trust you, trust that you won’t tell on them, so to speak. But they have to know you’re there to hold them to a standard.”

Kim believes that administrators in both districts regard her as a leader. “Whenever there is a grade level meeting, I help facilitate. The other instructional coaches do too. I’m not in charge of it, principals are, but I’m there to support and teach.” Now that she has been given an administrative title, along with an administrative contract and salary, she believes that their perceptions of her as a leader are much more solid. “I’m included in principal meetings and I’m asked my opinion much more often.” She is cautious about losing her acceptance by teachers though, and is aware that some colleagues now see her as an administrator rather than a teacher. “I hope they can see I’m still their coach.

Kim was eager to accept her first role as a literacy coach. In the role, she worked with classroom teachers, modeling lessons and providing professional development during staff meetings and after school workshops. She also supervised her colleagues, providing frequent reports to the principal about the progress of the teachers. She was focused on implementing the school improvement initiative outlined in their Reading First grant, ensuring accountability for her colleagues. She said she was somewhat uncomfortable with this aspect of her job, but helped her colleagues maintain fidelity to programming by providing constructive feedback as well as resources to support them.

Kim was disappointed when her position ended but pleased when it was reinstated a year later and was excited by its new definition which involved coaching teachers and coordinating the district's Title I program, both part time positions. Both roles were part of the teachers' bargaining unit and were considered teaching positions. They involved no supervisory responsibilities, which she preferred having been uncomfortable with those responsibilities involved in her previous coaching job. Kim worked along side teachers, particularly novices, based on needs they identified. She provided workshops and facilitated meetings at which teachers were allowed to discuss practices and learn new techniques. "We talked about how we could solve problems and do this together. I had my bag of tricks and they had their bag of tricks. We would discuss everything and come up with the best solution for that group of kids." She tried to give every teacher an equal amount of attention, although she was directed to concentrate on some teachers by the principal. In fact, she was directed by the principal to work with one teacher who had refused her support. "I tried to work my way in there. We ended up doing some co-teaching, writing a class story together. I tried to scaffold, but I don't think she found it valuable." She also helped teachers use assessment more effectively, created data walls where teachers posted and kept track of student achievement data, and helped teachers analyze results and strategize solutions.

As coordinator of the Title IA program, Kim was responsible for overseeing a federal grant of almost $1 million provided to the district to support instruction for struggling students. This included managing financial reports and ensuring compliance requirements were being followed, including required parent engagement activities, teacher certification documents, and annual reports of progress. With an office at the

city's administrative building, she worked in the background. Kim was not involved in daily supervision of teachers but she was available to provide coaching and consultation. While she missed the opportunity to be with teachers and students all day, she was ready for a new challenge. "I had been in the classroom and in Title I, out of the classroom as a coach, and back in the classroom as a teacher. I knew I wanted to do literacy work. Even though I would not be working with kids, I was ready for a change."

In 2013, the district's administration changed her position to that of Title IA director, an administrative job, but she still maintained her position as a part-time literacy coach at Waterview. In addition to managing the grant, which she had been doing, she became responsible for the supervision and evaluation of teachers, a responsibility for which she believed she was now ready but concerned about perceptions from her colleagues. "It was tough, especially with the other literacy coaches. I wanted to validate what they do and I see all the good things that they do. But I had to give tough and honest feedback." She hopes that she will continue to develop a balance between coaching and supervising as she navigates both roles.

Kim's Concept of Leadership

I make decisions that have a bigger impact.

I am hiring and evaluating.

I am establishing programs.

I can facilitate and fund the needs I have identified and help with that.

I am close to the teachers.

I know they think of me as a leader.

Kim's concept of leadership has developed primarily through her interactions with other leaders and graduate study, as well as in the tasks of the different jobs she has held. She describes an ideal leader as one who possesses essential qualities that create a vision and move it forward. Organization, helpfulness, passion, and a positive demeanor, along with the ability to make decisions based on input that solicits different points of view, are necessary for leaders to be successful. "I look at leadership as more of an art than a science. Knowing how to get things done, organizing tasks to generate energy for a project and then getting the right people on the bus, enlisting others to get the job done, communicating a message, these are all parts of who a good leader is." She also describes a successful leader as one who listens, collaborates, and solves problems. "We talked about this a lot in graduate school."

Kim has worked with a number of administrators in her different schools and districts and has observed their leadership qualities and styles. Some provided examples that she attempted to emulate while others demonstrated qualities she did not wish to repeat. "I remember the principal who hired me as being a strong leader. Phil was tireless in his efforts to meet student needs. He empowered teachers to work on behalf of students. He asked us what we needed and he provided that, especially time, to work together to get things done." Kim has tried to incorporate his qualities as a literacy coach and as a program manager. "I'm especially a strong collaborator and I try to get consensus and try to hear from others before I make a decision. Well, maybe not always consensus, but definitely input."

Kim also recalls a principal, Jill, whom she considered less than successful and remembers the time at her school, the one year she spent as a Reading First coach, as

being chaotic. “Issues were not being addressed and people were very frustrated. I realized you had to get to the bottom of what’s happening and take care of them. Issues do not go away.” Jill did not communicate well with others and rarely asked for input, although she directed everything that Kim did. “She had her doctorate but she couldn’t communicate.” She wished Jill would “just go and talk to people, but it was not my place to judge or tell my boss what to do.” She compared her to another principal, Claire, who had replaced Jill the year she returned to Waterview. “She was very approachable and wanted to help in any way. She always wanted to know what I was doing and supported me, and allowed me to do what I had to do. She didn’t worry much about me.” She also described Claire as being fun, collaborative, and interested in building relationships. While instruction was not her forte, she depended on Kim to lead the school’s literacy initiatives. “I think she was very thankful.”

As a district leader, Kim sees a new role as a supporter to teachers, paraprofessionals, and principals who have Title IA programs in their schools. She plans the program, manages the grant, and supervises the staff but manages to collaborate with others in all aspects. “Title I play an important part of their schools. I can’t work in isolation. I always ask input. I don’t want my programs to be in a vacuum. That’s part of my leadership style.” While collaboration is embedded in her personal values and the values of other leaders in the district, this leadership model is sometimes frustrating when a number of participants are new to their roles. “My principal is now in her third year, another is in his first, and the superintendent and assistant superintendent are new, the business manager is new, I’m sort of new in my role. There can be some struggles with this because when you are looking for an answer, people may not always have them.”

Kim's Identity

I've been one of the leaders.

I have a plan.

I see great things in the future.

Kim feels like she has now achieved the "ideal combination of responsibilities," although she realizes that she is losing contact with children. "Especially in the administrative job, I feel like things keep pulling me farther away from kids and teachers. But I'll do all that I can to keep in contact with them because they will help me make informed decisions." She provides leadership in establishing new programs funded through Title IA grant, including a new math program that principals and teachers has requested and would support struggling students. She is also the liaison with the director from the Department of Education who oversees federal funding and ensures compliance with the requirements of the grant. She is still developing her confidence in this area as the "rules seem to keep changing. It's so confusing." Still, she reaches out to the Department of Education and other Title IA directors for support and advice when she needs to.

Kim facilitates the school literacy team at Waterview. This committee consists of teachers at different grade levels and meets regularly to discuss the school's literacy program. One task it completed was a major purchase of books for use in reading instruction. Kim and the team inventoried the books they had, assessed their condition, analyzed the collection, and selected titles to add. This created a robust book room from which teachers could borrow books to use in their classrooms.

She also initiated a district-wide literacy team in connection with an initiative sponsored by the state Department of Education which would develop a community-school literacy plan focused on increasing partnerships in support of literacy in families and throughout the city. “I created a team of representatives from across the city, including many agencies and the schools. We hold monthly meetings and come up with ways to promote family literacy.” She describes how the group coordinated a partnership between the Boys Scouts and one of the school literacy specialists to design and build ‘Free Libraries,’ small bookshelves in public places where people can borrow or swap books. They established four around the city and had plans to build more. They organized pre-school literacy events, recorded public service announcements, and offered other family reading events throughout the city. “We have a lot going on!”

Kim is proud of her leadership in her role as the Title IA director in which she developed pamphlets and a website for parents to increase their engagement with student learning. While involving parents is a requirement of the federal grant, Kim decided that the district needed a fresh approach to the program. She consulted with the Title IA director at the Department of Education about ways to involve parents and then invited Title IA teachers to work with her in creating drafts. They did, and over the course of several months, drafted final documents that have been distributed to parents and the community. She was proud that she not only involved teachers in her program but also principals, parents, and students in the district’s marketing and web design programs.

They also developed a logo, distributed t-shirts promoting the program, and hosted events to celebrate the release of the documents. While she has not had a lot of feedback, positive or negative, she believes the campaign has been effective. She also

envisions more work that could be done to promote the program and intends to move forward with them. “Communication is so important to me.”

Kim’s influence differed at each of the schools at which she worked. When she was in the classroom, she knows how she influenced her group of students every year, and worked to improve her instruction through her graduate study in order to have a greater impact. She also influenced her colleagues by spearheading initiatives that would help them with their work and improve student learning. One example she noted was handwriting instruction with third graders which the district was not focused on but she felt was important. “Even if the principal didn’t ask us to do something, I decided we needed to do it anyway. It was my impetus to get things going.” She organized a means for them to study different approaches and built consensus when they made a decision.

As a coach, Kim believed she influenced the direction of her school when she collected, analyzed, and presented data to the principal and teachers. She started conversations about students and their progress as well as the kinds of instruction the children were receiving. Still, she did not have autonomy. Principals directed her work and most saw her role as a catalyst for change, as one of their tools for school improvement. All of the principals with whom she worked, including Jill who she did not find effective and Mike and Claire who she found herself aligned in leadership style, understood the role of a coach to be that of a professional developer, an agent of change who could influence teachers. Kim’s influence at her schools was connected to the leadership of her principals.

While she had influence within her own school, Kim felt that she had little at the district level when she was a coach. Even when she worked as a literacy coach in the district, her impact was limited. “Getting upper administration, like those at Central Office, getting them to understand what literacy specialists do on a daily basis, how specialized they are and the training that they gave, getting them to understand what we can do for the school, but they have no idea what we do.” However, once she began to manage a district-wide program and especially when she was named its administrator, she sees her potential for greater influence.

Kim is anxious to explore other administrative roles in her district. While she says she does not want to become a principal, she would like to work as a curriculum director or other program administrator. She believes that she will never return to classroom teaching at this point and has assumed a new identity as a school leader.

Conclusion

I knew I wanted to do literacy work.
I was just so ready.
I really enjoy it.
I do believe that I am a leader, but I have a lot of work to do.
I am always learning.
I haven’t met that bar yet.

Kim is reflective about her journey in education from her days as a classroom teacher to her current role as a coach and district administrator. She aspires to another role as well, that of a district curriculum coordinator with responsibilities in overseeing teaching and learning across all grade levels and content areas. She enjoys her work as an

administrator and although she misses the daily interaction with children and she wishes she could spend more time with teachers, she does not regret her career decisions. She feels that she has become a good leader, having observed other leaders, studied leadership strategies, and maximized leadership opportunities when presented to her. She especially sees herself as having a strong perspective on the evaluation of teachers, given her focus on instruction for so long, but worries that blending coaching with supervision presented a challenge. She said that she knows good teaching and believes she is able to support teachers in creating it. Careful not to appear as an expert, preferring to invite shared knowledge, she attempts to work collaboratively with others. Kim is direct in her approach and provides honest feedback to teachers that they need to hear. "It's hard though. I'm not exactly nurturing. I'm not cold hearted, but I'm not going to hold their hands." Her standards remain high and promises to help teachers meet them. That, she believes, is what she believes to be her role as a leader.

I feel like a leader with some influence now.
I feel like I am getting momentum.
I am just getting comfortable.

Kate

I met with Kate on two occasions at a coffee shop located in between her school and home. I asked to meet at her school, but she said she preferred we did not meet there. Her principal and a former colleague are both friends of mine and had suggested her for my sample, of which she was aware, although they did not know she had agreed to be in my study. Both conversations were rich, animated, and lengthy. Kate has an engaging

presence and uses her voice to draw the listener's attention. In this portrait, I will discuss Kate's background, her work as a literacy specialist, her participation in a community of practice, and her beliefs about leadership, all of which have constructed her identity as a leader.

Background

I think about what we always teach the kids.

I love literacy.

I wonder why people don't see the value.

I wonder why more people don't take stock in these practices.

Kate is a fifty-eight year old white woman who works at Simpson Elementary School, a 630-student public elementary school for students in grades three, four, and five in a New England city as a literacy specialist. She has worked in education for thirty-five years as an elementary classroom teacher, special educator, and for the past eight years as a literacy specialist at Simpson. She previously worked at an elementary school in a neighboring city as well as at schools in other states. Kate grew up in the state in which she now lives and earned a Bachelors of Science in elementary education at a selective private college. She was not hired for a teaching job her first year after college, so she went back to school at night to take courses to become certified as a special education teacher. "I figured, well, if I can't get in one way, then I'll do it this way." She later earned a Masters of Science in exceptionality with a concentrated in gifted and talented education at a large, local public university while she was working as a fifth grade teacher. While she enjoyed her studies in gifted and talented education, she never worked

exclusively with identified children but rather used her skills within her own classrooms. Because she has also worked with students with learning disabilities, she feels like she understands the full continuum of student abilities which is helpful in her work as a literacy specialist.

Kate has been married for 31 years and has two adult daughters, one of whom is a teacher. She enjoys many interests and hobbies, particularly outdoor winter activities. She notes that literacy is at "the heart of my job" and has been personally impacted by what she teaches children about reading, that it "entertains you, informs you, persuades you." She reads current research "to keep myself well informed about current practices, trends, things that we really need to keep ahead of the curve on and be thinking about what it means for our practice." She is always reading several things and especially enjoys biographies, memoirs, and historical fiction. She enjoys reading on her iPad because it is "very accessible and that make it a bit easier."

Context of Kate's School

I'm part of a team.
I've agreed to have a part in that team
And I'll follow through.

Simpson's school mission embraces literacy by stating that "reading, thinking, and communicating are essential" to everything they do. Its students typically rank at or above the state average on annual reading achievement tests, although the school was assigned a failing grade by the state Department of Education because of achievement gaps between the scores of students in the general population and children who are

economically disadvantaged and between Caucasian students and students of color. 31% of its students qualify for free and reduced priced meals and 93% are classified as Caucasian. Because of its designation as a failing school, Simpson was required to develop an improvement plan to address ways that would reduce the gap and improve achievement in reading. Its principal, who arrived the same year as Kate, and its assistant principal are very supportive of literacy initiatives, as are its teachers, the majority of whom have taught for more than fifteen years.

Recently, voters in the city where Simpson is located, decided to withdraw from the school district and establish its own governance, funding, and administration. The politics surrounding this decision, according to Kate, affected everybody and became a huge topic of debate. Reasons cited by proponents of the separate school district involved the way that its $42 million annual budget was funded, with their city contributing more because of higher property taxes. The city also preferred to administer its three schools separately and provide tuition for students to attend a private high school in the city. While this decision will not impact Kate directly and she has not engaged in the debate as she does not live in that city, it may reduce her ability to collaborate with colleagues in the other communities.

Kate's Work as a Literacy Specialist

I am a literacy specialist.
I see a vision of what literacy instruction should look like.

While her title of literacy specialist has not changed since she was hired, Kate's responsibilities have. At different times, Kate has worked exclusively with children

struggling with literacy and exclusively with teachers on instructional practices, depending on the school's needs. However, most of the time, Kate has balanced her responsibilities to both. In the last two years Kate has primarily supported new and veteran teachers through coaching, collecting and analyzing achievement data, developing curriculum, and providing professional development. This was at the direction of her current principal, Angus.

Kate became a literacy specialist through the encouragement of a Shaun, a former principal at Simpson School, although she had not worked with him when he recruited her. In 2005, the school was establishing the new position of a literacy specialist and Shaun was searching for "just the right" person to work with both children and teachers and who would be able to lead literacy initiatives at the school. "I was teaching at another school and he came into my classroom and observed me. I had been an active on the ELA (English language arts) committee at my school and my district, and my principal suggested he talk with me. He did, and he encouraged me to consider the opportunity." Before she applied for the position, she talked at length with a Peg, a "dear friend" who was planning to apply for a similar literacy specialist position at one of the primary schools. "We both got very excited about moving out of the classroom and doing some pretty intensive work at this level." She applied and was appointed to the position at Simpson, working with both students and teachers in the school as well as at the district level with the elementary literacy team. The principal who had recruited her resigned to work as an administrator at the private high school in the city and the current principal was hired. He and Kate "saw eye to eye right away" and support each other in establishing an environment for shared leadership focused on student learning.

