CURRICULUM SPECIALISTS
IN THE CONVERSATION OF CHANGE:
A THIRD SPACE APPROACH

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Title of Study: CURRICULUM SPECIALISTS IN THE CONVERSATION OF CURRICULUM CHANGE: A THIRD SPACE APPROACH

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Abstract: The site-based curriculum specialist is a position that is often implemented to satisfy reform mandates without deeper, more significant consideration of how the specialist initiates or sustains change efforts in the school. Much of the current research focuses on the effects of the specialist's work in schools, but little attention is paid to the daily work – particularly the differences, tensions, and negotiations – involved in changing perceptions and practices of teachers, principals, and other staff members in wide-scale curriculum change efforts. This narrative inquiry research study uses third space theory to shed light on the daily life of curriculum specialists, the challenges they face in negotiating their roles and identities, and how they work with these challenges to create the space necessary to engage school staff in curriculum conversations of change. Data collection included individual interviews, observations, and a focus group interview with six-participants. Data analysis was conducted first through a narrative inquiry lens in which participants' stories are shared from their perspective as they perceive themselves as curriculum specialists and find meaning in their work. These stories were also situated in the social, cultural, and political context within which this work is carried out. A second layer of analysis used third space theory to reveal insights for (re)negotiating one's identity in the role, border crossing as a means to disrupt binaries present in one's work, as well as the transformative possibilities of hybridity.

The findings of this study reveal that the successful negotiation of the curriculum specialists' roles and identities, and the challenges they face, is dependent upon the specialist's willingness and ability to (re)orient her identity to the contextual factors within which she finds herself, as well as the acceptance of the position and readiness for change within the school's culture. There are four major implications for future practice, including the need for: clarifying policies related to the role, preparing curriculum specialists for the complexities of the position, building a culture primed for change, and ongoing professional learning in communities of support.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Born out of an era of accountability and a move toward a techno-rational model of education in the United States, the site-based curriculum specialist is a position that reemerged in recent years to help schools deal with the demands of an increasingly complex educational landscape. Site-based curriculum specialists provide teachers and other members of the school staff ongoing professional development training, "coaching," and support to increase the instructional capacity of the school and in turn improve student learning outcomes. The premise being these specialists possess some level of expertise in regards to curricular and instructional knowledge that makes them a powerful catalyst in realizing school-wide improvement efforts (Mangin, 2009). This approach to professional development is thought to be more authentic and more responsive to the identified needs, goals, and vision of the school than external, "one-shot" training methods (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2007; Niedzwiecki, 2007; Routman, 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011).

Today's site-based curriculum specialists differ from those traditionally associated with the role. In the past, districts hired independent consultants to work with teachers and other school personnel during regularly scheduled meetings and training days. These curriculum specialists were typically scholars from the university who

worked in partnership with the school district conducting research, training teachers, or providing other types of consultation services (Jackson, 1992). Although they had extensive knowledge of particular topics or fields of study or interest to the school, they often had limited “real-world” experience working with students in public school settings, and rarely had extensive involvement or connection to the school. Their primary role was to provide a specific service or accomplish a task set forth by the district. The specialists covered the necessary information in the time allotted with little control as to how these new understandings were put into practice. Even when the curriculum specialists were committed to participating in ongoing curriculum work with teachers, there were a number of issues (e.g. funding, work schedules, changes in assignment, etc.) that prevented them from having substantial influence on teachers’ instructional practices (Stover, 1945).

To overcome these limitations, school districts began to seek more systematic approaches to address teachers’ professional development needs. The position of site-based curriculum specialist emerged as a means for schools to gain more direct, hands-on support in identifying and addressing the curricular and instructional needs of the school. Due to the ancillary nature of the position, the curriculum specialist has never been a clearly defined or uniform position. Schools employing these specialists have typically structured the position in relation to their unique circumstances and to the particular context of the school. I further explore the historical roots of the position as well as its unique positioning within the school’s infrastructure later in my review of the literature; however, I first want to provide my working definition of the term *site-based curriculum specialist.*

In this study, I use the term site-based curriculum specialist as an umbrella term to encompass multiple job titles used for the same position in different schools that perform the

same, or similar, functions. The site-based curriculum specialist is a district-employed member of the school staff assigned to one or more school sites to work directly with administrative and instructional teams within the school. The specialist typically provides ongoing professional development training, models “best practices,” and leads or actively participates in curriculum planning meetings. She likely also provides individualized coaching and other support services teachers need to improve student learning (Dugan, 2010; Snow, Ippolito, & Schwartz, 2006; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011). These specialists are generally certified teachers with advanced degrees, knowledge of the field, or specialized training, and may hold such titles as instructional coach or facilitator (or to a more specialized degree - literacy, science, or math coach), teacher trainer, or teaching and learning specialist. I use the term site-based curriculum specialist in an attempt to provide a more cohesive identity to these varied titles. It is my belief that if we are to understand how this position influences the educative processes occurring within today’s schools, it is necessary to bring the separate bodies of research within talking distance so that each might be supported and furthered by the others.

Research on this type of role in education suggests numerous hurdles these specialists face that limit their ability to affect change within the school. First, there are often ambiguities surrounding exactly what their job duties entail. Districts typically implement this position in response to external accountability or funding mandates, and often fail to provide clear direction or expectations as to the role of the curriculum specialist in the day-to-day functioning of the school/district (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Mraz, Algozzine, & Watson, 2008; Neumerski, 2013). Often, classroom teachers are chosen to fill these roles due to their success in the classroom; yet, find their lack of experience leading and working with

adults a real challenge in transitioning to the role of curriculum specialist (Burkins, & Ritchie, 2007; Jorissen, Salazar, Morrison, & Foster, 2008; Lowenhaupt, McKinney, & Reeves, 2013). What worked for them in the classroom does not necessarily translate to effectiveness "teaching" teachers. Confounding the problem is the fact that many receive little training before working in this new capacity, and many receive no training at all (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Mraz et al., 2008). These hurdles are further exacerbated when dealing with members of the school staff resistant to change or unwilling to collaborate (Mangin, 2009; Snow et al., 2006). Because the position is fraught with obstacles one must negotiate in order to engage in meaningful work with school staff, the work of the curriculum specialist may not always produce the fruit of the labor district administrators envision.