For two of her eight years as a literacy specialist, Kate worked exclusively with students because of the "urgency to make sure students were meeting standards." She enjoyed this, but felt that she could be helping even more children if she had the time to work with their teachers. Recently, however, she has been able to better balance her time with children and teachers. She was always part of any decision to modify her role, discussing with Angus the needs of the school and determining the best use of her focus which now involves data analysis, classroom coaching, curriculum development, and professional development. Serving as "data coach" is the newest of Kate's responsibilities which she prepared for by taking courses on data analysis and data driven dialogue which have helped her develop skills and strategies to have conversations with teachers about student learning. She works with teachers in the classrooms demonstrating teaching practices for new teachers and co-teaching lessons with veterans, many of which involve writing instruction. Kate appreciates and values this time with teachers, providing different opportunities for professional learning. She especially enjoys working with other teachers on a committee of "Reading Teacher Leaders," a group of teachers who voluntarily participate in action research with a nationally known consultant hired by the district as part of Simpson's school improvement plan to support the faculty in reading and writing instruction. She finds this work beneficial for herself and the school, particularly because of the ongoing relationship the consultant has established with individuals in the school and the networks she has helped them establish with other schools in other cities and states.

Kate's Beliefs about Leadership

I don't think you can necessarily make a leader.

I think there are a lot of skills that a leader probably should have.
I think you have to have a certain personality.
I think that has a lot to do with building capacity for shared leadership.

Kate's concept of leadership has developed throughout her career, working with different principals, professors, and teacher leaders in the different schools at which she has worked. She envisions a "certain personality type" that is needed to be a leader that included honesty, trustworthiness as well as a sense of humor, a willingness to think strategically, and the ability to "read people quickly and respond quickly" in order to manage both people and issues and move things forward. She believes that effective leaders are "willing to expose themselves and be open to feedback and questions" and work toward solutions collaboratively. "I don't think you can just necessarily make a leader," but rather she sees how leadership can develop over time and through different experiences. Kate remembers her first principal who hired her as a special educator and later as a classroom teacher as "very even-tempered" which allowed him to see everything in balance, a skill she admired and has tried to emulate. She also remembers a former superintendent who had a similar personality that contributed to his effectiveness as a district leader who maintained a solid vision for the entire community. "He was just another level person, just so solid, not really emotional but very bright and extremely effective." She credits him for introducing the concept of teacher leaders to the district and establishing teams that would develop curriculum and support instruction through continuous professional development which she continues to advocate and practice in her work today. "That did a lot for building capacity for shared leadership among teachers. The teams' work is highly effective, still, even twenty years after he started that."

This model of shared leadership has been a central theme in the school district, especially when some administrative roles were eliminated when individuals retired, including that of the curriculum director, whose responsibilities were assigned to various principals in the district. “Luckily they realized they can’t get their work done without us!” Different groups of teacher leaders coordinate literacy, math, and other content area curricula and offer different kinds of professional development connected to it. Kate facilitates the literacy team but works closely with the other teacher leaders as well in order to remain organized and collaborative.

Kate believes that the concept of leadership in schools is very broad and must be shared in order to be effective. “I think that most teachers are leaders, down and dirty. They have leadership qualities because otherwise they would not have chosen to do that they are doing.” She feels that teachers in her school feel the same way as most are involved in different teams or committees and are unafraid to share their opinions about issues about curriculum and school management. Angus, her principal, invites this kind of collaboration and reaches out to teachers to involve and engage them in decisions. Teachers also solicit feedback from each other in order to grow and improve. “Good leaders just do this.”

Kate sees a downside of a shared leadership model as well since teachers, herself included, are asked to do many things outside of their expected job. She has especially felt this recently because teachers have begun to resist being involved in as many initiatives. Because of some “political reasons, which is unfortunate” resulting from a recent drawn out contract dispute as well as the current decision for the city to withdraw from the larger school district, some teachers have been less willing to participate. “It’s

sad. Things are not so bad that it has to come to this." She maintains her interests and continues to offer her time and knowledge. "Sometimes a leader seems to mean that you've just raised your hand to do a whole bunch of things. And these days I'm doing things because teachers don't have the time to do it and they have the most important work to do." She sees leaders as servants who support their followers and enable them to learn and grow. She also sees that leaders know how and when to prioritize their activities, which she has begun to do, especially with obligations at the district level that pull her away from her own school and its teachers. "They need me at school and I feel horrible having to cancel on them. I respectfully ask people at central office to reschedule to a time after school. I say, 'Look, there's important work I'm trying to do here and you actually hired me for that."

Kate's Reading Teacher Leaders

I do a lot of work with teachers.

I'm visible.

I listen.

I'm kind of busy.

I'm always on alert.

I enjoy all that.

Kate works to engage her colleagues in new initiatives through the Reading Teacher Leaders group as well as through her coaching and data work at Simpson. She appears to be positive and says that she presents information in constructive ways, resisting the temptation to be cynical or negative. "It's a tricky middle place where I find all of our professional learning that we do." She bridges new to known experiences in

order to help teachers navigate things that may be difficult. “I try to present things in such a way that people may be more receptive or able to see the familiar so they have a place to jump off from.” Kate remembers the ways that previous initiatives at her school were implemented, most of which were mandated by state or federal legislation. She is aware of successes and failures of the past and tries to help colleagues maintain positive connections to them, retain what is working, and explore new ideas in the context of prior knowledge and experience. She continues to work on teachers who may not be willing to engage. “Some people stay right where they are, but I know I’ll be back!” She wonders about why some of her colleagues do not see the value in the work they are doing at their school in literacy, although she understands how much they have to balance.

Reading Teacher Leaders have become an essential part of the school district and have influenced the teaching and learning at every school in the district. She believes this represents her greatest work as a leader. The group formed several years ago in collaboration with a consultant who was hired by the curriculum director to revise the way that literacy was taught in the district. It consists of literacy specialists from every school along with general classroom teachers and special educators who volunteered to be part of its work. They meet monthly to identify achievement data, plan for instruction, monitor initiatives in the district, and plan professional development. As a form of action research, the group selects annual goals based on needs revealed through an analysis of past goals and plans strategies to address them. They invite teachers throughout the school to participate in the initiatives under study and engage with them about the initiative. In a recent project, more than half of the twenty-one classroom teachers

participated in the initiative, even when many teachers had stopped participating in professional development.

In that initiative, the Reading Teacher Leaders focused on refining the ways children are taught how to write responses to literature. Teachers would work with Kate and an outside consultant throughout the year who would demonstrate and co-teach lessons, initiate reflection and solicit feedback, and collaborate on the refinement of their program. They would also spend several full days together in professional development, led by Kate and the Reading Teacher Leaders, learning strategies to assist in the project and impact their classroom instruction. Kate maintains communication with teachers, developing agendas and printed materials including lesson plans and recommended resources for teachers to use. She also coordinates the Reading Teacher Leaders, compiling resources for them and designing ways to evaluate the impact of their initiative. “We focus on making our instruction come alive and how we help other teachers and spread the word. They are sharing their work. It’s like a huge Professional Learning Community” (Dufour, 1998).

Kate facilitates the district curriculum committee for English language arts. This allowed her to get to know a number of teachers and administrators from different schools and see the larger vision of literacy development throughout the district. She also served as the chair of the school and district professional development committee for several years, working closely with the curriculum director and principals in organizing opportunities for teachers to learn in different ways.

Kate works with new teachers in her school, demonstrating lessons for them, planning with them, and providing resources they need, and recommending teachers they should observe as part of their own development. “I push them, I push them really hard. But I’m always there.” She tries to provide multiple examples of effective practice for new teachers to see so that they can adapt what they see into their own work. In this way, she builds their capacity as good decision makers. She also maintains the Reading Teacher Leaders website and curriculum documents which supports her novice teachers as well as veterans in improving their practice and focusing on the work at hand, much of which involves a “next step” rather than something completely new.

Kate’s Longevity

I see a vision of what literacy should look like.

Kate credits her long career with helping her gain a perspective on different initiatives in literacy education. “I am tenacious! I’ve learned that over the years. But I’m flexible at the same time.” She also sees her role as that of a convener, as one who brings people together to address an issue or topic. “This is collaborative work. It’s never your work. It’s always the work of many people working together, thinking together.” Again this collective vision seems so different from top down mandates yes

Kate feels fortunate to work with her current principal, Angus, and the assistant principal, Mary. Because Angus came to Simpson at the same time as she did, Kate feels that they have made strides together in leading literacy in the school. She is part of the leadership team at the school which has scheduled periodic meetings, but more typically and more frequently meets informally. Kate and Angus confer regularly about literacy

initiatives as well as issues in school management. He provides her with a great deal of autonomy in her practice, but she keeps him informed of the work she is doing. Kate describes him as a very involved and visible principal who spends time in every classroom and has a strong sense of the learning happening throughout the school. Kate knows she will play an important role in the latest school improvement initiative, but sees it as part of an ever-evolving process of transformation in education rather than a mandate for improvement based on standardized test scores. She knows she will be invited to share her opinion and learn from that of others as they continue to develop their vision for the school.

While the time she spends with school administrators is less frequent because all of their schedules are typically unpredictable and busy, Kate works most closely with teachers at Simpson. She is involved in new teachers' classrooms at least three times a week, modeling lessons and assisting in anything they need. "I'm very flexible."

Perceptions of Kate

I think teachers see me in that role.
I've been there a long time.
I might have a quick answer if it's a quick problem.
I might have to let them know that I have to find out more.
I think they can definitely count on me to follow through.
I think people would see me as a person that can look at the work.

Kate believes that both teachers and administrators at Simpson and throughout the district see her as a leader, particularly in literacy. "I know they do because they seek me

out. We have great conversations. They want to know information from me; they want to share information with me. They want to collaborate on planning or solving a problem." She is available for support with "a quick answer if it's a quick problem or a quick resource, or a quick idea." She engages them in discussions to help them clarify their thinking or learn something new from each other. She also provides ongoing collaboration and is willing to research answers to more challenging issues. "They can definitely count on me to follow through."

Kate works with new teachers, but now on an individual basis. For several years, she facilitated a monthly study group, along with the principal and assistant principal. The group would select particular topics to study over the course of several months so that teachers could "really think about it and come up with lots of questions." It also provided an opportunity for Kate and the administrators to provide targeted support in their classrooms. "That was a nice model. I wish we could do that again." While she is careful not to appear as an evaluator of teachers, she is always willing to "drop into classrooms" when suggested to do so by Angus as part of his supervision with them. "He might say, 'Kate, can you check out the mini-lessons in a certain teacher's room?' or suggest to a teacher, 'You may want to check with Kate on that practice you are using,' and they will come to me." While willing to do what Angus ask of her, she says she is uncomfortable being "sent in" to classrooms in a supervisory role and even more uncomfortable reporting what she has seem to the principal. "That doesn't seem fair. I try to avoid that."

Kate is very visible throughout the school. Because her office is on the third floor of the school, the library is on the second floor, and the book room which she maintains

in on the first floor, she spends time throughout the school every day. Teachers schedule appointments with her, although much of her interaction with and conversation with teachers happens in the hallways, teachers' room, and playground while on recess duty.

Kate says that teachers at Simpson associate her with literacy and consider her a leader. "They see me coming and they say, 'There's the reading lady!" People come to her as resource for teaching as well a source of accountability. With the blessing of the principal, she asks teachers to give her reports of achievement data at the end of every quarter and more regularly from teachers of students who are struggling in order to monitor progress of the whole school. She laughs to herself when teachers apologize to her when their data is late. "They say they are sorry and "I'll get your data to you, Kate,' but really, it's their data and I'm just looking over it for them, and then with them." She starts conversations about data and raises a continuous awareness of literacy throughout the school.

Kate works with teachers to consider the impact of their teaching. She finds that she often has to navigate a gap between what teachers may consider to be good instructional practices and the reality that evidence demonstrates. "It's all about the evidence of learning." She suggests practices that other teachers may have found to be effective. She worries about overwhelming her colleagues and tries to be respectful, asking them "Where are you right now and where do you need to go next?" In this way, she demonstrates with her teachers the teaching she values with children, namely customizing instruction to meet their needs while focusing on the ultimate vision of what good teaching and learning should be.

Kate believes she has been influential in the literacy practices at Simpson School. She is proud of the assessment tasks that she and others have created to correspond with the reading and writing workshop model being used at the school and the way that teachers have focused on new standards as part of that work. She is proud of her work with the Reading Teacher Leaders whose action research model is impacting individual classrooms and the practices throughout the school. As a "process person," she values the organization of initiatives and the purposeful planning that is necessary in creating an impact. "It's coming! It's all a work in progress. I think it's really nice though. I feel really good about it."

Still, she knows there are some people at her school who do not accept her ideas as readily as others. "There are definitely some people that I know for a fact are thinking that I might be promoting "that sort of thing, or who say things like, 'Look out, here comes the data girl!" She knows some people wonder what her role is even after eight years working with them. Kate confronts this by offering any kind of help teachers need, including photocopying or organizing books. "I keep them guessing!" She also spends time with teachers for purely social reasons as well, such as during lunch in the teachers room. She values relationships and works to build them by talking with people. "I enjoy every level of conversation that I have with people. It's really important to share a lot of yourself, not just about your job."

Kate's Influence

I wonder why people don't see the value.
I've noticed people have gotten more skilled, on the whole.
It's nice though when I know that I feel good.

While Kate holds the title of literacy specialist in her school, she does not believe that it affords her any special privileges, expectations, or responsibilities. “We all work hard.” Being a leader and having an official title are two separate things. “People behave as leaders all the time, so you don’t necessarily have to have a specific role. In fact, there are probably some highly effective leaders that don’t have titles and roles. The teachers I work with, many of them are classroom teachers and they are definitely leaders in terms of helping their colleagues, anticipating, being above the curve, sharing resources they’ve found, and things like that.” Kate sees herself as a person who builds capacity in others, helps them see themselves as leaders, and share their expertise with others. Good leaders tend to bring out the best in other people. “It’s how they approach things, it’s part of a leader’s basic personality. It’s how they are put together as a person.”

Kate considers herself a naturally positive person and avoids conversations that are negative. She worries about why many of her colleagues have begun to complain about every change that the school or district is considering, although she recognizes the recent political issues surrounding the consolidation of her district and forthcoming dismantling of it. She wishes her colleagues would focus on their students and their work together, and she tries to push them in that direction. “I’m always trying to move them along, no matter what.” She credits her long career with helping her to develop this perspective. “Just the older you get, the more it’s there. The longer you’re here, you get to see where more changes come.” She feels as though she can navigate changes based on the experiences she has had and by always looking toward the vision she has established for her work.

Kate is proud of her past accomplishments and the influence she has had at Simpson, particularly the establishment of the work she has led about assessments in literacy, the Reading Teacher Leaders group, and the completion of a major curriculum revision to align the Reading and Writing Workshop model in all grades at her school as well at the other schools in the district. The ability to be reflective with children and with themselves has been a major focus in Kate's coaching and professional development. Developing protocols for conferring with children and colleagues has been part of the Reading Teacher Leaders group since its inception. "I've noticed people have gotten more skilled at giving feedback. I've been working on that forever." She hopes that this focus influences not only their teaching of reading and writing but also their practice of teaching.

Kate envisions a day when all of her colleagues will be willing to share their work collaboratively. She is certain it will be possible, given the momentum she has established in her eight years and the fact that she has already taken steps to promote the active sharing of work. Kate recalls a time when she and a colleague, a literacy specialist at a primary school in the district, were talking about ways to promote their work and engage more of their colleagues. "We have done so much with this group, this group has done so much work. We have got to archive it, we've got to capture it. We've got to showcase what we've done." They built a website that would encourage teachers to showcase their work would be useful to others as resources in literacy. The start of the site has been gradual, but teachers are beginning to use it. It is also a repository for curriculum documents and common assessment formats so many people visit it regularly. Kate want to eventually include videos and other teaching resources on the site, but know

that will require a lot of support and encouragement for her colleagues to take risks in making their practices more public. “So maybe that’s my job as a literacy leader too, helping them be willing to expose themselves and be open or for feedback. Me too.”

Kate’s Identity

I try to keep the outcome focused on people.
I need to know the work we’re doing on behalf of our learners is sticking.
I think that’s really important.

Kate sees herself as a leader, but says that her leadership is ever-evolving and is somewhat uncomfortable with identifying herself as one. “I’m assuming I am a leader, according to the standards of what a leader is, my perception of what a leader should be, and its my perception of what I think I’m doing makes me a leader.” She has taken courses and attended workshops that taught her how to facilitate meetings with groups. She has read books to help in her leadership development, joining study groups with other literacy specialists to support her development. She also confers with a network of other literacy specialists in her district and others when confronted with challenging issues, but misses her most trusted confidant, the primary literacy specialist in her district, who died of cancer two years ago. “She was a gem.”

Kate is also proud of the work she and her colleagues have done with a national consultant over the past few years, and intensely this year as part of Simpson’s school improvement initiative. She describes the consultant as very approachable, as an ordinary teacher who has learned about outstanding practices and is willing to share with others. Teachers enjoy working with her as her ideas are practical and immediately applicable in

their classrooms. They are also able to read her writing quickly because she writes in a very approachable style, and are impressed that they are working with a nationally known scholar. “It’s the famous factor, I suppose.” The school principals immediately embraced the consultant and her style as well. She explained things to them in similarly simple ways and demonstrated to them with examples from classrooms in other districts and states, and eventually some of their own, how the reading workshop approach would impact student learning. Kate was pleased that a national consultant provided convincing evidence and a certain level of believability and has set her up to support her colleagues throughout the year.

Kate is very aware of the distinction between her leadership role and those of her principal. She identifies as a teacher leader whose responsibilities have to do with improving instruction of teachers and the learning experiences of children. She is not an evaluator and avoids “blurring the lines between coaching and supervision” She remains firm on that, regardless of the different responsibilities she takes on in her role. She feels fortunate that her principal does not press her for an opinion about a teacher’s performance, although he will suggest that she provide support to individuals.

Kate knows that people see her as a person “who is looking at the work, using the data, understanding where the data tells us we need to go, and focusing on conclusions.” Wherever she is, she focuses on people, whether in a meeting about data or presenting a workshop. Kate tries “to keep our outcomes focused on people” which has had positive results. By engaging teachers in talking about their students and their practices, she is able to see a transformation at Simpson. “I can see that this focus has worked because we are doing a pretty good job for most of our, for the majority of our kids, but we know that

there needs to be more." This is where she knows she has made an impact. "It feels good."

Conclusion

What I do builds capacity.

As a leader, Kate is still developing skills and strategies. "You need to have management skills, you need to have people skills. I'm working on those." She credits the early years of her teaching career as a special educator with helping her learn how to work collaboratively with a variety of teachers, focusing on individual student needs. "I haven't changed much there." She continues to develop her listening skills, especially when she is in a conversation about "complicated situations where we are trying to figure out exactly what's the heart of what's going on."

Kate knows that she is helping teachers affirm and change their practices and is having an impact on teaching and learning at Simpson, all of which benefits students. Most teachers are excited about learning and sharing ideas and others are coming along. "You know you've been able to help someone move from one place to another. That's pretty good." Kate loves her job and does not plan to leave it any time soon. "It gives anyone great job satisfaction to know that the efforts that you're putting in are paying off."

Amanda

In this final portrait, I present the story of Amanda, a literacy specialist who has worked in the same school district for over two decades and who enjoys a professional

life outside of her community through professional associations, consultation, and writing. I had never met Amanda and approached her to be part of my study by e-mail and a follow up phone conversation. Before agreeing to participate, she asked me to tell her about my understanding of literacy, the role of the reading specialist, and my vision for schools. She agreed once she had confirmed that our beliefs were aligned and that we would be "on the same page".

Amanda's Environment

When I got here, I had no where to go.
Then I was given this space.
It worked. Teachers liked it.
It's really about the teachers.
I mean, that's what's going to create a culture of learning and collaboration.
It's not the stuff.

Amanda and I met at her school on a rainy afternoon just before students were released for the day. The building is over one hundred years old. Its long paneled hallways and creaky stairwells are covered with student work, mostly art and writing, as well as motivational posters and incentive charts. As we walked through the building, Amanda introduced me to her principal and several teachers. As we met each person, Amanda told me a story about them, providing a positive comment about something they were working on. All of them recounted with praise for Amanda. One teacher told me, "We are so lucky to have her. You will learn a lot from her!" She also shared information about the school and the challenges it had, including achievement and poverty. She listed the goals they were working on and described her connection to them.

Amanda also introduced me to her principal, Grace, who described Amanda as a "gem." I was fortunate to interview Grace separately, with Amanda's consent, who provided another aspect to Amanda's work and her influence at their school.

Amanda and I made our way to her workspace, her "literacy room", a full size classroom that she used as an office, resource center, and meeting space for teachers. Its walls are covered with artifacts including student and teacher work, charts where teachers have listed recent personal reading material, and recommendations for newly released books. Baskets of children's book line the counters along the walls and small bookcases throughout the room. There are also several work areas: a crowded personal space for Amanda with a desk, table lamps, and bookcases stuffed with professional books and children's literature; a large conference table with bowls of apples and chocolate kisses on it; a "living room" with comfortable chairs, a couch, lamps, and a coffee table; and a small round table for conferring with teachers. Amanda offered me coffee, water, and cookies and we began for our interviews in her literacy room.

Background

I am constantly learning.
That's a huge part of my growth and my refinement as a person and as a professional.

Amanda is a 44 year old white woman who works as a literacy coach at two public elementary schools in a small city in a New England state. She and her husband have two teenage children and live in a rural town about twenty miles from her school. Growing up in a different New England state, she remembers herself as what she describes as a "reluctant reader," a child who found learning to read difficult and never

read for pleasure. It was not until college that she became comfortable independently, even though she was exposed to books throughout her life. Amanda attended college at a selective public university and earned a Bachelor of Arts in mathematics. She moved to the state in which she currently lives and began her teaching career. She immediately began working toward a Master of Science at a large public university, originally in a general program related to teaching and learning but after the first few courses, she began to focus specifically on literacy. “I just got hooked and transferred into that program, becoming a literacy specialist.”

Amanda has worked for the same school district for 23 years, having served as a third grade classroom teacher and Title I reading teacher at Oliver Wendell Holmes School, a public school of 640 kindergarten through third graders a staff of eighty before moving into the newly created role of literacy coach in 2000 at Ross Elementary School, a smaller public school of 260 fourth and fifth graders and a staff of forty-five. Since 2011, she has divided her time and, in addition to her work at Ross, serves as the literacy coach for third grade teachers at Holmes, collaborating with another coach who concentrates on the primary grades. In her role as literacy coach, Amanda “wears many hats.” She coordinates Title I programming at her schools, including the supervision of paraprofessionals who work with struggling readers, the process by which students receive specialized instruction, the collection of data, and the writing of the annual grant application and performance report. She is also responsible for the professional development of the faculty in literacy, coaching teachers in their classrooms, facilitating study groups, workshops, and staff meetings, supporting first year teachers and teaching interns in their implementation of the school district’s literacy framework, the Reading

and Writing Workshop, and coaching both veteran and novice principals to assist in their supervision of teaching and learning in literacy. Amanda led a team that wrote the curriculum for English language arts and now coordinates the development of units of study in reading, writing, listening, and speaking that are aligned to mandatory Common Core State Standards. Amanda's role is broad and encompasses many responsibilities which she appreciates. "I'm never bored! My job is always changing because it is responsive to the needs of our schools. I think all of my activities fit into my job."

Amanda is also an accomplished writer. To her, the act of writing is her act of reflection. "By writing, I'm learning. I'm growing and changing." She is often sought out to speak and present workshops at national conferences, has served as an editor at a major publisher of educational resources, and has been asked to consult with other schools about literacy, all with the encouragement of her school district and family. Her professional work outside of her school and district is an important part of who she is as a professional and as a person.

Amanda's Work as a Literacy Specialist

I see growing leaders.
I see growing other leaders, cultivating leadership.
I see collaboration and learning together.

Amanda was encouraged to accept the newly created role of literacy specialist at Ross School by a former assistant superintendent. While teaching third grade and Title I, Amanda was helpful to her colleagues and was already serving as a resource in literacy for them. After "some convincing," she accepted the position and moved to the new

school. Even though she had been with the district for almost ten years, she knew very few teachers at Ross and was nervous making the transition, especially into a new position that would need to be defined for the faculty, students, principal, and herself.

To get to know the teachers, Amanda offered assistance in anything, helping with any project in any classroom. Her first days at Ross were spent "on the floor," cutting out laminated book marks, helping teachers make book baskets, and organizing their libraries. "It wasn't an overly glamorous job." She never came into the role with a preconceived notion, although she had read extensively about what literacy specialists do and had talked with the assistant superintendent at length about his expectations of her to help improve literacy teaching in the school. She did what came naturally and rather than explaining her job, telling them how to teach reading, and expecting them to immediately engage in coaching, she offered to help her colleagues in any way she could.

Amanda was very conscious of the differences in age and experience between herself and most teachers as she was at least twenty years younger and had taught far fewer years than the rest of the teachers. "I just wanted to be helpful to them." While this was important to her, Amanda also wanted to be accepted by her new colleagues. She missed her friends at Holmes and the comfort she felt with them. "I wanted a sense of belonging. It was all about survival."

Once her colleagues came to accept her, Amanda believed she could begin to influence them and their practice. She recalls a time when a group of teachers at Ross invited her to go kayaking on a Saturday. She went and quickly realized their motive for inviting her was not as much about being friendly as it was about "wanting to know who

I was and what I was about." She learned that they had not been included in the school improvement plan that included the appointment if a literacy coach and were skeptical of the reading and writing workshop framework she was intending to introduce to them. They were unclear about her role. "I realized this was not going to be smooth sailing. It wasn't like they wanted me. It was somebody else's decision." One of her first actions was to begin conversations between fourth grade teachers at Ross and third grade teachers at Holmes. She had experienced limited and contentious past interaction between the schools which often involving the reporting of standardized test scores where "fourth grade teachers would tell the third grade teachers how they could do a better job. It was not a loving relationship. We had our arms folded and we didn't like them." They felt disrespected and undervalued by their intermediate grade colleagues. Amanda initiated conversations about the curriculum and how children were doing with it, encouraging them to talk about how the children were progressing rather than just reporting on scores. While difficult at first, the wall between the two buildings gradually began to come down and eventually, teachers were more comfortable working with each other. It was not an immediate process, but rather "slow, steady cultural change. It's all about relationships."

Amanda initiated study groups about specific topic in literacy, most related to the developing reading and writing workshop framework. While teaching at Holmes, she had written and received a small grant that would support a professional development project and was eager to use it to Ross. Teachers would meet once a month over the course of the school year to read and study a common professional text, discuss ways to implement or adapt its ideas, and reflect on ways their learning had impacted student learning. About

five teachers participated in the first few groups, but they created "a momentum that sustained their practice and built relationships."

Another way that Amanda built relationships with teachers at Ross and engaged her colleagues in collaboration with one another, was to promote her literacy resource as a "neutral space" to find resources and discuss student learning. Amanda successfully scrambled for funding to provide materials and has been able to expand its resources every year. However, she cautions that "it's not about the materials. What's going to create a new culture of learning is the collaboration." Amanda describes her literacy room as "important to (her) work," as it provides a space to centrally house literacy resources and, more importantly, to create opportunities for adults to learn collaboratively.

Amanda sees her role as a literacy specialist as one who build capacity in people. "I didn't go in believing that a coach nor literacy specialist was somebody who worked in classrooms and was showing teachers how to change practices through coaching. I see it as being a leader, being a resource, following their lead of how I could support them."

Amanda's Beliefs about Leadership

I think a leader cultivates leadership in others.
I see being a leader is being a resource.
I can't build a system around myself, nor should I.
I think it's putting egos aside.

Amanda believes that like learning, leadership is collaborative. She believes that a leader must bring people together, provide for things they need, and build their capacity

because it is only through collaboration that a school can move forward. “When I think of the word leader, and think of leaders I know, I see them growing other leaders, cultivating leadership, learning together.” She recalls leaders with whom she has worked who have been able to do this, and some who have not. One who was a leader who built capacity, including her own, was John, a former assistant superintendent in the district who shared her vision for collaborative learning. She enjoyed talking with and learning from him and participated in his doctoral research while she was at Holmes. He shared his vision and asked others to come together to make a plan of action.

She also recalls Jane, the principal at Ross at the time she started as literacy specialist. She and the staff were constantly at odds and Jane had never communicated her own vision for growing the school. Having replaced a very popular, collaborative principal who was beloved by the entire faculty, she never engaged the teachers in a new direction. When Amanda arrived, it was “not a positive place. I was supposed to be part of the culture change, but Jane didn’t really know why I was there.” Jane was promoted to a district administrative position later that year and was replaced by Marion who remained at Ross until 2013. She had been the assistant principal at Holmes for many of the years that Amanda taught there and they had worked together on a number of projects. “We would sit at a restaurant for a whole Sunday afternoon and figure things out. It was great!”

Amanda recognizes Marion as one of her greatest influences in leadership. “She listened, she asked questions, she built relationships. She was just what we needed. The school started to settle down.” She credits Marion with engaging the faculty, focusing their attention on literacy instruction, and explained Amanda’s role as the literacy coach

in a way that teachers understood and accepted. “Teachers began to put their defenses down and began to realize that this could be a good thing.”

Being a leader is about providing resources, not having al the answers. “I didn’t go in believing that a coach or a literacy specialist was somebody who only worked in classrooms and was going to change practice.” Rather, she saw her role as a supporter who would bring about change through direct and meaningful interaction with her colleagues, providing the things teachers needed. “I really see being a leader is a much wider definition and you can do that in many capacities, like reading as many books as you can and sifting through them to make recommendations to teachers. Those are the things that teachers appreciate.”

Developing a Sense of Belonging

I had no where to go.

I felt very lost.

I think getting my literacy room was the first step.

I started doing simple things.

I don’t think anything I do is all that important.

I was like, ‘Wow, you’re actually using it!’

I know I can get people to listen.

Amanda is constantly working among her colleagues at both Ross and Holmes. She rarely uses her desk, except after school and on the weekends. From the early days when she sat on the floor cutting out laminated book marks and organizing classroom strong image libraries, she built relationships with teachers based on satisfying their

needs. “I started doing simple things like book lists” in which she provided titles of new or popular books for readers at different grade levels and stages of development. She advocated for the funding of classroom libraries and convinced Marion to provide purchase orders to a local bookseller so that teachers could choose their own books to purchase based on her suggestions. “Everybody got $200. They were thrilled. I got them to the bookstore and they saw what’s out there. Then they stopped reading the tired old books, like Lost on a Mountain in Maine, just because they had multiple copies of it locked in a closet even though 4th graders cannot read it.” Amanda continues to publish book lists for teachers twice a year and the school still provides money every year for teachers to purchase new books, although most spend their own money as well. She knows her lists are useful as she has seen teachers at bookstores with them. “When I saw that, I was like, ‘Wow! They actually use it outside of school!”

Amanda believes that her work with principals is built upon mutual respect. “I work for both of my principals behind the scenes and I never stab them in the back. I tell them both right up front what I’m thinking or feeling or doing. I let them know that I don’t play games.” Amanda says that she addresses problems directly, but creatively, and is able to hold her ground among teacher and administrative colleagues. This builds a sense of trust between them and furthers the potential the all have for impacting change at their schools. Amanda’s principal agrees. While speaking with her at length, I realized that she admired Amanda and had great respect for her. “She’s the reason I came here. She has done so much for every person in this school, including me.”

Amanda is not an administrator and does not evaluate teachers, although she does supervise paraprofessionals in the Title I programs. Because of this, she is cautious not to

"rat anybody out" as well, hesitant to give feedback to principals about the performance of specific teachers when they ask, which she admits rarely happened. She believes that it would "not be good for the culture." Because of their collaboration and shared leadership, however, where she and the principals know what the others are doing and what they are working on, Amanda and the principal's focus on similar things in developing their staff, especially novices. "I don't need to say too much because if I'm doing my job and I'm in their classrooms a few times a week, and if a principal is doing their job and are in the classrooms regularly, then patterns emerge that the principals see without having to talk about it."