Existing research in the field has documented the benefits of site-based instructional coaching in school improvement efforts (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight et al., 2015; Mraz et al., 2008; Snow et al., 2006), identified characteristics of effective instructional leadership (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight et al., 2015; Routman, 2012; Snow et al., 2006), and detailed how organizational and structural factors affect the curriculum specialist's work within the school (Dugan, 2010; Mangin, 2009). Although research consistently supports the notion that site-based curriculum specialists can make a significant and enduring contribution to the instructional capacity of the school, a gap still exists in knowing both *what* the curriculum specialist does to affect curricular change and *how* this work is carried out in the day-to-day contexts of the school environment (Neumerski, 2013). Neumerski (2013) finds that while instructional coaching is a relatively new yet somewhat remerging practice in education, little attention has been paid to the particularities of this position at the local level, and even more importantly, to the specific day-to-day work of these professionals as they go about initiating

or sustaining change efforts. My research is situated in this gap. To better understand the complexities involved in carrying out this curriculum work, I want to start at the source. By collecting and analyzing individual stories, I seek to gain insight into the daily lives of site-based curriculum specialists as they work to influence curricular and instructional change within the school, and at the same time define the conversations of change within which this work occurs.

Statement of the Research Problem

The reemergence of the site-based curriculum specialist in recent years is an outgrowth of the high-stakes era of accountability and performativity in education. As such, these positions have typically been implemented by district leaders to satisfy reform mandates or to ensure adequate progress towards external performance criteria without a deeper consideration of the curriculum specialist's role in initiating and sustaining meaningful curricular and instructional change within the school. Fullan and Knight (2011) find that curriculum specialists (they use the term instructional coaches) often "operate in systems that are not organized to create, develop, and sustain the conditions for instructional improvement" (p. 50). It has been my experience, echoed by others in the field, that there is little oversight, continued development, or support for the role after its initial implementation in the school. Once created, the position ends up functioning as an isolated and somewhat randomized agent of change, rather than as an integral component of a larger improvement effort (Affinitio, 2011; Chiola, 2015; Lancaster, 2016). This limits the impact of the curriculum specialist and hinders efforts to improve teaching and learning within the school.

Fullan and Knight (2011) further find that school improvement efforts fall short because school leaders focus on the wrong drivers, such as accountability, testing, and

individual teacher development, instead of more significant levers of instructional improvement, such as "capacity building, team work, [and] pedagogy" (p. 50). In doing so, accountability and reform discourse colonize the school culture, limiting ways of perceiving curricular and instructional change as anything other than raising test scores, operationalizing premeditated best practices, or adhering to the pace and scale of learning dictated through prescribed curricula. Although the curriculum specialist is often tasked with leading the effort, this techno-rational view of curricular and instructional change minimizes the role of the curriculum specialist to that of surveyor and enforcer and leads to teacher and even administrator resistance to change efforts.

In this study, I am interested in exploring the curriculum specialist's role in curricular and instructional change that is local and contextual rather than that which reifies dominant reform discourse currently pervading education. For this reason, I use the term *curriculum conversation(s) of change* to highlight the processes of change taking place within the school. My use of this phrase seeks to problematize colonized language of reform as it relates to standardized performativity and external accountability, and replace it with a localized notion of change that accounts for the school's attempt to improve curricular or instructional practices to better meet the needs of the students and of the community as a whole. This phrase seeks to expand the understanding of curriculum to a larger view of the "human and social acts we call 'education'" (Aoki, 2004, p. 95). The phrase further emphasizes curriculum work as a conversation among invested stakeholders (Pinar, 2012). It acknowledges the unique circumstances within which each school operates, recognizes the political, social, and historical entanglements of the notion of change in education, and it expresses "change" as a continuous process in which the school seeks to address past issues

or build upon accomplishments to better improve student learning, whatever the impetus may be for doing so.

The role of the site-based curriculum specialist is to support the work of school staff, primarily principals and teachers, in implementing these change initiatives to improve instruction, thus improving student learning outcomes. Because this position relies heavily on the social, cultural, and political milieu of the school in order to establish productive working conditions, there is little doubt it is fraught with challenges and obstacles even while maintaining much promise for providing teachers the coaching and support needed to improve teaching and learning within the classroom (Dugan, 2010; Fullan & Knight, 2011; Hanson, 2011; Snow et al., 2006). Research highlights the potential for curriculum specialists to have a powerful and lasting impact on school improvement efforts; however, there remains a gap in understanding how curriculum specialists work to affect curricular and instructional change and how this work unfolds in the day-to-day context of the school.

More research needs to be done, at the local level, to determine how the curriculum specialist negotiates her particular situation – and the challenges inherent within – to find the creative and transformative space necessary to engage staff members in meaningful and productive curriculum work. To find out how the specialist sets about this task, it is important to understand how she views herself in this role and how she views her work with others. It is also imperative to explore her understanding as to how others perceive her role in the school's change efforts. Additionally, understanding her perception of the ways in which teachers or principals approach these conversations of change, provides insight into how the specialist intentionally (re)positions herself in response to signals from those with whom she

interacts. Only then might we enter into an informed dialogue about how best to utilize and support these educators in their roles as change agents.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how site-based curriculum specialists play a meaningful and engaged role in the school's curriculum conversation of change. This study explores their roles and identities in the daily life of the school through the stories they tell in order to learn how they negotiate multiple and competing forces to create a space within the school's infrastructure to support the principal and teacher(s) in carrying out the functions of their position more effectively.

Research Questions

This study is framed around a central research question and two sub-questions:

What do site-based curriculum specialists' stories reveal about their negotiation of their roles and identities in the school's curriculum conversation of change?

1. What challenges do site-based curriculum specialists face in negotiating their roles and identities?
2. How do site-based curriculum specialists work with these challenges to engage others in curriculum conversations of change?

Theoretical Framework

I used third space theory to guide my inquiry into the role of the site-based curriculum specialist in education. Third space theory is a postcolonial, sociocultural theory first articulated by Homi Bhabha (1994) in his seminal work, *The Location of Culture* as he explored the dynamic, and often tumultuous, negotiations that occur between members of a community as individuals both mimic and resist dominant, socially-reinscribed ways of

participating and living in the public sphere and in doing so, transform it entirely. In this theory, differences between individuals or ideologies are not diminished or excluded. Rather, they are negotiated and reassembled to create hybrid identities that are neither the colonizer nor the colonized, but situated somewhere in-between.

Third space theory is an appropriate framework for this study because it is useful for understanding cultural influences and processes of both individual and collective identity formation that impacts the curriculum specialist's work in the school. Schools have a distinct culture in which shared beliefs, values, and norms establish the social and political parameters within which individuals participate. However, there are often competing viewpoints and ideologies at play within the group that determines the synchrony and success of identified goals. Third space theory provides a theoretical basis for considering the ways in which the curriculum specialist (re)negotiates her identity within these parameters in order to work productively with others in curriculum conversations of change. Because human interaction both shapes and is shaped by social and political forces within a given culture, third space theory is also useful for understanding the complex interactions and negotiations that take place as the curriculum specialist engages others in these conversations. Finally, this framework provides insight into how the ongoing conversation might transform the culture of the school leading to curriculum work that conceives of learning in new and generative ways. In understanding the curriculum specialist's role in the school, several key tenets of third space theory guided my work. These include the (re)negotiation of identity, border crossing, and the transformative possibilities of hybridity.