Amanda as a Learner

I always think of rowing in the same direction.
I mean, we have the same ultimate goal.
I need to make sure we're all on the same team.
I am very fortunate.
I feel like every few years somebody comes along in my life.
I learn so much from them.
I need to give back.
I have had amazing opportunities to learn from people.

Amanda has learned about her work as a literacy specialist through professional study, direct experiences at her schools, professional networks connected to her writing, and particularly with mentors who have been supportive of her. "I'm fortunate that I've had a lot of opportunities. I have had them because people have taken an interest in me,

not just giving me opportunities but showing me how to do them." She is grateful to a number of mentors who have guided her professional work, including a graduate school professor, an editor at a publishing company, and professors at a local college who invited her to collaborate on his research and writing that involved topics of mutual interest. "They gave me an opportunity to get out of my comfort zone and to share in learning."

John, a former assistant superintendent, empowered her as "an agent of change" when he appointed her as the literacy specialist at Ross. John was working on his doctoral research about building professional capacity in teachers and shared information with Amanda who was "eager" to learn, especially as it influenced her coaching. John led her, by sharing his research, to affirm the importance of collaboration and building relationships. "When people collaborate and make meaning together, you get your human capacity which is where skills and attitudes change. I learned that you need to set up purposeful opportunities for individuals and organizational capacity to occur and people make meaning together. It all goes back to the importance of people getting together to talk."

Amanda also cites a former principal, Marion, as being a powerful mentor, who shared her beliefs in collaboration and supported her through an example of shared leadership. She learned that "it's all about putting egos aside" and working toward the good of the students. She described Marion's singular focus on student success and credits her with adjusting the school culture that would become supportive of collaboration and risk-taking. "She taught me to reflect, which I probably do to a fault,

and I help others reflect too." She learned to think critically about her teaching and lead herself to new learning which would improve her practice.

Amanda admits that she needs to see the "big picture of where we're going" in order to become fully engaged. "I'm very organized. I'm all about structures and planning. I need a goal and when I know where we're going, then I can work backwards and get the job done." She also feels that this allows her to predict her reaction to barriers when they appear, including people and structures that challenge the process. "I won't just keep going and hitting the wall. I'm always saying, "We've got to stop, we've got to talk and that usually means multiple people."

Amanda feels fortunate to have worked in a district that embraces the concepts of shared leadership, reflective practice, and strong interpersonal relationships. "Sometimes districts set themselves up as competitive, but not here." A few years ago, Amanda was hired by a school district from another state to consult with them about building the capacity of their literacy specialists. With the approval of her district's superintendent, she was released to work with the other district for ten days over the course of two years, providing training and coaching for them. Before her first workshop, Amanda asked that administrators participate in all of the workshops with their literacy specialists. Of the eight principals, assistant superintendent, curriculum director, only two attended. She asked again for them to attend with every subsequent visit, but few, if any did. The district made excuses for their absence, saying that an important meeting came up, but Amanda had a hard time accepting that. "This was important, being with teachers. If I'm going to be with a teacher and they are expecting me, like these people were expecting their administrators, then you show up." This created an unproductive dynamic and a

negative message about coaching in the district that challenged her thinking about collaboration. “Without administrative support, you can’t get anywhere. There was no team here. If they couldn’t even get their administrators there, then the administration was not really valuing the potential of coaches in their schools.”

Amanda’s Impact

I *don’t think I want to know what they think of me!*

Having worked at Ross for thirteen years, Amanda feels as established there as she was at Holmes, the school at which she taught and to which she returned this year to support third grade teachers. Conversations with Amanda are easygoing and personable, but focused. She talks quickly, thinks aloud, and makes engaging eye contact. Teachers stop her in the hallways to ask questions and share success stories. They stop into her literacy room for resources and conversation, or simply to browse the books she has collected. When Amanda stops into classrooms, students greet her by name and show her their work while teachers engage her in their lesson. She laughs at herself, admits challenges, and recognizes her own needs. “Today I was ready to quit. Nothing was going the way I had planned,” she said to a group of teachers of one fall day at Ross during which she met with new teachers for their monthly meeting which included a classroom observation. They laughed with her and shared stories of their difficult days as well.

The principal at Ross School, Grace, has appreciated and admired Amanda’s work for many years. They worked together previously when she was assistant principal at Holmes before transferring to Ross in 2013 as principal upon the retirement of

Amanda's mentor Marion. In fact, it was Amanda who recruited Grace and convinced her to join her at Ross. "She is the reason I came here. I love working with her." She has observed the level of trust that teachers have with Amanda and the way that they interact with her. "They are very impressed with her knowledge and her skills and how she connects with people because her approach is collaborative and non-judgmental." She has seen teachers reach out to her for a variety of reasons and Amanda respond with consistent ways that respect individuality and personal needs. "She makes people feel comfortable so that they can ask questions or bring up ideas." Amanda invites teachers to reflect about their work, often using herself as a model about how to think about their practice. "She gets them to be so reflective which helps give a direction where we need to go next."

Grace relies on Amanda to provide professional development in literacy as well as other initiatives including curriculum mapping and instructional leadership. She asked Amanda to provide professional development for team leaders who did not necessarily have the skills to facilitate meetings with teachers about curriculum. She taught them, "brought them together as a whole group and modeled for them the expectations so that when they worked with their grade level teams they could lead the work that was needed."

People at both Ross and Holmes Schools see Amanda as a leader in literacy, curriculum, and school organization. Because of her close alignment with the principals and other administrators as well as her collaboration with other instructional coaches in literacy and math, teachers and administrators solicit and trust her opinion. Grace believes that people see that "Amanda has the big picture and she's a big push for that.

We work together to get a common understanding, and everyone knows she's at the center of that."

Amanda as a Leader

I think leadership for me is about building capacity.

I'll do anything to help instill new practices.

I want to be helpful.

I'm definitely behind the scenes.

I don't like being in the forefront.

I love coming up with ideas.

I like making things happen.

Amanda's role as literacy specialist is broadly defined but centers around change. Her work was not always well received and teachers questioned the need for her role, especially when she first accepted the job. She attributes this to the overall climate at the school which was not collaborative due to the principal at the time, Jane, who eventually left during Amanda's first year. Fortunately, her replacement, Marion, understood Amanda's role and potential for making a great impact on teaching and learning at Ross and empowered Amanda by expecting all teachers to work closely with her. By asking teachers what they needed, Amanda built their confidence and trusted her to work with them. "Every layer of coaching kind of grew as the needs progressed."

In recent years, Amanda continued to coach teachers, but focused more on newly hired teachers with structured support through direct instruction, coaching, and feedback. In fact, all but two teachers have been hired since Amanda started working at Ross and

the two remaining veterans were collaborative with Amanda from the beginning. 'One is in her 38th year of teaching. She asks me questions all the time and we get talking bout everything. She's always trying something new." Her work with new teachers consists of being in their classrooms several times a week and holding a day-long workshop with all of them monthly to discuss teaching practices, observe veteran teachers in their classrooms and reflect upon what they saw, and learn about curriculum and assessment. As a teacher of teachers, Amanda intends to support teachers well enough so as not to lose them, having invested in their expertise and building a relationship with and among them.

As the Title I coordinator for Ross, Amanda led the application process to use a whole-school Title I program which would allow the school to use federal funds traditionally allocated for targeted needs more liberally. She and a team of teachers and administrators conducted research about programming models, analyzed data, developed programming, and proposed an annual budget. The application was accepted and the school was allowed to follow the plan Amanda and her team developed. "I'm always trying to maximize resources and be creative. It's not just about creating programs, but responding to the needs of kids."

Another initiative Amanda and her team developed was a set of focused language arts classrooms for students who were struggling with reading and writing and were considered at risk of school failure because of their low reading ability. She and two teachers, one in each grade, planned a program that included a process for identifying students who were most in need, a sequence of lessons that would accelerate reading development, and a framework of instruction that maximized the reading and writing

workshop experiences for them. Amanda planned to co-teach at least three times per week with the teacher so that they could each customize their instruction for smaller groups of children than in the traditional class of twenty five. She conducted quarterly evaluations on the children, continuously monitored their progress, and adjusted instruction appropriately. The goal of this program was not only to ensure that the children were reading at a fifth grade level when they completed fifth grade but rather that they graduated high school. The program is now in its eighth year and two cohorts of students have worked through high school. 71% and 60% of the children who participated in the first two classes, respectively, have received diplomas, which Amanda says "is very nice data." Amanda is proud of this program not only because it may have contributed to student success but also because it was based in research and was supported by the administration in her district.

Amanda works with other teacher leaders monthly at her school and throughout the district, providing professional development and coaching for them about teaching and leadership. "Again, it's about cultivating leadership in them so that we can get more work done with team leaders facilitating the curriculum." She has created a network of leaders who understand curriculum and instruction and be able to lead meetings, offer advice and professional development, analyze data, and encourage the vision for the school. "I can't be at every meeting, nor should I be. I can't build a system around myself. It needs to be around a system, around teachers who all understand and sustain their practice." Amanda taught the team leaders about a different way to facilitate meetings which became more about learning and less about business. "It really changed

the leaders' roles." Administrators in the schools and the district are supportive of this and attend regularly which "certainly gives credence to what we are doing."

Amanda's Influence

I think I am part of building capacity in the district.
I have this luxury.
I'm not tied to a classroom.
I see the big picture.
I get the job done.

Amanda is quick to recognize her role in transforming her school, particularly the culture of collaboration that has emerged over the years. While she credits others, including specific teachers both current and former principals, and a former assistant superintendent with initiating change at Ross and throughout the district, she is grateful for being part of the work.

While Amanda's strategies are typically inclusive, affirming, and positive, she occasionally takes on a more aggressive tone, depending on the personalities of those with whom she is working. One veteran fifth grade teacher with a strong personality and considerable influence at the school, Lara, had agreed to serve as team leader, but was unaware of the work it would involve until she attended a group meeting with Amanda. "I remember Lara at our first meeting of team leaders. I told them that we have this whole bunch of curriculum to do and that they would lead their teams to do it. I asked them how we should do this together. Lara was, like, 'That's not what I signed up for. My contract says this and that, and those are my peers, and I'm not leading any meetings.' Well, I

said, “If you don’t want to do it, somebody else will because we’re all replaceable and they’ll find someone else. This is where we’re going, simple as that. So you can either do it or envision someone else on your team doing it.’ I wasn’t very nice.” Amanda described how Lori sat throughout the remainder of the meting with arms crossed and a scowl on her face, and how she left the meeting without speaking to anybody. “She was so mad, but I left her alone. I was a little worried because I don’t usually play that kind of card. But the next day, she came to my room and simply said, ‘I’m in.’ Now she’s our biggest cheerleader.” Through the workshops she facilitated, the coaching she provided for the team leaders, both of which involved conversations among the team leaders, Amanda was able to engage Lara in an understanding of the new model of curriculum development. “She made a complete 360 degree turnaround. She struggled with it, but I think that made her embrace it more. It all goes back to everybody needing a sense of belonging, everybody needs to be nourished in different ways.”

Amanda is careful to avoid the term ‘model’ in regards to the demonstration lessons she provides. “When I coach in classrooms, we’re doing it together. I never say to people, ‘Watch me do this and then to the same thing.’ After all, you don’t want a whole bunch of me. Still, I provide examples and demonstrations, especially for new teachers, to give them an idea of what something looks like.” She follows up with reflective conversations that include a discussion about how they could adapt what they saw into their own practice.

Although Amanda is modest about her professional accomplishments and does not consider herself a professional writer, her book and articles are well respected by teachers and literacy specialists around the country, myself included. She feels fortunate

to have an opportunity to share her experiences in this public way and also feels an obligation as a coach to share her thinking in whatever ways she can, all in the name of building capacity. Similarly, Amanda takes any opportunity to involve her colleagues in her professional work, inviting some to facilitate workshops with her or co-author articles with her. “When I know that’s the next step for them to take, I try to help them take it like others did for me.”

Amanda’s Relationship with Principals and District Leaders

I work with other leaders all the time.
I do what I can to help.

Amanda and Ross School’s current principal, Grace, have a strong relationship. They worked together at Holmes School before both coming to Ross. In fact, Grace said that Amanda is the reason she moved to Ross a year ago. Grace believes that Amanda is an effective literacy coach who has great influence. She said that she learned about the role of a coach by watching Amanda over the years “When you’re a coach, you’re a person who is always helping others become better and that is always her approach to anything, always helping people get better.” Grace said that she has come to understand the importance of coaching from Amanda which has developed her own approach to principal leadership.

Amanda admires Grace and the work she is doing as well. She praised her ability to transition to a new school and follow an effective, beloved principal. “She is doing a great job as a first year principal, and I’m there to help her with whatever she needs.” She

is aware that this provides her with a great deal of power in the school, but she prefers to focus whatever influence she has on improving student learning.

Amanda has conducted workshops for principals and district leaders to support their understanding of curriculum and literacy initiatives. She believes that this builds their capacity as supervisors so that they are better able to support effective teaching practices in their schools. Amanda says that she feels comfortable working with them and is eager to work with them whenever she can.

Amanda believes she is part of any transformation that is happening in her schools and throughout her district. While frustrated by her school's designation as a "failing" school, she is confident in the work she and her colleagues are doing. She believes that she is a positive agent of change and is able to make a difference. "That sounds really huge, but I'm part of it. I'm part of building capacity in the district."

Amanda recognizes a number of professional writers and scholars in the field of education as having influenced her, including Michael Fullan (1995, 2001, 2005) who reminded her to be patient while change is happening. "Change takes five to seven years, and I think he's absolutely right." His writing also taught her the importance of building capacity in others. "He wrote an article saying that coaches won't last long if they are not builders of capacity." Amanda's greatest influence is in the opportunities she provides for others throughout her schools. "That's what people would say defines my leadership. I create opportunities, and I think people are very appreciative."

Conclusion

I love building capacity.

I love working with other leaders.

I love growing other leaders.

I can see the big picture.

Amanda enjoys her work and cannot see herself doing anything but being a literacy specialist. “I’m never bored and I find it constantly challenging. New opportunities often come my way, so it’s never the same.” While she has considered an administrative role in curriculum leadership, she has never considered bring a principal because of the many responsibilities that would take her attention away from teaching and learning, and she would not be interested in that. Because she works closely with her principals, she has seen what they do every day, “making sure custodians are hired and doors are locked and parents are happy.” She fears that these responsibilities would monopolize her time both in and out of school. She values her ability to participate in her children’s activities and would not want to lose that aspect of her life because of school-related commitments. With so many responsibilities and commitments “you don’t get to focus on anything in real depth,” which makes the principal’s job unappealing. “I wouldn’t want to be an administrator because I really love the leadership aspects of my job. I have the best of all worlds right now.” The thought of returning to the classroom is intriguing. “Maybe some day. Never say never.”

Amanda feels that there is still plenty of work for her to do, and her work continues to broaden. In the past year, given the requirements of the Common Core State Standards, she has led a team to align science and social studies curriculum to include literacy standards. By working with teachers for just one day a month outside of their

classrooms, Amanda has been able to help them make meaning together and produce a curriculum in which they have ownership and investment. “A lot of curriculum work in the past has been done in the back room and teachers get annoyed at that. I’ve taken it outside. Until you have a conversation about it, you never will know what you have. I am creating opportunities for that to happen.”

Amanda identifies herself as a writer. “Writing speaks to me, and allows me to speak.” She does not, however, usually intend to write. Rather, writing happens as both a vehicle and product of her thinking. “I’m not thinking of an idea as my next article. It’s much more organic for me.” She is happy to share her writing, but does not feel compelled to do so. “If others want to read what she has written, she hopes they will learn from her thinking. “It’s really just my learning and when I put it on paper I’ve already processed it and hopefully I’ve shown someone else where I’ve screwed up. They can learn, I can learn, and that feeds me.” While not the central focus of her work, Amanda feels that her writing is all part of coaching.