(Re)Negotiation of Identity

The (re)negotiation of identity, whether conscious or not, is a tacit requirement for the role of the curriculum specialist. However, an intentional and ongoing (re)negotiation of one's identity makes engaging with others in a third space possible. For this reason, it is important to understand how identity is implicated in the curriculum specialists' efforts to find a space within the school's culture to engage both teachers and principal(s) in curriculum conversations of change.

Untangling the notion of identity can prove problematic, or at least equivocal. There are varied usages and understandings of identity in its relation to self. Oyserman et al. (2012) find that the words self and identity are often used interchangeably; however, the terms signify two different and important parts of a person's being. Identity is one aspect, or extension, of the self, and is created (or recreated) based on one's sense of self in relation to the context in which one is situated. Identity, then, is more temporal and fluid than the self. According to Oyserman et al. (2012), a person has numerous identities (e.g. personal, social, role, etc.) she utilizes for different purposes. I draw upon their understanding of social identities, the sense of association and place within a group, and role identities, in which one's participation in a particular role is dependent on another's reciprocal role, as the facets of identity most relevant to the curriculum specialists' work. This insight proved helpful in my analysis of the multiple and varied identities curriculum specialists assume within the school's curriculum conversations of change, providing insight into the interdependent relationships necessary to engage others in productive curriculum work.

In addition, Oyserman et al. (2012) conceive of identity as both a mental construct, stored in the memory and influencing behavior, and a social product, the result of contextual

factors within and among social groups. This conception of identity proved useful in analyzing how participants situate themselves within the school's culture, social groups, or their role in curriculum conversations taking place within the school. In summarizing Oyserman et al. (2012), identity as an extension of one's self is multiple, dynamic, and fluid, changing in response to both internal and external situations.

This view of identity is a theme central to Wang's (2004) search for a third space in which to create a cross-cultured, gendered identity through the (re)negotiation of *self* in relation to the stranger (Other). While Wang's (2004) search is personal, attempting to understand, (re)negotiate, and orient the self in relation to her changing environments, this sense of self shapes who she is and how she interprets and participates in the social world. In as much, Wang's (2004) efforts to meet and engage the stranger in a space of self (re)formation informs my inquiry into the identity work curriculum specialists undertake in finding a productive space within the social and political context of the school.

Themes of difference, struggle, creativity, and transformation reverberate throughout Wang's (2004) work and signal the generative possibility of rethinking self in relation to others. I find resonance in these themes as each relates to the difficult work of the site-based curriculum specialist in bringing others into a third space to engage in conversations of curriculum change. This is complicated and messy work as members of the conversation must deal critically with differences in search of a way beyond them. However, Wang (2004) recognizes:

> The willingness and capacity of the self for relating to the other – be this a person, a text, or a landscape – in such a way that the other's alterity is acknowledged through a loving relationship is necessary for initiating an educative process. In such an

> expansive process, one risks feeling uncomfortable even among the familiar but it inaugurates the very possibility of education: learning from something different and other than the self. (p. 7-8)

Curriculum conversations of change can be educative conversations as ongoing interactions and negotiations between members of the group have the potential to stretch beyond current limits of understanding, to something new and more generative than that which came before it. As Wang (2004) expressed in the quote above, the acts of interaction and negotiation require a willingness and capacity to move beyond rigid borders of difference in order to engage with the other.

Border Crossing

To understand the complexity of bringing others into a mutual space in which complicated conversations become possible, it is important to consider a tenet of third space theory that highlights the role of difference and the ways in which differences can be negotiated and transformed into something productive. This tenet comprises the understanding that in the act of Othering, of identifying oneself as different or in opposition to an Other, the limits of one's own understanding, identity, or ways of perceiving creates borders, insulating the self from that which is other. These borders establish difference, and in doing so, form a binary opposition that excludes the Other.

However, fissures exist between these binaries that provide the space needed to disrupt the taken-for-granted assumptions upon which the binary functions (Serres, 1991/2006). This third space is a contradictory and ambivalent site as differences are exposed and disrupted, yet it is also a place of polyphonic interactivity and generative awakenings. In order to reach this in-between place, the borders must be crossed by those who reside within.

According to Wang (2004), the very act of crossing is "a prerequisite for creating a third space" (p. 126). Bhabha (1994) recognizes these borders, not as barriers meant to contain nor compartmentalize, but as a fluid boundary "in which *something begins its presencing*" (p. 5). For Bhabha, this boundary acts as a bridge across and between the opposing singularities enabling each to be exposed; to be rubbed, jolted, and awakened by the other in ways that destabilize both. The bridge, then, becomes a third space in which the negotiation of contradictory, conflicting, and likely incommensurable differences becomes possible. This space, however, "cannot be assumed; it must be created" (Wang, 2006, p. 111) which requires a willingness to move outside the border of the dominant ways of knowing/being in order to be exposed to an Other.

Underpinning this study is the assumption that the role of the curriculum specialist can be uniquely positioned within the school's infrastructure to draw others into a third space in which it becomes possible to disrupt the multiple and competing binaries existing within the school. While the administrator/teacher binary is perhaps the most readily apparent within the day-to-day operations of the school, there are a number of binaries functioning within the school – district goals/school goals, scientifically research-based curricula/teacher's organically-created curricula, top-down reform mandates/teacher or school-led change initiatives – that shape the culture and influence the identities of those working within.

Because the curriculum specialist is charged with amalgamating competing discourses to produce a plan for curricular change that best addresses the current needs of the school, her role is crucial for reaching a third space – a metaphoric intersection (Serres, 1991/2006) – in which the implicit mindsets inherent with(in) these binaries are called into

question and new passages are negotiated, allowing for a more fluid and transformative conversation of curriculum change to occur. In my research, I looked for ways in which existing binaries at play within the school impact the curriculum specialist's work, and how she may draw others to traverse these borders toward new and hybrid conceptions of curriculum.

Transformative Possibilities of Hybridity

Hybridity, a postcolonial term and a notion central to third space theory, is important for my study into the role of the site-based curriculum specialist because it is helpful for considering the ways in which ongoing curriculum conversations in a third space hold the potential for transforming the collective identity, and thus the culture of the school, resulting in a mutual commitment to realize a more organic vision for teaching and learning within the school. For Bhabha (1994), binary logic can be disrupted only to the extent in which critical discourse:

> overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the other…changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics. (p. 25)

In other words, differences are reconsidered and negotiated in a way that leads to mutual transformation of the two so that the binary is disrupted, shifted, cast anew. Each member of the binary is temporarily displaced, and in so doing, creates the possibility for polyphonic dialogue leading to multiple recreations that do not seek to exclude or subvert the Other. It is in this hybridization that Serres (1991/2006) finds the potential for new and different ways of thinking and being that do not erase both, but use the two to form new

conceptions, “Neither angel nor beast, since the double negation produces a stupid worthless neutral thing, but angel and beast at once, wandering without belonging, a mixed body, reaching the possible” (Serres, 1991/2006, p. 25). Recognizing that every encounter has the potential to lead to hybrid interactions and understandings, I examined moments of hybridization in the stories curriculum specialists told.