We never get anywhere alone.
I think as coaches, it’s not just about coaching.
I think it’s about helping to grow somebody.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented four portraits, or cases, of practicing literacy specialists who were participants in my study. Their cases provided both similar and unique perspectives by which to explore my research question that asks: “How does a literacy specialist develop an identity as a leader?” Several themes emerged from their

collective stories that reveal insight into the roles of literacy specialists, the development of identity, and the nature of leadership. By listening to their stories, readers are able to learn about the phenomenon at hand. The participants serve as mentors for practicing and pre-service literacy specialists, illustrating the ways that social learning and relationships support adults and lead them to transformative learning.

In the next chapter, I will offer an analysis of my findings, identifying themes that were evident across the cases using thematic analysis (Saldana, 2013) and the Voice Centered Relational Method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, et al., 2003). I will also connect their stories to the literature about leadership, identity development, and adult learning. This will allow me to suggest implications that could potentially influence the development of practicing and future literacy specialists.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to explore the phenomenon of literacy leadership and the ways that literacy specialists develop identities as leaders. Through a multiple case study methodology in which I created detailed narrative portraits of four practicing literacy specialists, I explored the ways that they impacted and were impacted by their school communities, participated in transformational initiatives, and developed identities as leaders. By listening to and recording their stories, I learned about their experiences and was able to "open up a world to the reader through rich, detailed, and concrete descriptions of people and places" (Patton, 2002, p. 438). By analyzing this "thick description" (Geertz, 1973), I found patterns and themes that are common in their experiences. These have helped me to understand the phenomenon of literacy leadership and suggest ways to support their learning and development throughout their careers.

A number of factors appear to have influenced the development of my participants including social and environmental conditions that both challenged and supported them. All of those factors pointed to the complex and ambiguous nature of their roles, a phenomenon revealed in the literature as well as among my participants. While three of my four participants work under a teacher contract, which is most common among literacy specialists nationally, their jobs are typically different from those of their teaching colleagues. Most are not administrators and are not afforded the same formal authority as principals, curriculum directors, or others with more traditional,

and therefore more identifiable, titles. They have leadership responsibilities, but may carry them out from the background as support people who are building capacity in others. Their work and their leadership may run parallel to that of teachers and administrators (Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009) , all of whom are focused on student learning, teacher instruction, and school improvement initiatives, although their paths cross continuously. Others may see them as helpful, as teachers, consultants, and specialists who support teaching and learning and lead literacy initiatives in their schools. They may see themselves in similar roles, although their identities may have developed over time and longevity. Literacy specialists also represent the "sleeping giant of teacher leadership" which can be a catalyst for efforts to transform schools (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001) and play an important part of the culture of a school and community. Their identity exists in area in between teaching and administration which is both uncomfortable and affirming for them and contributes to their transformation as professionals.

In this chapter, I will describe the processes I used to express and analyze the stories of my participants. In doing so, I will discuss eight patterns, or findings, which emerged from them and contributed to my understanding of how these literacy specialists developed identities as leaders.

Methods for Analysis

As described in Chapter 3, my methodology involved conducting three layers of interviews, reviewing public documents, and observing my participants and their environments. These three methods allowed me to triangulate my data, assemble the thick

description I desired, and develop a deep understanding of each participant. I then wrote narrative portraits of each participant, included in Chapter 4, in which I expressed their stories and experiences using their words.

I used two methods for analyzing my data: thematic analysis (Boyzatis, 1998) and the Voice Centered Relational Method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003). I used both concurrently which helped me to listen carefully to my participants and maintain my objectivity while leading me to recognize common themes that emerged from their stories. These were appropriate methods for my study as both have been used in previous case study and narrative research to reveal themes in life stories through the voices of the people expressing them, offering an authentic experience of a phenomenon.

With thematic analysis, I searched for patterns of response across the four cases and noted them as extended statements and phrases. Groups of repeating ideas suggested codes which led me to themes that, when woven together, suggested meaning, or findings. Both common statements and outliers were noted as part of their experience.

I used the Voice Centered Relational Method, a narrative technique, to listen and be able to and express the stories of my participants. I found in a previous pilot study of the topic that this method provided a structured, objective way for me to listen carefully to the voices of my participants through multiple listening and reading of transcripts. The process yielded I-Poems which were valuable and informative to me as I was able to hear, interpret, and express the voices of literacy specialists, a focus of this study. The

process also led me to listen for other, or contrapuntal, voices that may have influenced the statements of the participants.

While my methodology and analysis helped me explore the phenomenon of literacy leadership and leadership identity, it does not offer broad generalizations. Rather, it reveals several findings, discussed in this chapter, that lead me to offer implications not currently found in the literature about literacy specialists, professional learning, and leadership. These, as well as recommendations for further research and practice, will be discussed in Chapter 6. Findings and implications are summarized in the table below.

Summary of Findings and Implications that Address the Research Question		
Findings	Implications	Question
1. Reading and writing is a passion in the lives of these literacy specialists. **2. The literacy specialists in this study have similar and multiple responsibilities.** **3. The literacy specialists in this study described how mentor-apprentice relationships enabled learning and development.** **4. The relationships between the literacy specialists and their principals were influential in their development as leaders.** **5. Major mandated school improvement initiatives impacted the role and development of these literacy specialists.** **6. Democratic leadership practices supported the literacy specialists in this study.** **7. The literacy specialists in this study have a positive self-concept and see themselves as leaders.** **8. These literacy specialists emerged as leaders through their experiences within the social context of school.**	1. Relationships matter to literacy specialists. 2. Literacy specialists are motivated by a moral, transformative purpose. 3. Literacy specialists develop as leaders through the social contexts of their school environment.	How does a literacy specialist develop an identity as a leader?

Findings

1. Reading and writing is a passion in the lives of these literacy specialists.

Terri, Kim, Kate, and Amanda all said that literacy was a prominent feature of their lives, some when they were children and all in the present day. Three of them described their childhoods to be rich in opportunities to read and write. Terri wrote books for her grandparents, curling up in "nooks and crannies" of their old house where she could read and write for hours. Kim remembers reading during the summers she spent fishing for lobsters at her coastal home, loving every kind of book but especially losing herself in realistic fiction. Similarly, Kate read everything she could get her hands on checking out countless books from the public library. All of them work to instill a similar love for reading and writing among their students at their schools and among their teachers who, as Kate says, "are surprisingly not all readers."

Amanda, however, described herself as a "reluctant reader," a child for whom "reading did not come easily." She said she only began to enjoy reading and writing when she was an adult. This struggle weighed heavily on her throughout her childhood and into college and led her to pursue literacy education. She began to focus on the children who were most like she was as a child, those who had not yet "met the right book" or who did not like to write. She also wanted to help teachers make reading a central, positive part of their lives. She recognized the importance of building relationships with books which enhances relationships with other people.

2. The literacy specialists in this study have similar and multiple responsibilities.

All of my participants described multiple roles and responsibilities as literacy specialists and coaches. While their roles were dependent on the needs of their schools, a typical occurrence among literacy specialists nationally, there roles included several

common responsibilities. Their primary work involved coaching other teachers, using a model that follows the Gradual Release of Responsibility model (Vygotsky, 1978) and is promoted by many scholars (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Allen, 2006; Knight, 2007; Puig and Froelich, 2011). They spend time in classrooms demonstrating lessons and observing teachers in order to solicit and provide feedback. They believe this promotes reflective teaching and helps teachers improve their teaching by learning about themselves.

Terri says that she was always "very aware that (she was) teaching teachers," and worked to provide them with resources and opportunities to "helps them develop the skills of effective teaching." She believed that through her years as a literacy specialist and teacher, and her learning at Teachers' College, that she knows what "good teaching" looks like and is able to help teachers create it.

Like Terri, Kim knows what good instruction looks like and hopes to help teachers accomplish it. Now that she is required to supervise and evaluate teachers in her administrative position, she worries about how teachers will react and accept her in that role. She said that she is able to give honest feedback, even when it may be hard for a teacher to accept, but is ready to provide all the support she needs to improve. Kim works to remain "close to teachers" although the administrative part of her job pulls her away from them and their classrooms more than she would like.

All of the literacy specialists focus on supporting new teacher in their schools, feeling responsible for helping them learn how to teach reading and writing even when, as Amanda says, "the universities haven't done it." Amanda and Terri decided to work with them while Kim and Kate were assigned to do this by their principal. Through

coaching, study groups, and workshops, all four describe how they provide what they consider to be a solid induction program for novices. Terri and Kate said that they worry that other teachers will feel neglected because they are paying more attention to new teachers, but realize that they are focusing where they are most needed.

All of the participants were especially conscious of their roles as coaches and not supervisors who completed annual evaluations. Even Kim, as the only literacy specialist working part-time as an administrator, said that she preferred not to supervise and evaluate because it may jeopardize her relationship with teachers as a coach. As literacy specialists, they are considered teachers and provide peer support rather than supervision which is connected to job performance, employment, and potentially salary. They were careful to set boundaries between themselves and their principals and, as Amanda said, were careful not to "rat anybody out." Instead, they share work constructively with teachers who set goals for improvement and together they share stories of their success.

They see a clear distinction between administration and leadership. Kate says that administrative tasks "get in the way" and Amanda agrees, saying that leadership is more engaging for her than writing schedules and "making sure the custodians have enough supplies." They have seen what principals have to do and prefer the work that they are doing because it allows them to be close to teachers and students while having influence and, as Kate said, a "seat at the table." In an environment that embraces shared or distributed leadership, as both Terri and Amanda described, the roles remain distinct which allows the literacy specialists to understand their place in the organization and contribute to the collaborative efforts for school improvement. Indeed, when the locus of

leadership is expanded, typically by a principal who values such a model, my participants felt most comfortable, satisfied, and influential

All of the participants see their roles as having a broad impact on their schools. From analyzing data to coaching teachers to providing workshops to mentoring new teachers, they believe that their work impacts children who are the ultimate beneficiaries of their work. As Kate said, “You see your efforts paying off” when children and teachers are doing well.

However, they also see that their roles are somewhat ambiguous, different from those of teachers and principals, and difficult to define. As veterans, they have constructed their role to be influential at their schools by building capacity in others, contributing to the leadership, and leading change initiatives which will transform their schools. They remember that this was not always the case in some school environments and when they first assumed their positions as literacy specialists. They recognized that it was through their longevity and experience that they have defined and have begun to thrive in their role within the school culture.

3. The literacy specialists in this study described how mentor-apprentice relationships enabled learning and development.

During our interviews, each participant identified mentors with whom they have worked and discussed the ways that their mentor impacted their professional lives. These included professors, principals, other administrators, other literacy specialists, and professional colleagues, all of whom supported their professional knowledge as well as their personal development as educators. Amanda identified a past principal who taught her how to be reflective, professors from graduate school who invited her to co-present at

conferences and co-author articles with them, and editors at the company that published her book who helped her refine her writing process. Kate described principals whose qualities she admired and particularly a fellow literacy specialist who had passed away as being a significant influence on her work as they supported each other in their roles. Terri described her current principal, instructors and mentors from Teachers College, and a consultant who was hired to coach her as being influential. She said that she "fine tuned" her practice because of a consultant, Anne, who was hired by her district to coach her as she developed strategies as a literacy leader. "There was a partnership that I felt with Anne and she helped me reflect on what was working and what was not." Terri also mentioned a network of literacy specialists in her districts who met regularly to discuss their work, share successes and challenges, and learn collaboratively. She believed that this team encouraged participants to mentor each other and improve both their individual and collective practice.

All four literacy specialists recognized that they now served as mentors for others. Amanda readily admitted, "I had amazing opportunities to learn from people, so it's my philosophy to do the same for others." Both Amanda and Terri both described how they built capacity in others by providing them with various tools to support their learning. Terri helped teachers learn by modeling it in front of them. When meeting with teachers after they had watched her demonstrate a lesson, she would talk with them and identify things she did well and areas of improvement to model reflective practice as well. She believed that this helped teachers to see her reflect on what worked and what did not and encourage them to give themselves permission not to be perfect. "I show them that I always want to get better." Amanda described how her literacy room served as a resource

for adult learning, providing colleagues with a space and resources with which to explore, reflect, and learn. Kim provides examples of best practice by modeling for her colleagues as well as by connecting them with each other, encouraging them to talk about their teaching and observe each other in practice. Kate collaborates with consultants from outside of her district to expand her repertoire of strategies with which to model for teachers at her school.

All of the participants also discussed how they particularly focus on new teachers in order to guide their development. Amanda believes that this is a necessary part of her work in that she is able to teach new teachers about what is expected of them within the school's literacy vision. This illustrates an understanding of apprenticeship, or the relationship between a mentor and a novice, that was first suggested by Lave (1977) in her ethnography of tailors in the workplace who learned through their close relationships with their mentors and later expanded by Lave (1988, 2011), Wenger (1998), and others (Brown, Collins, & Deguid, 1989; Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991; Mosenthal, 1996).

Mentoring helped the participants in my study lead change in their schools. By providing a safe space in which their colleagues could learn, even reluctant colleagues were able to grow. Both Amanda and Terri described colleagues who had initially resisted changes in their literacy practices. Amanda recalled a veteran colleague who sat through countless workshops and meetings exuding negativity through her body language for months. It was only after Amanda had developed a more trusting relationship with her by helping her incorporate new techniques with more familiar ones that "she let her guard down" and was better able to accept change. Terri also offered a story about a colleague who had made "great progress". Over the course of many months, Terri modeled

instructional practices and engaged in reflective dialogue about their lessons which led the teacher to new ways of thinking. Both Terri and Amanda used their role as mentors to influence the colleagues and were able to do so within a social context.

My participants guided their colleagues into new ways of thinking about literacy instruction and help them navigate changes to their instruction, especially in an environment where change is mandated, through mentoring. This illustrates two theories proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991): Legitimate Peripheral Participation and Situated Learning Theory. Both claim that learning is constructed collaboratively among people who are engaged in a common purpose within a defined social context and that adults support each other through a change process. My participants created learning opportunities for their colleagues within an authentic social setting that allowed them to develop as learners, leading to see their work differently and begin to experience a transformation of their practice. Such communities of practice serve as holding environments (Kegan, 1994) that enable adult learners to move toward a transformation of knowledge and practice within a climate where change is mandatory.

4. The relationships between the literacy specialists and their principals were influential in their development as leaders.

All of the participants in this study described the relationships they had formed with their current and past school principals. Terri described how she "blossomed" when her current principal was hired at her school and Amanda "felt connected" because her current and immediate past principals invited her to collaborate on initiatives to move the schools forward. However, this was not always the case, as each of my participants described relationships with different principals and district administrators who did not

embrace a distributed leadership model. This perspective offered a valuable distinction between environment in which they felt supported, valued, empowered, and vital and in an environment in which they did not. The former is supportive of their developing identities and the process of their socialization into roles of leadership.

While Kate appreciated her principal, she acknowledged that she was often "sent in" to support certain teachers about whom the principal was concerned. While she believed that his intentions were always constrictive and supportive, she was cautious not to become his "informant" which would have compromised her relationship with other teachers. Similarly, Kim was conscious in her first position as a literacy coach that she was being sent into classrooms and would work with teachers because of an administrative mandate. She was given a clear agenda, to change the ways that teachers were teaching writing, which was developed and delivered by the principal. Kim appreciated how her principal assigned her to classrooms and defined the work she would do with every teacher. As a new literacy coach, she felt that his mandate established her role and "opened the door" for her.

Each participant described the relationships they have had with different principals and administrators, and noted both positive and negative differences in leadership styles. This impacted the cultures of their schools. While all had worked with principals whom they considered to be "ineffective," "not-visible," or "unable to communicate," they named similar qualities in more successful principals with whom they had worked. These qualities included an ability to motivate people, organize work, direct initiatives, collaborate with others, ask questions and listen to responses, empathize, and build capacity in others throughout the school. All said that they felt most

valued and successful when they worked with principals who supported them both personally and professionally. Terri said Angela recognized her knowledge and believed in her ability as a literacy specialist. “She really trusts my literacy judgment. That was huge. That had not always happened.” Similarly, Amanda described both her current and past principal as “involved in everything and everything” and “very interested” in the work she was doing.” Her current and former principal and her former assistant superintendent were particularly involved in her work. They regularly attended her workshops and meetings which “spoke volumes” to the participants. This was in contrast to a school at which she had once consulted where no administrators participated in workshops at all. She also appreciates the autonomy she has been given. “They’ve never said no. I’ve been allowed to grow and flourish and try new things. I’m not sure that many people have been afforded those same opportunities.” Kate also appreciates her current principal who is collaborative and willing to share decisions about all aspects of the school organization with others. She feels like she has both autonomy and accountability as she leads initiatives to improve literacy teaching and learning.