Finally, I embrace third space theory in this research study for its transformative possibilities. As Wang (2004) points out, “the third space is about passage and making passages” (p. 149). “It is transformative, affirmative, and creative” (p. 150). Working through differences in a third space is not about coming to any definitive resolution, for that is an impossible, if not fruitless, undertaking. It is, instead, about seeking alternative pathways for thinking and being that allows each to engage with the other in more mutually affirming and generative ways.

Rather than seeking to control or contain the other through regulatory, suppressive, or exclusionary means of reform, engaging with the other in a third space allows for true transformation to occur as both parties become participating members of the dialogue and decision making regarding those change efforts. For Bhabha (1994), “the transformational value of change lies in the rearticulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the One…nor the Other…but something else besides, which contest the terms and territories of both” (p. 28). When two opposing/contradictory entities interact in a third space of mutual transformation, the possibilities for authentic and enduring change are greatly multiplied.

This is not an easy task! Being exposed to the other in a middle space outside one’s own established boundaries can be a distressing and arduous endeavor. However, according to Buckreis (2012), “respecting, and being open to, the alterity of the other and the power of

interactions through differences" is crucial for working through the tension involved in creating this transformative space (p. 275). That is the task of the curriculum specialist. With this in mind, I was attentive to the ways in which participants' stories reveal their efforts to bring others into a transformative third space in their work in the school.

In short, third space theory serves as the theoretical framework guiding my study into the role of the curriculum specialist in the school's curriculum conversation of change, as it is quite relevant for exploring how the curriculum specialist negotiates her work within the social, cultural, and political milieu of the school. Using third space theory, I examined the ways curriculum specialists engage members of the staff in collective efforts to improve learning, and I further searched for moments in which this work negotiates external regulations and accountability to realize a more local and organic approach to improving curriculum and instruction.

Research Design

Narrative inquiry is the methodology used for this research study. According to Clandinin (2013), narrative inquiry is the study of lived experience through the stories individuals tell. It is relational, contextual, and social (p. 17). Narrative inquiry is situated on the premise that "humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Polkinghorne (1988) claims stories are the "primary form by which human experience is made meaningful" (p. 1). According to Reissman (1993), narrative researchers are concerned with how respondents claim identities and construct lives based on the order they impose on their experiences (p. 2). If we are to understand how curriculum specialists find the space to engage others in conversations of

curriculum change, we must begin with their stories, the identities they construct, and the meaning they make of their work in the school.

I chose this methodology because in order to answer my research question, it is imperative that I gain an understanding of participants' lived experiences as curriculum specialists. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990) narratives of life experiences are the context best suited for accessing the meaning of these situations. Although I further explicate this methodology in chapter three, I provide an overview here of my research design including the procedures I followed for the sampling of participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Participant Selection

According to Polkinghorne (2005), participants need to be purposefully selected to ensure that "the data collected are sufficiently rich to bring refinement and clarity to understanding an experience" (p.140). I used purposeful sampling to locate six individuals who worked as site-based curriculum specialists in a public school district in a Midwestern state to participate in this study. Because this type of position holds different titles depending on the district and/or funding source, I located potential candidates through an online search of the positions and job descriptions of school districts in the state and by word of mouth of colleagues in the field. I submitted a research request to a total of six school districts that employed these specialists in their schools. Of the three districts that approved my research request, I sent an email to all individuals employed as curriculum specialists in those schools requesting their participation in my study. The email contained participation and informed consent information as well as the initial survey and scenario response form. Twenty-five individuals were invited to participate, and thirteen completed the survey and scenario

response. Based on the information provided in those responses, I invited six individuals who established the most heterogeneous group possible to participate in the study. I wanted to select individuals from diverse backgrounds including educational experience and backgrounds, school demographics, gender, ethnicity, and age of participant. However, due to the limited availability of the position, I did not achieve the diversity I had hoped for.

Data Collection

Data collection for this research included an initial selection survey for participant selection, individual interviews, observations of participants, and an online focus group. The initial survey included questions about the demographics of the school within which they worked, background information of potential participants, as well as realistic scenarios in which participants were asked to respond as to how they would handle the particular situation. The scenario and ensuing questions were written to elucidate evidence of negotiation in participants' work with others in order to select candidates for which third space theory would be useful in analyzing their work. The information gleaned from the surveys allowed me to choose as diverse a group of participants as possible in order to increase the richness of the data. Responses on the surveys were further used to revise and create additional interview questions.

Individual interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format to encourage participants to tell stories about their lived experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I conducted two 1-1.5 hour interviews with all participants but one, who never responded to my attempts to schedule a second interview. I requested follow-up conversations as needed. Interview questions were designed to delve deeper into the participant's individual experiences, to seek clarification of their responses on the survey, and to keep the

conversation going. The direction of each interview was ultimately determined by the stories the interviewee chose to share as I adapted questions as needed in order to develop a narrative account of their work as a curriculum specialist. I recorded and transcribed the interviews.

Another data source were the observations of participants as they carried out their normal functions and routines within the school day. I conducted two half-day school visits in order to observe participants in a variety of settings and duties, with the exception of the one participant who chose not to respond to my requests after the first interview and observation. During these observations, I documented instances of negotiation that occurred as participants carried out the functions of their position. I conducted an observation in conjunction with or following each interview. The scheduling of which was determined by the participant. The observation was scheduled around a particular event or occurrence deemed important or relevant by the participant. Follow-up observations occurred as needed.

An online focus group served as the final data source for this study. Participants were asked to participate in a 2-hour online focus group through Google Hangouts. This focus group was intended to engage participants in ongoing conversation amongst their peers about topics related to their work. Questions for the focus group were developed based on common themes or topics that arose during participants' interviews and observations, or those I believed would provide insight into the research questions for this study. Responses during the focus group served to confirm or further illuminate the stories told by participants and to provide additional context for interpreting their stories.

Data Analysis

I collected and reviewed data as an iterative process throughout the study to ensure the data being collected lead to a better understanding of how the curriculum specialist negotiates curriculum conversations of change (Polkinghorne, 2005). Analyzing data throughout the research process enabled me to make needed adjustments to data collection throughout the study. First, I coded the surveys, interviews, observation reports, and focus group using categories identified through my analysis of the data to create a "narrative sketch" for individual participants which highlighted the unique aspects of their school and the conversations of change occurring within (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 11). A second analysis involved exploring the data for evidence of negotiation in a third space.

Researcher Subjectivity

According to Clandinin and Connelly (1995), our own lived and told stories, as narrative inquirers, "are always in relation to, or with, those of participants and with their, and our, landscapes" (as cited in Clandinin, 2013, p. 24). Therefore, I begin this section with a bit of background information about myself in order to make visible my entanglement with the role of the curriculum specialist, and why I care as to how they can play a generative role in curriculum conversations taking place within the school.

I worked as a site-based curriculum specialist at both the elementary and middle school levels for six years. During that time, I held the title of Literacy Resource Specialist, Teacher Trainer, and Literacy Coach depending on the funding source for my position. Although my title changed several times, I was involved in the same type of curriculum work which was to build teachers' instructional capacity, primarily in literacy instruction across the curriculum. In those six years, I worked at five schools within two different school

districts, and experienced firsthand the pressures both schools and districts face in trying to stay one step ahead of the challenges vexing public education: ever-increasing budget cuts, state and federal funding mandates, and worsening teacher shortage that leaves districts scrambling to put qualified, effective teachers in in every classroom. Worse yet, I witnessed the effect of misguided and precarious top-down decision making on both the teachers and students with whom I worked. However, I also experienced the joy, the hope, and the everyday triumphs these students, teachers, and schools/districts celebrated amidst the clamor.

Along the way, I struggled to find my place, perhaps my voice, in it all. No longer a teacher, yet not an administrator, I often felt isolated in both my perspective and my approach to the issues that arose in my work with others. I found myself constantly seeking a productive medium between the view of the practitioner and that of the administrator, sometimes to no avail. It is through ongoing reflection, soul searching, and an unyielding commitment to improving my profession that this study emerged. As a result, I am closely connected to this endeavor.

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) describe the qualitative researcher as an interpretive *bricoleur* [emphasis in original] (p.8). The term bricoleur, French in origin, means handyman. Contemporary usage of the term is "one who engages in bricolage," "the creation of something using whatever materials one has at hand" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), the interpretive *bricoleur* "understands that research is an interpretive process shaped by his or her own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity and by the people in the setting" (p. 8). Adopting this viewpoint, I posit the qualitative researcher as an artisan who pieces together layers of fragmented

recollections, experiences, and attached meanings of the stories participants share, in order to craft a representation of reality - an object of analysis - that is truthful to both participants and to the cause under study. I understand that research is not a neutral, value-free process, and I recognize the ways in which my own understandings and perspectives shape my work. Rather than ignore or hide them away as if it is possible to ascertain a completely objective analysis of participants' stories, I was reflexive and documented the ways in which my biases potentially influenced my understanding of the ongoing research process. I included self-reflexive analysis in the data analysis. Doing so allowed me to provide a richer analysis of participant's experiences negotiating their work as curriculum specialists, and enabled me to theorize how they might find their place in the ever-changing landscape of public education.

Significance of Study

Significance to Practice

First, and most importantly, this study is significant to the practice of curriculum work(ers) because it provides insight into the day-to-day realities curriculum specialists face working with teachers and others in the school to affect curricular and instructional change. This study explored the lived experiences of these particular educators to identify how they work to create a space of their own among the multiple forces at play within the school's infrastructure. In doing so, their stories may offer other curriculum specialists fresh insights and new possibilities for negotiating the space necessary to engage teachers and other school staff in productive curriculum work.

This study also provides an alternate lens through which other stakeholders in education can view the curriculum specialist's role in curriculum change efforts. It is my hope that sharing their experiences will open the conversation for teachers, principals, and

other stakeholders to position the curriculum specialist in ways that will enhance their work. Insights gained from this study will further enable educational leaders, at the local, state, or national level to discover ways to further support the training and development of curriculum specialists. The results of this study could also be used by faculty in schools of education to enhance the programs and coursework available to aspiring or practicing curriculum specialists. This is especially important because there remains a need to provide curriculum specialists support and guidance beyond the school or district level.

Finally, the stories of these curriculum specialists, both individually and collectively, can be used to enrich the conversation of curriculum change for those involved in instructional leadership and decision making at the local, state, and national level. My hope is that this study contributes to change the conversation from one of external accountability and standardized measures of achievement to a more organic conversation grounded in an ethical responsibility to improve teaching and learning.

Significance to Theory

Although numerous studies have used third space theory in educational settings, they have typically focused on student-centered spaces (Gutierrez, 2008; Lauer, 2009; Moje et al., 2004) or have been personal inquiries into their classroom practices or beliefs about teaching/curriculum (Buckreis, 2010; Piazza, 2009; Skerret, 2010; Wang, 2004). This study holds theoretical significance because it is one of few empirical studies in education that uses third space theory, and appears to be the first to use third space theory in a qualitative study to explore the complexities of the curriculum specialist's role. As such, the analytic framework I develop for this study may prove useful to others seeking to use third space theory in a similar manner. Additionally, most of the research on this type of role in

education centers on the practical aspects of implementation or the effectiveness of the role in terms of measurable outcomes. This study is significant because it connects curriculum theory to practice by exploring the complexities curriculum specialists face in influencing curriculum matters within the school.

Significance to Research

Chase (2005) recognizes narrative inquiry as “a field in the making” (p. 651), and highlights the need to continue expanding the field using diverse approaches to research. Reissman (2008), too, believes that narrative inquiry needs “voices in different registers to become a chorus” (p. 200). This study adds breadth to narrative inquiry by using third space theory as the theoretical framework to analyze participants’ stories, thereby expanding the diverse viewpoints with which to interpret narrative research. Additionally, this study contributes to an expansion of the role of researcher and context in thematic narrative analysis by adding a more self-reflexive layer to thematic analysis and may expand the range of possibilities for others conducting narrative inquiry research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An important aim in this study is to better understand how curriculum specialists play an active role in the curriculum conversations of change taking place within schools. As such, it is necessary to understand where we have been, in terms of curriculum support in schools, in order to traverse more intelligently where we are going. In this literature review, I draw from both practical and theoretical literature to trace the historical roots of the curriculum specialist position in education. I also highlight the role of the curriculum specialist today. Finally, I discuss the findings of current empirical studies on the role in order to situate my study in the existing literature of the field.

Changing Roles of the Curriculum Specialist

The curriculum specialist has had a long and storied role in education. As early as the 1900s curriculum "persons" – of some sort – were involved in curriculum conversations unfolding nationally, in state departments of education, and in local school districts across the country. Although their involvement has evolved, and at times stagnated over the years, curriculum specialists continue to be employed as "advice givers" and overseers of the complex task of teaching and learning (Jackson, 1992; Knight, 2015; Tschannan-Moran & Tschannan- Moran, 2011). As difficult as it is to

articulate an adequate history or description of tasks related to the field of curriculum itself, so too is it difficult to pin down the historical role of the curriculum specialist in education, at least in terms of the specific titles and duties related to the role. In this section, I attempt to trace the historical roots of the curriculum specialist, through their contributions as highlighted in the literature of the period or abridged histories provided by others, to better understand the context of the site-based curriculum specialists' role in schools.