None of the literacy specialists in my study pursued their jobs on their own. All were invited, encouraged, and even begged to assume their first position by school principals and district administrators. Kate described how the principal who hired her visited her classroom to watch her teach. She had never met him and was unsure of the reason he wanted to observe her teaching. It was only when he was leaving her room that he said that he had heard about her work and wondered if she was interested in serving as his school’s literacy specialist. She was flattered, but initially declined the offer. She only

accepted his invitation at the encouragement of a colleague and close friend who had also been approached by a different principal to do similar work.

Similarly, the relationship my participants had with other leaders in their schools influenced their identity. When authoritative leaders served as principals and directed all of their work, as was the case with Kim's second position, or laissez-faire (Northouse, 2012) leaders were disinterested in their work and paid little attention to them, they revealed that they felt less like a leader. They felt most supported in their work as leaders when principals followed a democratic or distributed style of leadership and valued their knowledge and experience. All of them were recruited to apply for their jobs, hand selected by democratic leaders who knew of their work as teachers and sought them out to lead literacy initiatives in their schools because of their past experience. They were given autonomy to conduct their work, as when Kate formed the Reading Teacher Leaders group and Amanda developed her literacy room, and took risks to influence their colleagues and school. They were included by administrators in building leadership teams, contributing to decisions and initiatives, and felt able to express their voices in concert with others. It was the influence of a democratic leader that encouraged them to enter a new stage in their career, a new stage of development that would challenge them as adults.

School principals helped to establish the identity of literacy specialists. By inviting them to serve on leadership teams, consulting with them about improvement initiatives, or assigning them to work in classrooms, they publicly validate their knowledge, insight, and influence which leads others to see them as leaders. It also leads

literacy specialists to see themselves as leader and to acknowledge their own roles in leading change within their schools.

5. Major mandated school improvement initiatives impacted the role and development of these literacy specialists.

While the schools at which my participants worked were located in separate cities and had distinct demographic differences, they all shared several common factors that influenced their culture. All of the schools had, at one time, been classified as "schools in need of improvement," or "failing schools" by their states' Department of Education, a designation which is based primarily on student achievement test scores, but also includes, in some cases, rates of progress among groups of students such as children with disabilities and children who have limited proficiency in the English language. Because of their designation, the schools were required to develop and implement plans to increase student achievement and progress across the whole school and target populations. While some improvement efforts were more extensive than others, all plans involved a transformation of teaching and learning through professional development in literacy instruction. The literacy specialists were expected to be resources for this step by coaching teachers in new practices and monitoring student achievement data in response to their refined instruction. For most schools, this represented a shift in culture and caused teachers and principals to think differently about their work.

Each of my participants' schools approached improvement initiatives differently, although they all said that these efforts had improved student achievement and changed the way their schools operated. For example, Kim described her experience as a literacy coach at a school whose improvement initiative was funded by the highly structured and

accountable Reading First grant. She was hired to help teachers apply required instructional practices in writing. She was directed by her principal to provide coaching as well as feedback to him about the progress teachers were making. While she was uncomfortable with that, she complied in order to support the mandatory initiative. Kim, as the literacy coach, functioned as a strategy that would enable the initiative to move forward. She said that she was allowed to lead the initiative in her own way, but was expected to follow the mandatory program. Her leadership was directed by the principal who managed the entire initiative which included all of the participants in its implementation. The initiative resulted in improved student achievement test scores by the time the grant ended, which was its goal.

The impact of improvement initiatives involved more than increased scores on student achievement tests. Amanda said that at Ross School, the teachers and principal realized that what they were doing "just wasn't working," so they needed to "try something new." Low student achievement may have provided data to initiate the plan, but there was an already existing feeling that changes needed to me made in order to address student and staff needs. When Amanda began working there, she was immediately invited to participate in planning the change initiatives that would involve restructuring schedules, curriculum, and professional development. She was immediately engaged in determining needs by getting to know her new colleagues and shared her insights with the principal and other teacher leaders. While she acknowledged that it "wouldn't be smooth sailing," Amanda was involved from the beginning and helped to create an environment where change could be managed. The organizational structure of

the school, built around relationships among the faculty, supported her development as a leader.

The most drastic of improvement plans occurred at Terri's River Meadow School where the principal and more than half of the teachers had been replaced. She described how the new principal, Angela, who had led other turnaround schools before coming to River Meadow, had engaged all of the staff in the improvement plan. She asked everyone to participate by contributing ideas and providing feedback to which she responded with both immediate and long-term actions. For example upon the suggestion of several staff members, Angela allowed for flexible schedules to better support an academically focused after school program. She was a constant presence in classrooms, hallways, the cafeteria, and other places where students, staff, and parents had gathered, asking questions, listening to responses, and soliciting collaboration. Terri, who had worked at River Meadow with four previous principals, appreciated the difference in Angela's leadership. She navigated a mandated improvement initiative with deliberate choices in leadership. She genuinely promoted collaboration, attended to relationships among adults and children, and created structures that supported people in an environment that was forced to change. This allowed staff to become part of change. Through Angela's leadership, Terri helped to direct the change process and allowed her to develop her skills and identity as a leader which had been a challenge earlier in her career.

While the change initiatives at each of their schools were mandated by their state's Department of Education, the schools approached improvement collaboratively and regarded them as opportunities for growth. The literacy specialists factored prominently in the initiatives, providing technical support for improving instruction and

supporting their colleagues throughout the change process. They developed a role as leaders through the initiatives, mediating the expectations set by authoritarian leadership and the realities of classroom instruction. Colleagues looked to them to lead the change process. This contributed to their identities as leaders whose influence was appreciated and tangible.

6. Democratic leadership practices supported the literacy specialists in this study.

A common model of leadership emerged from the stories of my participants which described a democratic leadership style in which leaders and subordinates work collaboratively without a hierarchy of "top-down" communication and expectation (Northouse, 2012, p. 56). In this style, all voices are sought out and heard, individuals are valued for their contributions, and feedback about performance is generative rather than corrective. Interpersonal relationships engage participants as followers and build networks of support for individuals and the organization.

My participants identified the qualities and abilities of leaders they knew and whom they consider to be effective. These included listening and communication skills, integrity, collaboration, creativity, and an ability to follow through on initiatives. These all point toward a relational view of leadership. They also named qualities and skills of less effective leaders which included disorganization, dishonesty, a lack of vision, the inability to communicate, and a preference to lead alone. The leaders they initially named were primarily administrators– principals, superintendents, and curriculum leaders- all of whom held titles of authority within a traditional school organizational structure. As our discussions about leadership continued, some named colleagues and other teachers as

leaders. My participant Kate bluntly stated that "all teachers are leaders." However, this is not a typical or conventional association because of the overriding concept of school leadership as managerial (Collay & Cooper, 2008). Indeed, three of my participants said that they did not want to be administrative leaders because of the many duties they see their administrators doing every day, most of which do not involve teaching and learning. They saw their leadership roles as horizontal, as being on the same level of the organization with teachers who had the greatest potential for influencing the lives of children.

In addition to relational leadership, my participants alluded to two other philosophies of democratic leadership: distributed leadership and servant leadership. Distributed Leadership refers more to the practice of leadership than the roles and responsibilities of individual leaders. It recognizes the contributions of all individuals who contribute to leadership in an organization, including those with formal and informal roles (Harris & Spillane, 2008). This approach is not merely about a sharing of roles, but rather a stretching of responsibilities among multiple leaders who have a vested interest in the work at hand (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). The theory anticipates the ways that leaders interact with each other and with followers as an entire community navigates change.

Similarly, the principles of servant leadership emerged as considerations about leadership among my participants. They described a view of leadership that suggests a greater moral purpose, particularly in wanting to support students by supporting their teachers and improving their schools. Just as literacy impacts the very core of individuals and the conditions in which they exist (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Giroux, 1987), my

participants suggested that leadership can create the conditions within a culture that will have a lasting impact. This is reminiscent of servant leadership. Described by Greenleaf, the servant leader considers himself a servant first and begins with a "natural feeling that one wants to serve" (1977, p. 27) and emerges through collaboration, empathy, communication, and service. When Amanda declared that she would do anything to help another teacher and described her first year as a literacy specialist as being "on the floor" cutting out bookmarks and organizing books, she demonstrated a willingness to serve her colleagues. When Terri asked the faculty at O'Donnell School, the new school to which she was assigned, to tell her about their strengths and needs and assured them that their conversations would be confidential, she honored her colleagues and developed a trusting relationship. When Kim provided honest feedback to colleagues in a new supervisory relationship and supported them with resources and strategies to help their practice, she showed how she would use her authority to assist her colleagues in improving her practice. As Kate built a team of reading teacher leaders and invited everyone to come to the table in order to contribute their own expertise and experiences in a true communities of practice model (Wenger, 1998), she showed her colleagues that her authority was not about command, control, or power but rather of sharing practices and mutual contributions to school improvement. All of them functioned as servant leaders whose moral authority was created by proving themselves as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and reliable rather than by using power to force change. The participants in my study aspired to and used influence strategically which contributed to the development of their identity They focused on building the capacity of their colleagues which would in turn build the capacity of the organization to impact learning.

While my participants said that they preferred working in shared and distributed leadership models, they recognized the need for principals to make decisions, some of which were top-down. However, they all described the importance of mutual communication with their principals even when mandates were imposed. Terri regularly asked her principal for feedback and appreciated Angela's directness that, coupled with kindness, demonstrated respect. Amanda felt that she could be direct with her principal and could challenge her when she did not agree with a decision. She expects that she and her principal to be honest and direct with each other. This open communication builds a collaborative relationship that is important to maintain among leaders in a democratic leadership structure.

All of my participants recognized that not every aspect of the school's culture was positive or productive. However, leadership choices within the organization neutralized negativity and maintained progress. Kate discussed political situations in the community that clouded the teachers' willingness to engage in new initiatives. Terri described an authoritarian district leadership team whose administrative mandates were typically received negatively which resulted in resistance and represented misalignment among teachers, principals, and district administrators. Amanda realized early on that "not everything was always rosy" as she and others worked to reform their school, although she said that teachers were willing to try once they understood how they would be affected. She recounted stories of teachers who had been resistant but eventually became supportive of change initiatives over the course of several months or even years. By building relationships with teachers, Amanda believes she is demonstrating a

collaborative culture and is providing a sense of "belonging," where "everyone is nourished professionally."

All of the literacy specialists see themselves as a different kind of leader than is conventionally defined in a patriarchal system such as public school. By the very nature of their jobs, they work in between the traditional roles of teaching and administration. Neither classroom teachers, although they are employed with a teaching contract, nor administrators, although they may complete administrative tasks, they see themselves as creating a new form of leadership. Even Kim who works part-time with an administrative title, responsibilities, and salary, envisions a type of leadership that differs from the conventional concept of authoritarian leadership in schools. She, like the others, sees leadership structures that are supportive, collaborative, and dependent upon relationships with others.

While they do not name it as such, all of my participants describe leadership models that have inherently feminist attributes, namely that they are built upon relationships among people in a horizontal organizational structure rather than directives delivered from a single authority (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Porter & Daniel, 2007). While they all work in school districts with hierarchical structures and administrative mandates, as evidenced by imposed improvement plans and the many requirements of grant funded programs, they function as leaders through the autonomy they have in the school level of the organization. They describe models where different voices are heard and considered as work is initiated, change is attempted, and progress is realized.

7. The literacy specialists in this study have a positive self-concept and see themselves as leaders.

All of my participants revealed that they considered themselves to be leaders at their schools. Because of the responsibilities associated with their job, their relationships with administrators and colleagues, and their accomplishments at their schools, districts, and beyond, all four believe that they exhibit similar qualities to those they recognized in other successful leaders.

In particular, they all said that as leaders, they participated in advancing the school's vision, taking part in decisions that impacted learning, and organized initiatives and programs connected to literacy. They said that the believed that their colleagues and administrators saw them as people who were knowledgeable about literacy instruction, as resources who could provide information about reading and writing instruction. They also believed that others considered them to be leaders, as people who had the knowledge, experience, and skills to lead them in literacy, but this too took a considerable amount of time to establish. It also remained tentative for all of them and heavily dependent upon the context of the school, the relationships they had with teachers and principals, and the perceptions others had of them.

All of the specialists saw their role as a helper, as someone who works "behind the scenes" to support children by supporting their teachers and school. They believe in building the capacity of other people and of the system itself, providing support for their teaching through coaching in a gradual release of responsibility that would eventually be assimilated and sustained in their practice. The concept of being a helper was broad. Terri and Amanda would organize books, laminate bookmarks, and photocopy materials for teacher so that they can focus on their teaching rather than clerical tasks. They asked teachers to tell them what kind of help they needed in an effort to customize their support

and address a teacher's immediate needs. While Kate laughs when she describes her leadership as the result of being "the only on who raised her hand," she and the others recognize the importance of being at the service of their colleagues. This builds capacity gradually by addressing whatever needs that are present and guiding others to grow.

The greatest result of building capacity for Amanda is "growing leaders" who work in classrooms but are involved in leadership initiative in their schools and beyond. She was proud to explain how she encouraged teachers to work with her on writing projects and conference workshops both in the district and at national conferences. Similarly, Terri is proud of how her teachers are now able to facilitate their own professional learning communities and study groups and how she is able to take on the role of participant and even silent observer. Kate began to develop leadership in her colleagues by establishing the Reading Teacher Leaders group, a voluntary group of teachers who met regularly and were engaged in action research and professional development. She also believes that all teachers are leaders and continuously remind them of that.

Terri, Kim, Kate, and Amanda believe that they have influence in their schools and cite specific evidence that is tangible. They establish relationships among colleagues, create a space for them to interact, reflect, and learn, and offer themselves as mentors for instruction. This focuses their attention on their colleagues as adult learners who, when working together, will realize both personal and professional transformations and school change. They see themselves as agents of change, as collaborators in improvement initiatives whose goal is to transform their schools by transforming teaching and learning.

The participants in my study were all very aware of their role in impacting the lives of others. While none of them taught their own students directly, they realized an influence by supporting teachers and the schools in which they worked. For example, when Amanda, the published author, spoke about building capacity in other people, she described how she supported teachers' instructional needs and encouraged them to see their work in a larger context. She encouraged others to work with her on projects, co-author papers, and present workshops with her at national conferences. When Terri admitted that she had taken a "back seat" at some of the grade level meetings she once actively facilitated by encouraging other teachers to set the agenda and lead conversations, she believed she had helped groups of teachers become more self-sufficient and more in control of their own learning. When Kate who organized the Reading Teacher Leaders group engaged her colleagues in action research, she recognized how their learning was impacting the practice of the participants as well as the entire school community.

Similarly, all of my participants spoke about wanting to make an impact on their schools and recognized the successes they have had. They saw their work as instrumental in advancing a culture of literacy as well as a culture of change. Terri, who was empowered by her new principal, saw herself as an important member of the school's leadership team, offering advice and feedback about initiatives that would impact learning throughout the school. Having acknowledged her successful leadership at River Meadow, she was excited to work at a second school and develop similar models there. Kim, now in a part time administrative role in addition to her role as a coach, was pleased that her ability to influence had been immediately increased by her new title. Amanda

who uses her literacy room as a space for teachers to learn is proud of the changes she has witnessed at her school over the years, particularly the development of reflective practice of both teachers and students. The influence Amanda has had on her school in the many years she has worked there was confirmed by her principal who described her many contributions and acknowledged her role in changing the culture of the school. While modest about her success as a published author, she also sees how her writing and consultation can influence others at her school and beyond.

All of my participants spoke about their sense of belonging, feeling accepted, and being valued in their schools. Amanda spoke of how this need to belong was most intense when she first assumed her role. Challenged by a new setting with new colleagues, as well as a lack of a physical space, she struggled to define her role and introduce herself to her new school. She said that it took several years to be truly accepted, particularly by veteran teachers who viewed her with suspicion. Terri experienced a similar situation even though she had taught at her school for several years before becoming the literacy specialists. Her colleagues saw her as a primary teacher and were not aware of her background or her ability to support fellow teachers effectively. It was only when she became connected to Teachers' College that her colleagues recognized her as a leader and she felt accepted in her role. She acknowledged that an outside authority was needed to validate her ability and knowledge.