Curriculum Specialists in the Early Curriculum Field

After the emergence of the American Curriculum Studies field in 1918, scholars at the university level worked with schools in their curriculum efforts (Kliebard, 2004). These curricularists conducted research, served as district curriculum directors or supervisors, and provided consultation to the schools in a number of ways. As the demand rose, classically-trained and practice-oriented curriculum specialists emerged in the late 1930s, after the founding of the first Department of Curriculum and Teaching at Teachers College, Columbia University. According to Pinar (1978), the birth and growth of the curriculum field was born out of the practical concerns and loyalty to the needs of school personnel. Jackson (1992) claims there were curriculum specialists in most school systems by the start of the Second World War. During this period of time, those working in the field were commonly referred to as *curriculum specialists*, and their work centered on developing and implementing curriculum in schools in order to meet the needs of students as well as the society at large. As the number of trained specialists grew, more and more school leaders turned to these specialists to assist in developing subject-matter

curriculum, to provide in-service training for school staff, and to act as consultants on other issues within the school.

Parallel to the burgeoning curriculum field in the 1930s, the role of supervision became a commonplace in schools as school leaders viewed the role as a means to provide teachers with the knowledge and training they needed to improve their teaching. According to Coleman (1945), supervision involves a more experienced educator working collaboratively with a less experienced classroom teacher to improve areas of concern or grow in areas of interest related to classroom practices. Supervisors could be anyone from the superintendent of schools to the teacher next door and even outside curriculum consultants. These supervisors served in a number of capacities including observing classrooms and conferencing with teachers, mentoring and supporting new teachers, locating and providing resources, solving existing problems in the school, and planning curriculum (Mackenzie, 1961; Permenter, 1959; Stover, 1945). Supervisory duties were often voluntary and typically occurred outside of or in addition to the individual's primary teaching or governing role in the school (Henderson, 1945). Many districts, however, employed supervisor(s) at the school or district level. In this case, the supervisor often worked in conjunction with university-based curriculum specialists to provide teachers needed curricular and instructional support (Stover, 1945; Wear, 1966). The influence both the supervisors working in schools and university-based curriculum specialists had over the curriculum and instruction within schools did not last long, as the pressures of a changing world brought drastically different viewpoints to the forefront in education.

Curriculum Reform Movement

The curriculum reform movement of the 1950s and 60s was largely orchestrated and carried out by discipline-area experts (i.e. scientists, mathematicians, etc.) rather than researchers and scholars from within traditional fields of education. Bolstered by fears of a destabilized world after World War II and the ensuing Cold War and Sputnik Crisis, national leaders sought to remedy the perceived crisis in scientific achievement in the U.S. by funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation, the state's Frontiers of Science Foundation, and other political action groups whose aim was to improve education as a matter of national security (Kliebard, 2004; Willis, 1993). In his historical overview of curriculum, Bellack (1969) claims that during the post-World War II era, "a new breed of curriculum reformers led a vigorous reform effort and wrested leadership from the curriculum specialists" (p. 285). In proceedings published from the influential Woods Hole Conference concerning science education during this period, the group advocated for the "best minds in any particular discipline be put to the task" of constructing curricula "that can be taught by ordinary teachers to ordinary student and that at the same time reflect clearly the basic or underlying principles of various fields of inquiry" (Willis, 1993, p. 357).

This meant that for the first time in the history of American education, professors, researchers, and others working in science and math-oriented professions – and not those in education – led the development of curricular materials and methods. The rationale for giving these discipline-area "experts" free reign of the curriculum was their high degree of vision and specialized competence in their specific domain. According to Pinar (1978), this change dealt a "crippling blow" to the departments of education, but especially to

those within the curriculum field whose voices were virtually silenced in the process. This was the turning point for curriculum specialists as they no longer held the sway in educational decision making as they had in previous decades.

During this time, traditional university-based curriculum specialists, who had been excluded from mainstream conversations and developments in education, did one of two things. They either retreated, for the most part, back into the college/university to carry on with their research and offer criticism about the new norm in education, or they jumped headlong into the practical world working alongside teachers and other educators as facilitators of the reform work being carried out in schools (Pinar, 1998). One such position filled by these specialists was that of curriculum director, a central office-based employee whose duty was to oversee the curriculum improvement program(s) going on within the district (Doll, Shafer, Christie, & Salsbury, 1958). In these roles, the primary function of their work shifted from developing curriculum to merely implementing new curriculum designed by outside subject experts. These types of district-level positions became the norm during this period, as school leaders recognized the need for more consistent and ongoing support in carrying out reform efforts.

It was during this era that the supervision of teachers also became more routinized in schools as the clinical supervision model developed by Cogan and his colleagues at Harvard during the mid-1950s became the preferred method of teacher evaluation and development throughout the next two decades (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). The model, based on supervisory models used in teaching hospitals, was developed out of the desire to better mentor student teachers in the field (Marzano et al., 2011). According to Marzano et al. (2011), the clinical supervision model articulated by Cogan (1973) and

his former student Goldhammer (1980) was designed to improve teaching through ongoing, collegial dialogue between supervisor and teacher as the teacher's classroom practices were observed, analyzed, and refined. Although Cogan (1973) and Goldhammer (1980) emphasized the teacher as an active, knowledgeable co-constructor of the work taking place within the supervisory cycle, the model quickly became a method for evaluating teacher's practices devoid of the intended collaborative, dialogic interactions (Marzano et al., 2011). Supervisor as evaluator versus supervisor as mentor was a dualism playing out throughout the 1960s and 1970s as school leaders responded to the demands for reform and accountability of educational outcomes hailed by policymakers and society at large (Mason, 1970; Petrie, 1969).

As the curriculum reform movement gained momentum and clinical supervision became the method through which schools attempted to measure up, it became necessary for schools to reexamine and redefine the qualities and abilities of supervisors and curriculum workers, as well as establish minimum standards for selection and expectations for these roles (Mackenzie, 1961). Educational leaders recognized the need for more systematic efforts to improve instruction in the schools, and that this responsibility was more appropriate for trained experts in the field.

By the end of the 1960s, however, the current "direction" of education and the state of the curriculum field in general were in question. Seeking to change dominant reform discourse of the time, Schwab (1969) called for a deliberative approach to curriculum making that made room for all aspects of the curriculum in the curriculum revision conversation, in an effort to both counteract the overreliance of specialized, domain-specific theories of knowledge and to resurrect the field of curriculum. He

viewed curriculum revision (rather than reform) as a local, collective, problem-solving process in which those directly involved worked together to develop curriculum that met the educational aims of the school. Schwab specifically called for site-based curriculum specialists to oversee this curriculum work in order to “instigate, encourage, and monitor” the curriculum making (Jackson, 1992, p. 29). Working in this role, the curriculum specialist acted as a guide in helping other members of the curriculum revision committee work through the process. Although it is not clear how much impact Schwab’s call to rethink the process of curriculum making had at the practical level, it did serve as an impetus in the decades that followed for a reconceptualization of the field of curriculum.

Reconceptualization of the Curriculum Field

While curriculum specialists working in schools busied themselves with carrying out reform initiatives during the 1970s, another group set about reconceptualizing the field of curriculum from a practical orientation of curriculum development and consultation to a more academic and intellectual endeavor exploring the theoretical underpinnings of curriculum in ways that acknowledge the social, cultural, political, and historical nature of curriculum and of schooling in general (Pinar, 1995). The reconceptualist movement emphasized that curriculum scholars are concerned with developing the field theoretically in order to reconceive curriculum as a means for social and cultural change. It was a critique, in a sense, of the field’s tradition towards service to practitioners and a rejection of the uncritical reinscription of the inherited curriculum of schools. For reconceptualists, education had become colonized by technological rationality, and they sought to open it up to explore more meaningful and significant understandings of what the curriculum could and should be (Pinar, 1978).

Reconceptualists were concerned less with providing direct or immediate assistance to schools and more with developing a better understanding of the purpose and effects of curriculum and education as a whole, marking a paradigm shift away from traditional schools of curriculum.

It was during this time that the split widened between theoretical academicians in the university and school-based curriculum practitioners with a split also felt within the colleges and universities who sought to prepare these workers. Pinar (1978) and other reconceptualists challenged the *technician's mentality of change* held by those working in schools, a concept that is, no doubt, evidenced in practical literature of the period (Eisele & Wootton, 1971; Mason, 1970). However, curriculum specialists working in the field accepted the growing demand for accountability in schools, and saw their work as a critical link between the aims of discipline-area curriculum builders and the efforts of teachers charged with creating effective learning environments for students (Mason, 1970).

The Era of Accountability Through Standards-Based Education

Beginning in the 1980s and continuing even today, the standards-based movement in education ushered in a new era of accountability with its emphasis on standardized measures of achievement. Following a decade of reported decline in overall achievement in education, this era began with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. It gained momentum through the periodic reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1994 and was further bolstered by the No Child Left Behind legislation in 2001. During this time, national leaders and policymakers sought to achieve the goal first articulated during the Curriculum Reform movement of years past: to fix our schools

in order to produce the most efficient, most educated workforce so that America maintained its dominance as a superpower. As a result, wave after wave of reform efforts sought to achieve this goal, and schools have scrambled to keep up with the demands ever since.

The first such reform to emerge during this period was teacher reform in which critics blamed teachers for the abysmal failure of past reform efforts. In fact, *Educational Leadership* was among dozens of other publications throughout the 1980s that devoted entire editions to staff development. Articles in that edition offered critiques of current in-service training methods and suggested alternatives. Wood and Thompson (1980) cited a report by the Rand Corporation, declaring that the 1980s would be the decade of staff development, "if schools are to install our improved plans, and perhaps even to survive" (p. 374).

While the title curriculum specialist is scarcely mentioned in the literature of the decade, there is evidence that it was still an integral position in education. According to Wood and Thompson (1980) roughly 80,000 professors, supervisors, and consultants were involved in in-service training during this period. The role of supervisor, or clinical supervisor seems to have replaced the curriculum specialist in schools; however, the position carried out similar functions including: providing in-service training (Glickman, 1980; Joyce & Showers, 1980); engaging teachers in classroom observations and one-on-one curricular or instructional work (Goldsberry, 1984; Hunter, 1980; Pajak & Seyfarth, 1983; Snyder, 1981); and instructional improvement of a school or district (Burch & Danley, 1980; Glickman, 1985). This position was more of a site-based incarnation of the curriculum director of years past, although some districts employed supervisors at the

district level as well. The supervisor position, however, seems to have fizzled out by mid-decade as peer and instructional coaching gained momentum, due perhaps to decreased funding but also because of a changing focus to more shared leadership philosophies (Joyce & Showers 1980, 1982; Moffett, St. John, & Isken, 1987; Raney & Robbins, 1989). These coaching models looked very similar to the clinical supervision models earlier in the decade and included goal setting, observations, open-ended feedback and coaching for application (Joyce & Showers, 1980).

If the literature was quiet on the role of curriculum specialist during the 1980s it was virtually silent during the last decade of the 20th century as school leaders fostered collaborative decision making through site-based management (Geraci, 1995/1996). Although a new standards-based reform effort, *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, was kicking into high gear, it seems schools were embracing the creative and problem-solving powers of teachers. Peer coaching continued to be a trend (Joyce & Showers, 1996) as did other methods of instructional leadership that sought to harness teachers' pedagogical insight by encouraging them to take an active part in leadership roles within the school (Danielson, 2007; Feiler, Heritage Gallimore, 2000; Lambert, 2002). During this period little was mentioned of curriculum specialists, clinical supervisors, or consultants in the literature on school leadership roles. However, the tide was turning on site-based management approaches, at least as it related to grassroots collegial efforts to improve the school, as the march towards standardization demanded more systematic accountability of improvement efforts.

In this section, I traced the historical roots of the site-based curriculum specialist position in education by situating the position in both the theoretical and practical

literature of the period under review. This literature reveals an ongoing concern and focus, over the past century, on how teaching practices and student learning could be improved. Although the impetus changed as reform efforts gained and lost momentum over the years, school districts across the country consistently looked for ways to improve teaching, and thus student learning outcomes, by employing consultants, specialists, supervisors, and other staff to work with teachers in areas of curriculum and instruction. Today's site-based curriculum specialist position in education has roots in both the theoretical and practical realms of education. The position retains characteristics of, and was no doubt influenced by, the work of university-based curriculum scholars and consultants who regularly offered their expertise on curricular and instructional matters within schools, as well as positions originating at the practical level to provide teachers with needed training and support. In the following section, I take a closer look at the changing roles of the curriculum specialist over the past two decades to better understand the present context of the role.