A sense of belonging, together with a feeling of influence have supported the development of identity among my participants, confirming Kegan's suggestion that adults most yearn to be included and to have a sense of agency (1994). Similarly, this illustrates the "procedural way of knowing" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule,

1997) which suggests that women develop both voice and a sense of self through interactions with authorities, listening to the multiple voices of their administrative and teaching colleagues and learning to connect them. They become socialized into leadership through the relationships and networks in which they participate.

As leaders, my participants are clearly focused on people, working to empower their colleagues and build capacity in them to teach well which will ultimately improve the lives of the children they teach. Porter and Daniel refer to this stance as "legacy leadership" (2007, p. 261) which seeks a greater purpose by creating future leaders who share similar beliefs about leadership.

8. These literacy specialists emerged as leaders through their experiences within the social context of school.

Leadership, like teaching, cannot exist in a vacuum. It exists because of and in relation to social interactions among people. Because of this, leadership emerges over time and develops as individuals respond to their environments. The participants suggested that while certain personal dispositions were innate and could not be learned, leadership could emerge through socialization into the role. They emerged as leaders over time through relationships with other people, particularly through those with influential mentors, and the conditions in which they worked. Amanda believes that she has moved into the role of mentor and recognizes how she "grows leaders" and builds their capacity. Terri sees herself in the same way, recognizing that some people, like herself, may not be "natural born leaders."

All four participants described how they knew they were leaders when others recognized them as ones. Kate and Kim believed they were leaders when their colleagues

were coming to them for support, advice, and feedback long before they held official titles. Amanda understood her leadership when colleagues who once challenged her validated her knowledge and experience. Terri credits her principal and colleagues as acknowledging and nurturing her leadership, but also recognizes that her work at Teacher's College helped to establish her leadership by providing an authority to her practice she feels she was lacking previously and empowering her as a leader. Similarly, All of the participants believe that a leader's self-concept is dependent on the recognition, validation, and affirmation of others which leads them to develop an identity as a leader and function in their roles.

My participants also described how their principals often directed their work. Kim said, "I was told where to focus" and relied on her principal to set the goals of the school and assign her to classrooms in most need of support. Similarly, Amanda was directed to help teachers establish a reading workshop when she arrived at Ross School, although was given little guidance or direction in how to do it. "I just kind of got to work." Over time, my participants initiated projects and became more self-directed, as was the case with Kate's group of Reading Teacher Leaders and their focus on action research. While topics for their research were self-selected and based on the needs of students as revealed by achievement data, Kate made sure that their work was aligned with the school's improvement goals and that the principal and district administration was supportive. She initiated a relationship with a national consultant and asked her to work with administrators to help them understand their work. She said that this was very successful and further validated the work of the Reading Teacher Leaders as well as her work as a literacy specialist.

The current principals of my participants, two of whom are women and two who are men, appeared to balance a distributed leadership model along with a predominantly hierarchical structure. All schools held major mandatory improvement initiated which required the careful and strategic administration of a leader. Rather than controlling the initiatives independently, these principals chose to share the leadership with others, empowering multiple individuals with influence. Through their choices of leadership, they created an environment that engaged other adults to serve as leaders. This supported the development of my participants' identities as leaders, led to high satisfaction in their work, and built a strong sense of ownership in the transformation of their schools. The principals' roles were essential in establishing a culture in which adults thrived as learners, teachers, and leaders.

My participants see how they have grown as leaders because of their interaction with superiors, colleagues, and followers. When asked to provide an artifact that represented their leadership, all four said that they had considered bringing a teacher because their colleagues were representative of their work as a leader. All of them refer to the teachers at their schools as "my teachers" and feel a sense of ownership of their needs, challenges, and successes. Amanda referred to the progress of teachers as her "report card." Changes in their practice give evidence of her work. They all talked about how they facilitated study groups for teachers during which they asked teachers to think about their practices, receive professional development, and plan for continuous learning. They believed these meetings were central to their work as literacy specialists and essential for the improvement of their schools.

While they created opportunities for teachers to learn collaboratively, they were not provided with peer groups or regular occasions to learn with other literacy specialists. Even in districts with other literacy specialists and teacher leaders, opportunities to build professional relationships in a Communities of Practice of their own are uncommon. If they exist, they must be developed by the specialists themselves. Kate developed her Reading Teacher Leaders group and Kim initiated a relationship with colleagues in the Department of Education to support their work. Terri appreciates a relationship with her mentor from Teacher's College, but misses the regular opportunities she used to have to work with fellow literacy specialists in her district now that they are no longer able to do so during school time. Amanda feels as though she is always the one who organizes the professional development but must search for it on her own, typically connecting with colleagues outside of her district and state.

The schools in which my participants work offer significant opportunities for growth and development. Through individual relationships with principals, fellow teacher leaders, and teaching colleagues as well as the structure of leadership within the school environment, my participants emerged as leaders who felt validated, important, and influential.

Chapter Summary

While every person's experience is unique, as evidenced in the portraits of my participants, common themes emerged in the way they engaged in their work and perceived of their roles within their school communities: concepts of social learning, democratic leadership, purpose, and influence were shared among them which suggest

common themes in their development. These themes offer an understanding of the phenomenon of literacy leadership and suggest implications for future development.

In this chapter, I described the methods used in analyzing the data collected to address the topic of my dissertation project and the question, “How does a literacy specialist in a public elementary school develop an identity as a leader?” The common themes that were revealed through cross case analysis do not draw broad generalizations about all literacy specialists, but have led me to synthesize several implications that relate to the role of the literacy specialist, the structures and practices of leadership, and the was that adults learn within a transformative environment. In the final chapter, I will discuss these implications about the phenomenon of literacy leadership and make recommendations for further exploration of the topic.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The phenomenon of literacy leadership is important to consider as public education works to improve learning and transform its schools. The ways that educators who work as literacy specialists develop an identity as leaders has proven to be a timely topic that has been both personally and professionally informative. By listening to the stories of four veteran practitioners, all of whom were women working at public elementary schools in different New England cities, I was able to recognize patterns in their perceptions and experiences as well as in the cultures of their schools. These encompassed the ways in which they approached their work, understood the concept of leadership, and perceived of their influence within their school communities. These patterns suggested that their leader identity emerged from the social context and involved their relationships with supervisors and colleagues, their interaction within a school culture of change, a transformation of their schools, and ultimately a transformation of their own lives. Indeed, while they worked to transform their schools by supporting teaching and learning, they simultaneously experienced a personal transformation that contributed to their leader identity with a clear vision, a moral purpose, and a transformative mission that will change the lives of others.

Summary of Preceding Chapters

As I conclude this study, a brief summary of each chapter provides the reader with a review and supports the discussion of my implications.

Chapter 1 introduced my topic, my background as a literacy specialist, and the rationale for my research, as well as the theoretical framework of Social Learning, Relational Cultural Theory, and Transformational Learning Theory that support my study.

Chapter 2 provided a review of scholarly literature connected to the topic, namely theories and research about the role of the literacy specialist, concepts of leadership, and identity development.

Chapter 3 described the multiple case study methodology I developed to conduct my research, introducing the four participants in my study and explaining my process for conducting layered interviews with them, reviewing documents about their schools, and observing their practice.

Chapter 4, the heart of my study, presents narrative portraits of each of my four participants, expressing their stories and experiences as literacy specialists. The stories included the words of each participant as well as excerpts from I-poems created through my analysis and images of artifacts they shared during our interviews.

Chapter 5 offers an analysis of my data, expressed as six themes that emerged in the cross case analysis using Voice Centered Relational Method and thematic analysis and are important in understanding the phenomenon of literacy leadership.

In this final chapter, I will discuss four implications that I have learned about literacy specialists and their identity as leaders. I believe that these implications can assist in a deeper understanding of the roles of literacy specialists in our schools, support

their development as educators, leaders, and adult learners, and contribute to the scholarship not only of literacy and leadership but also in school transformation.

Research Question

Throughout this final chapter, I will discuss what I have learned in response to my research question: *How does a literacy specialist in a public elementary school develop an identity as a leader?* While a case study does not offer generalizations or draw conclusions, my research offers insight into the development of literacy specialists and lends a perspective on the roles they play in our schools that is not present in the literature. My study also suggests the importance of considering an approach to leadership that differs from the conventional authoritarian approach, namely a transformative application of leadership that impacts the cultures of our schools and the lives of our children.

Implications – Developing a Different Kind of Leader

Throughout this study, I held a personal bias that literacy specialists served as school leaders, but wondered if they saw themselves as leaders. The stories of my participants confirmed my bias but suggested a non-traditional leadership role that remains tentative within the school organization. Their stories also reveal that they see themselves as leaders within the school environment and their relationships with others contribute to that identity. By exploring their development, I identified findings about their roles, their identity, and about leadership and the organization of school. Summarized in the table below, these themes suggest the following implications that could potentially impact both the literacy specialists as well as school leadership.

Summary of Findings and Implications that Address the Research Question		
Findings	**Implications**	Research Question
1. Reading and writing is a passion in the lives of these literacy specialists. 2. The literacy specialists in this study have similar and multiple responsibilities. 3. The literacy specialists in this study described how mentor-apprentice relationships enabled learning and development. 4. The relationships between the literacy specialists and their principals were influential in their development as leaders. 5. Major mandated school improvement initiatives impacted the role and development of these literacy specialists. 6. Democratic leadership practices supported the literacy specialists in this study. 7. The literacy specialists in this study have a positive self-concept and see themselves as leaders. 8. These literacy specialists emerged as leaders through their experiences within the social context of school.	**1. Relationships matter to literacy specialists.** **2. Literacy specialists are motivated by a moral, transformative purpose.** **3. Literacy specialists develop as leaders through the social contexts of their school environment.**	How does a literacy specialist develop an identity as a leader?

Implication 1. Relationships matter to literacy specialists.

Literacy specialists view leadership as an opportunity to develop and sustain relationships, help people navigate change and grow as professionals, and build capacity in individuals and throughout the school. This supports the concept of relational leadership (Daly, 2010; Institute, 2014; Komives et al., 2009; Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006) which is defined as a "relational process of people working together to accomplish a change or make a difference that will benefit the common good" (Komives, et al., 2006, p. 402). As with Relational Cultural Theory

(Institute, 2014; Miller, 1986) which recognizes the importance of relationships and voice in human development and suggests that the personal connections people make help them to navigate the uncertainties and complexities of change, leadership is dependent upon the context in which it exists. The theory also suggests the necessity of grounding leadership within the social context (Komives, et al., 2009; Komives, et al., 2006) in order to support the development.

This approach to leadership contrasts with a conventional model of authoritarian, patriarchal leadership which traditional school organizations follow. This model emerges from a feminist perspective that nurtures an organization by focusing on people, a social consciousness, and collaborative action.

Because leadership is a product of the greater culture and the context in which it exists, these models are challenging to create and sustain. While the participants considered themselves to be leaders, they waited to be "allowed" or "encouraged" to lead, as Terri suggested in her description of her current principal's empowerment of her. Even when a democratic philosophy of leadership is promoted by visionary principals, the overarching authoritarian context of school may impede its greatest impact. Non-hierarchical leaders, such as literacy specialists and other teacher leaders, still need to follow the directive of a supervisor in order to function as leaders. This sets a foundation for the ease or challenge of developing an identity as a leader. However, when the administrative leader, the school principal, embraces such a philosophy, the literacy specialist is able to develop as a leader.

Implication 2. Literacy leaders are motivated by a moral, transformative purpose.

Literacy, by its very nature, is inherently political and deeply rooted in culture. It enables people to construct and make meaning of their own experiences and is "fundamental to aggressively constructing one's voice" (Giroux, 1987, p. 7), which supports a person's interaction with power and society as well as self and social empowerment. Literacy suggests a means for people to gain greater control over their lives, engage in social action, and promote social change in solidarity with the marginalized (Shannon, 1990). Being able to read and write provides us with the capacity to "read the world" and develop a better understanding of the political limitations and possibilities that emerge in our contemporary world. Literacy allows people to navigate the complicated world that surrounds them and make meaning of their experiences.

Literacy, then, is itself a transformative process (Mezirow, 1996) that supports the ongoing development of people and impacts their very lives. The role of a literacy specialist is likewise inherently transformative. As the catalyst who provides an initial "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22) or an agent who initiates reflective discourse in search for a common understanding of experiences, a literacy specialist offers her colleagues an opportunity to reflect upon and navigate change, make sense of their work, and become self-directed in their teaching.

Literacy specialists provide what Kegan (2000, p. 49) calls "informative learning," or new content that contributes to already established experiences and ways of knowing. Through modeling, coaching, and direct instruction, they provide their colleagues with the tools for change, expectations for practice, and improved instruction. However, as literacy specialists create a deeper impact among their faculty, as evidenced by their growing independence and confidence in their work, the move toward

"transformative learning" makes them more vulnerable to change (Kegan, 1994). Both forms of learning are valuable, although the latter facilitates a reconstruction of standing frames of mind which may be instrumental in large scale transformation or improvement efforts in a school.

The four literacy specialists in this study relied on strong interpersonal relationships with teachers, to be reflective about their practice (Kegan, 1994, p. 232), improve their teaching and the learning of their students, and begin to experience personal and professional transformation. This impacts the entire school culture as they become agents of change as well. Through their relational leadership style as colleagues, they helped other teachers mediate the potential harsh mandates, such as highly structured school improvement plans.

The literacy specialists in this study also experienced a personal transformation. This contributed to the ways in which their leader identities emerged. Their abilities to manage their own assumptions and beliefs, navigate change in themselves and others, engage in the collaborative work of leadership, and create influence within the context of the whole school environment allowed them to contribute as leaders. Given an appropriate environment, they were able to become the leaders they want to be (Collay & Cooper, 2008). Transformation implies a change in the identity of the individual (Illeris, 2014) which leads to a change in the environment that she influences and by which she is influenced.

While they have experienced transformative learning, it has been neither a simple task nor an automatic occurrence. Their prior experiences, personal qualities, and the

context in which they work have facilitated or challenged their transformations as adults and as leaders. Adults experience both instrumental and communicative competence, in other words both an orientation to improvements of tasks as well as a negotiation of personal purposes, values, and meaning (Mezirow, 2000). In order to transform, one must approach the latter and begin to develop a sense of oneself, or one's identity. When a setting is conducive to supporting communicative growth though collaboration, genuine discourse, and reflective practice, the development of one's identity is more secure, as it appears to have been in the settings of my participants. However, if they had been in schools with more overt patriarchal, authoritarian structures, these opportunities are more likely to have been limited and present challenges to the development of identity.

Implication 3. Literacy specialists develop as leaders through the social context of their school environment.

Given an alternative to the traditional concept of leadership in schools, one which is derived from a relational model rather than one of authority and power, the social context from which leadership emerges and is sustained becomes an essential consideration in understanding how literacy specialists develop an identity as a leader. The social context contributes to their formation, challenging and supporting them as they define a concept of leadership that may run counter to a conventional view. This was evident in all of my participants' stories, but particularly in Terri's as she worked under very different leadership contexts, as well as Amanda who helped to build a school culture whose foundation was in social learning.

All of my participants served in a coaching capacity. In this role, they guided their colleagues in reflecting about their teaching, modeled effective instructional practices,

and provided ongoing feedback as they incorporated these practices into their work. They all described their coaching to resemble what Vygotsky refers to as the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (1978) in which a learner begins by watching a teacher perform a task and then gradually assumes responsibility for it, eventually completing it independently. This framework is at the heart of social learning theory (Bandura, 1986; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007) which suggests that people learn through direct experiences and by observing others. The role of a mentor becomes significant in providing these experiences and creating a culture that nurtures the novice or protégé. While mentoring can be approached in different ways (McNally & Martin, 1998), a collaborative concept of mentoring emerged from my participants.

My participants also engaged individuals and groups of teachers in professional relationship that were supportive, provided opportunities to build knowledge, encouraged reflective practice, and developed a shared vision of teaching and learning. They provided for job embedded professional development which allowed teachers to learn within the context of their own work environment, illustrating an application of situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learning was embedded within legitimate activities an authentic culture that involved learners in communities of practice in which all participants learn individually and assist in the development of collaborative knowledge (Wenger, 1998).

Just as my participants applied the practices associated with social learning theories, they also developed individually as leaders through similar models. Their connections to mentors and other leaders within their schools, particularly their principals who had confidence in them, sustained their development as leaders. Their identity was

validated by others as they participated in making decisions about their school. They became comfortable within their community of leaders and assertive in their contributions to their community.

These experiences suggest that leadership groups helped to develop an identity for my participants as they assumed roles of leadership within their schools (Burke & Stets, 2009; Hogg, 2001; Stets & Burke, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The context of their schools, their desire to serve as a leader, and their membership in this social group helped to create a concept of themselves as a leader (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Cable & Welbourne, 1994). The context also supports their participation in the distributed leadership of their school, feeling connected to the work of change. Peer group support through Communities of Practice supported their learning and the development of their identities as leaders.

Wenger (1998) offers a social theory of learning that helps to understand the experiences of the participants in my study in which he characterizes social participation as a process of learning and knowing. He suggests that identity is an integral aspect of learning and develops within a social context. He identified parallels between identity and practice which involves the ongoing negotiation of a person's perception of herself within the environment in which she lives and works. Her identity is a negotiated experience, a way of "being in the world," (p. 149) and is developed through participation in groups with which she is associated. Her membership in such communities helps to define her and develops her identity throughout her life, especially when confronted with both familiar and unfamiliar contexts. Indeed, identity is continuously developed by different trajectories that span past, present, and future

experiences. Wenger also suggests that people reconcile multiple memberships at different times in their lives which eventually forms a single identity and develops confidence and a strong sense of self. This leads her to recognize her connection to local communities as well as broader organizations that strengthen her identity and role in transformation. It is through the context of social experience that a person develops an identity that is both personally and organizationally significant.

Their experiences illustrate Kegan's interpersonal stage of development and a socializing way of knowing (Kegan, 1982) in which he suggests that individuals develop through their association with others. Their identity as a leader, not yet developed, relied upon the social environment and the ways they were being socialized into their new roles. Through an external authority, acceptance, and affiliation within the group, their sense of self became defined by the judgment of others. Indeed, they were led into leadership by others' perceptions of them, mentored as apprentices of leaders they admired, and supported through this stage of development by the environment in which they worked.

Through their years of experience as veteran literacy specialists, my participants developed a self-authoring way of knowing (Baxter-Magolda & King, 2004) and approached the institutional stage of development which led them to see themselves as leaders. Less dependent upon their mentors, they developed a confidence in their role but remained reflective in their practice. They each began to navigate the social context of their schools, approaching it from a systems perspective, which contributed to their identity as leaders with influence through their participation in school improvement initiatives. This self-authoring way of knowing provided them a means of expressing their voices within their schools.

People grow through and toward relationships throughout their lives (Baker-Miller, 1986) and are better equipped to navigate the uncertainties of change through their collaboration and connectedness with others. The social context sets the stage for identity to be developed or silenced, depending upon the conditions set by those within the community.

Central to the development of my participants identities as leaders is what Kegan (1982, 1994) calls a holding environment, a place where learning happens. The context of a school as a workplace may be considered a holding environment when it is engaging, supportive, and collaborative. He argues that people move naturally through a succession of holding environments which create a "culture of embeddedness" that supports the evolution of a person throughout their lives, allowing their identity to develop within its context. Time and space for learning are necessary in order to cultivate the leadership among literacy specialists, teacher leaders, and other teachers within the community.

Cambourne (1988, 2002) defined several environmental conditions in which literacy develops successfully in elementary classroom settings. These included: 1) an immersion in the content and context of learning; 2) the modeling of practical models; 3) well defined learning expectations; 4) the acceptance of responsibility for learning by the learner; 5) opportunities to approximate and take risks; 6) opportunities for practice; 7) continuous reflection and feedback; and 8) a purposeful engagement with learning. It can be argued that similar conditions are necessary to facilitate adult learning in schools. My participants described the contexts they create for their colleagues, such as Amanda's literacy room and study groups, Terri's meetings with new teachers, and all of their work as coaches. While they did not identify similar conditions in their school environments

that supported them in their development as leaders, many of these conditions were evident in each of their schools. The social context in which literacy specialists learn their practice and develop an identity as leaders was essential in the experiences

Recommendations

While case study research, particularly ones with small samples such as mine, are not intended to generalize or construct arguments for further action, three recommendations emerge from my study that could impact the ways literacy specialists develop an identity: 1) the need for professional learning of literacy specialists; 2) a commitment from schools to expand the role of leadership in a more democratic model; 3) the necessity for further research about the identity development of teacher leaders.

Recommendation 1. Professional Learning for Literacy Specialists

Literacy specialists are teachers of both children and adults. The participants in my study identified as such, recognizing their influence on learning and their impact on both students and teachers. Because professional learning is continuous, multiple opportunities are necessary for ongoing growth and development. My study leads me to recommend two types of professional learning that are important to consider: pre-service graduate education and job-embedded professional development.

My participants described their commitment to teaching and a passion for literacy. This initially prompted them to pursue an advanced degree and licensure as a literacy specialist while still teaching elementary age students. However, when they enrolled in programs, they found that their pre-service preparation was primarily content based involving classic and contemporary theory and practice in reading and writing. While

supportive of classroom instruction, it did not prepare them for their roles as leaders. My knowledge of other literacy specialists, my own background, and the literature suggest that this is a typical experience. One of my participants, Kim, enrolled in a second degree program in educational leadership which provided theory and practice in the content of leadership. Similarly, while this program provided administrative training, it did not offer her an opportunity to explore and develop tools for instructional leadership that were necessary for her role as a literacy specialist. Because pre-service programs in both literacy education and educational leadership do not offer sufficient opportunities to develop, I recommend an expansion of graduate studies, both as a separate discipline and within current literacy education and educational leadership programs, to include tools that support the development of teacher leaders. These should include theories of distributive and relational leadership, adult learning and development, and transformational learning. There should also be a consideration about how gender influences leadership and how the patriarchal model of school may inhibit development. These would better prepare teacher leaders for their new roles and help to establish a common understanding of their places within the organizational structure of school leadership.

Once in their roles, literacy specialists continue to need opportunities to learn and grow as adults, adult educators, and especially leaders. Job-embedded professional learning is necessary to support them and the development of their evolving identities. I recommend a model of transformative learning that would attend to the development of the person that leads to self-authorship. These opportunities would offer holding environments, as described by Kegan (1994) and Drago-Severson (2013) , that are

necessary for growth and development to occur. A number of models are described in the literature (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009; Drago-Severson, et al., 2013; Hartle & Thomas, 2003; Komives, et al., 2009; Komives, et al., 2006; Mangin, 2007; Quatroche & Wepner, 2008) all of which point to learning in context, the centrality of mentors, a sharing of leadership, and a continuous focus on change. These align with the nature of literacy as a transformative concept, a continuous "critical perspective, interpretation, and rewriting of what is read" (Freire & Macedo, 1987). This approach would serve to transform them as teacher leaders and guide their practice.. The literacy leader as "sleeping giant" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001) who could then awaken and emerge as an influential and transformative force who affects students, teachers, and indeed the entire school community. Like the content in which they specialize, literacy specialists have an opportunity to make a lasting impact that is meaningful and generative.

Certainly, structured opportunities would need to be established within their schools and within the profession. I recommend establishing Communities of Practice as a means of connecting literacy specialists with each other. Either regionally through professional organizations and universities or within larger school districts who employ many teacher leaders, opportunities for literacy specialists to meet and learn would be essential for their development. Virtual Communities of Practice would be another viable alternative, especially for those in geographically isolated areas or those seeking broader networks of collaboration and support.

I also recommend that professional organizations, such as the International Reading Association, expand its attention to literacy leaders through special interest groups, sponsored workshops and webinars, and other opportunities for literacy

specialists to gather to discuss topics connected to their practice, including leadership strategies. Similarly, I recommend that universities provide courses, workshops, and seminars for continuing education of teacher leaders. These could be conducted on site, at local schools, and virtually throughout the school year. Consultants affiliated with university could also be provided to literacy specialists, as was the coach from Teacher's College who worked with my participant Terri, and provide individualized coaching and support within their own environment. All of these coordinated opportunities for literacy specialists to come together and learn collaboratively would satisfy a need and would model the relational and social approaches to learning that are followed within their every day practice.

Recommendation 2. An Expanded Concept of Leadership

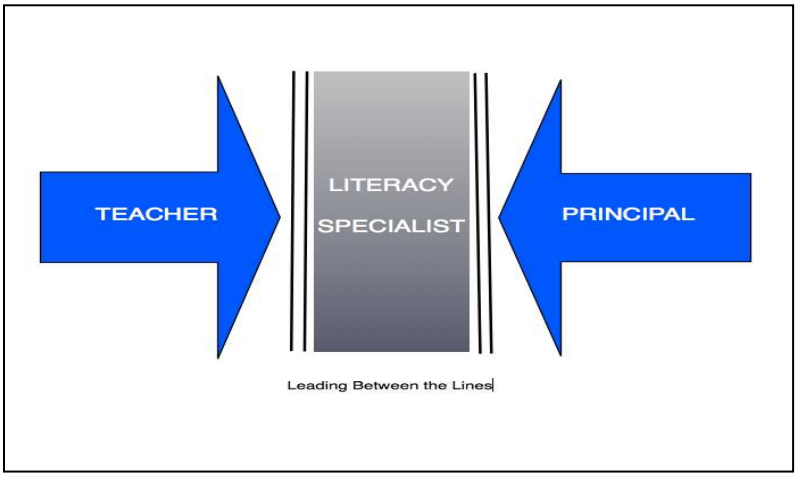
In order for literacy specialists and other teacher leaders to emerge, develop, and thrive, schools and districts must examine their assumptions about leadership and consider alternate models of organization. In order to enable teacher leadership, they must expand their understanding of leadership from the traditional hierarchical, patriarchal, and authoritarian concept to a democratic, distributive, and relational model. In my study, my participants described approaches to leadership that envisioned leadership in these ways in which influence is more tangible than power and is shared among people all working toward a similar goal. These settings led to the development of identity and a deep sense of self for my participants. Democratic leadership models were essential in supporting them in their development which in turn supported the ongoing transformation of their schools. Certainly, this would require a significant shift in practice, but is necessary to transform our schools.

Recommendation 3. Further Research

Finally, further research that explores the nature and development of literacy specialists is also needed. I included previous studies that explored the concept of teacher leadership in my literature review, but most have focused on broad beliefs and job responsibilities. It is important to expand this investigation to include the ways that literacy specialists develop identities as leaders as well as the ways that they are influenced by and contribute to the transformative processes within their school communities. Such research should be broader than mine. The four participants in my study revealed common themes of identity and leadership, but admittedly exemplified what could be considered exemplary practice as literacy specialists. They all exhibited a strong commitment to their roles, a positive attitude, and a desire to serve as leaders. Their stories, while informative, lead me to wonder if others in a wider sample would feel the same way. As I was designing this project, I had considered surveying a larger, broader sample of literacy specialists using Voice Thread in order to gain a wider and more generalizable perspective. I decided to work with a smaller, more convenient sample in order to listen to their voices carefully and explore their stories deeply in a more interactive way. A future study could involve a broader sampling of veteran literacy specialists, chosen more randomly to include males and females, different ages and races, and participants from both elementary and secondary school around the country. A future study could also compare the experiences of veteran and novice literacy specialists in order to consider different stages of development and their relation to identity development as leaders.

While my study focused on literacy specialists, I wonder if similar themes would emerge in a study of other teacher leaders including curriculum specialists, department chairs, and classroom teachers. Further research across different teacher leadership roles would expand the idea of what a leader is and suggest ways to develop their identities, support their schools, and help to transform learning in their communities.

Conclusion – Leading Between the Lines



Lieberman and Miller (2004) suggest that "teacher leadership is a powerful way to make our schools work for everyone in them – the students and their teachers." Similarly, Crowther, Ferguson, and Hann (2009) assert that "teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build school capacity" which is built upon mutual trust, shared purpose, and individual expression (p. 53). Indeed, it is by developing a concept of leadership that blends aspects of both teacher and administrative leadership that schools will transform. It is in this way that literacy leadership emerges and has the greatest potential of impacting student learning, improving school achievement, and enhancing the common good.

This understanding of leadership, however, is dependent upon the context in which members of the school community work, thus encouraging a redefinition of leadership that genuinely includes and engages more than a single authoritative leader. Such a new understanding of leadership is potentially easier said than done as patriarchal structures of leadership remain the norm.

Literacy specialists lead "between the lines" of the conventional roles within the school organization. They are neither teachers nor principals whose roles, responsibilities, expectations, and perceptions are readily understood. Rather they work somewhere in between which creates a certain level of vulnerability that is at the same time uncomfortable and satisfying, frustrating and rewarding, underestimated and powerful. Like other teacher leaders, literacy specialists navigate the tension between teaching and administration by sharing the characteristics of both roles and expanding upon them as they work toward a clear vision and desire for influence. The role and identity of a literacy leader is not a transitional one, a necessary step in a career pathway, but rather a significant and necessary contributor to the transformation of a school.

This study concludes with an assumption and a call to action: that the "sleeping giant" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001) of the literacy specialist, and indeed all types of teacher leaders, has awakened in our schools and is now poised to transform teaching and learning. When the giant accepts her call to leadership, builds relationships among colleagues, and facilitates learning centered on the changes in practice, perception, and culture, she emerges from an undefined place in the school organization to take her place among other leaders. She must be groomed for her role through continuous learning and supported in practice within an environment that supports adult learning through

sustained relationships among its members. In this way the giant will establish her identity between the conventional lines of teacher and principal, emerge to participate in the transformation of her school, and realize the impact she desires particularly in the area of literacy which by its very nature is transformative.

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Appendix Letter of Consent

September 1, 2013

Dear Ms. xxxx,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research project I am conducting for my dissertation as a doctoral candidate at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the project at any time without any negative consequences.

The focus of my study and dissertation is how literacy specialists develop identities as leaders. In this study, I am curious to learn what factors nurtured, supported, or challenged you in your development as a literacy specialist.

Your participation will involve three activities and may require approximately three hours of your time in total. First, you will be asked to respond to questions by recording a voice-response on a confidential website, Voice Thread, which will be explained to you. Next, I will interview you privately. Finally, you will be asked to share artifacts that demonstrate your leadership within your school. I will maintain and protect your privacy in all phases of the study. I will not share any information with administrators or teachers at your school. In discussing my study with my Doctoral Committee, colleagues at Lesley, and other readers, as well as when I write my Dissertation and publicly present my study as is required for my degree, I will use pseudonyms for you and your schools in order to disguise your identity. I will share my findings with you as I complete them and ask for your feedback regarding accuracy. When the dissertation is completed, I will provide you with a link to access the document electronically through Lesley University's library.

By agreeing to participate, you understand that your responses will be confidential. You also certify that responses provided in online applications will be yours and yours alone. If you have questions before, during, and after the study, please contact me at plancia@lesley.edu. I have also listed the names and contacts of my doctoral committee chair as well as the co-chairs of Lesley's Institutional Review Board (I.R.B.) which has authorized the study. You may contact any one of them at any time throughout the study.

Your reply to this email denotes your consent to participate. I will be in touch soon after I receive your consent. Thank you for agreeing to be part of my research. I look forward to learning from you!

Sincerely and with deep appreciation,

Peter Lancia
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DISSERTATION APPROVAL FORM

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Dissertation Title LEADING BETWEEN THE LINES: EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY AMONG LITERACY SPECIALISTS

School Lesley University, School of Education
Degree for which Dissertation is submitted: Ph. D. in Educational Studies

Approvals
In the judgement of the following signatories, this Dissertation submitted on April 4, 2014, meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Dissertation Committee Chair: Dr. Judith Beth Cohen, Lesley University
Judith Beth Cohen — 4-4-14
signature — date

Dissertation Committee Member: Dr. Barbara Steckel, Lesley University
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Director, Ph.D. Educational Studies: Dr. Paul Naso, Lesley University
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