The Role of the Curriculum Specialist Today

There has been a renaissance of sorts of the position of in-house curriculum expert over the past twenty years as aggressive reform mandates left school districts scrambling to prove their worth. High-stakes testing beginning in 2002 through the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), competition for funding with Race to the Top (2009) performance grants a few years later, the push for national curriculum standards during the Common Core movement coupled with the aggressive surveillance and commandeering of "failing" schools by state departments of education has led to a tumultuous period in education. Add to this, expectations of differentiating for the unique

needs of an increasingly diverse student body, and many would argue that the work of teachers and administrators has grown more complex than ever before. District leaders have increasingly turned to these in-house specialists to assist schools in initiating and sustaining wide-scale curriculum change in order to satisfy reform mandates. In this section, I outline the duties and expectations for these specialists, discuss some of the documented challenges they face in carrying out their work in schools, and analyze the specialists' role through the theory-practice lens to provide context for my research study and a rationale for my use of the title, curriculum specialist, to encompass these multiple roles.

Just as articulating only one definition of curriculum proves fruitless, and even detrimental, so too is the case for defining the role of the site-based curriculum specialist. It is important to note here that the title curriculum specialist is rarely used in this context, and the title in general has fallen out of mainstream discourse. In fact, the term is not mentioned at all in *The Sage Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction* (Connelly, F. M., He, M. F., & Phillion, J. A, 2008). My use of the label curriculum specialist in this study is used as a logical term to neatly encapsulate a particular set of school employees who have similar roles in the school although they may hold different job titles in different districts. These specialists are typically known as instructional coaches, instructional specialists, subject-area coaches or specialists, teacher trainers, staff development teachers, and among others. Regardless of title, these positions perform similar functions within schools although the particularities of each can be as vast as the

number of schools employing them. Some argue that this is what makes the position so powerful, and that "attempts to standardize the position can undermine its effectiveness" (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016, p. 56). My intention is not to assimilate their work, but rather to bring a sense of collective embodiment to their mission.

A Google search of the term Curriculum Specialist proves that there are in fact practitioners who still retain the title. The search yields a number of job descriptions (Google Careers, 2020), an overall profile of the position (Roberts, 2019), and steps for becoming a curriculum specialist (Teaching Certification Degrees.com, n.d.), and even job postings for districts looking to fill this position (Austin Independent School District, 2018). Each of these sources provide a similar definition of the role, although each retains unique aspects pertinent to their particular context. These sources also provide an overview of necessary skills, duties and expectations, and qualifications required for the position. The table below provides a summary of these requirements:

<table>
<tr><td>Required Skills</td><td>The curriculum specialist:
Must have strong communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.
Have advanced knowledge of curriculum development and theories of teaching.
Understand local, state, and national regulations affecting curriculum and instruction.
Possess the ability to embrace and demonstrate new technologies/practices in the field.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Duties and Expectations</td><td>The curriculum specialist:
Works with various stakeholders to plan, organize, promote, and/or implement state and national curriculum standards and frameworks.</td></tr>
</table>

	• Assesses curriculum and professional development needs; and develops and facilitates training. • • Participates/Leads data analysis teams within the school and district. • Writes curriculum, consults on matters of curriculum development, and selects • resources and materials that align with various curriculum frameworks. • Advocates for and monitors appropriate curricular modifications or changes. • Observes instruction and provides feedback/support • Serves as a liaison between the school, district, government and/or educational groups, and other stakeholders.
Qualifications:	To be a curriculum specialist, one must: • Have a Bachelor's Degree in an education-related field. • Hold a teaching certification (usually). • Have a Master's Degree in administration, education, or other relevant areas (usually). • Successful and/or significant teaching experience (often). • Experience developing curriculum and providing staff development (often).

Table 1 Summary of Requirements for Curriculum Specialist Position
Note: Data from Roberts (2017), Teaching Certification Degrees.com (n.d.), Austin Independent School District (2018)

The duties and responsibilities outlined from these sources are very similar to those evidenced in the literature on instructional coaches and similar titles mentioned in previous sections. According to Jorissen et al. (2008), instructional coaches

> help analyze data and student work to plan instructional improvement as well as to help individual teachers address their own needs…They help identify appropriate interventions, model teaching strategies, gather data in classrooms, and engage teachers in reflective dialogue to improve professional skills. Instructional coaches offer support, feedback, and intensive individualized professional learning. (p. 17)

Wolpert-Gawron (2016), too, finds that coaches serve as mentors working with teachers who voluntarily seek them out for support or those assigned by administrators due to identified needs. They also provide professional development for staff, help locate or develop resources for teachers, communicate the school's accomplishments to stakeholders, and act as change agents by collaborating with other instructional coaches. According to Niedzwiecki (2007), many coaches oversee the implementation of new curriculum, especially if their position is directly tied to reform initiatives or mandates. These curriculum specialists, whatever their official title may be, also support the school principal. They not only provide counsel on matters related to curriculum and instruction, but they often assume other leadership roles and responsibilities that enable the principal to focus attention on more compelling issues within the school (Jorissen et al., 2008).

Challenges of the Position

Research shows that these site-based curriculum specialists can be valuable change agents (Niedzwiecki, 2007; Wolpert-Gawron, 2016); however, because of the

interpersonal aspects of the role and the dependence on collaboration with others, the position is often replete with challenges one must negotiate in carrying out her work in the school. These challenges are unique to the context within which the specialist works, and can change throughout the course of a school year or from year to year. The challenges they face and their ability to work through them determine the reach and extent of their influence on curricular change initiatives within the school.

The first challenge curriculum specialists often face is that they have difficulty knowing exactly what it is they are supposed to be doing with their time and efforts. This may be the result of uncertainties as to the role and function by the principal or district leaders (Fullan & Knight, 2011), being assigned or offering to do menial tasks that deter from more significant work (Mraz et al., 2008; Sandstead, 2015/2016), or being spread too thin working on numerous, unrelated tasks at once (Niedzwiecki, 2007). In addition, a lack of support or direction from principal or other school leaders or other organizational barriers can make it hard for curriculum specialists to carry out their work (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Jorissen et al., 2008; Niedzwiecki, 2007; Wolpert-Gawron, 2016).

In attempting to find their place in the school, many curriculum specialists find they are ill-prepared for the job. School leaders often fill these positions with effective teachers from within the school or district (Harrison & Killion, 2007). However, according to Burkins and Ritchie (2007), “Being a successful teacher, while necessary, is an insufficient prerequisite to coaching” (p. 35). Although they may hold an advanced degree or have specialized knowledge, they seldom have experience, training, or strategies in evidence-based coaching (Jorissen et al. 2008; Tschannen-Moran &

Tshannen-Moran, 2011), and often lack "the pedagogic, communication, and leadership skills necessary for their work' (Fullan & Knight, 2011).

Another common challenge curriculum specialist must contend with is overcoming the "coach-as-spy" mentality that can occur when the principal or coach fashions her work in an evaluative or supervisorial manner (Jorissen et al., 2008; Niedzwiecki, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011). Teachers may believe that their work with the coach is an extension of or potentially influencing their performance evaluations. This is also true of coaches who are hired or assigned to the school by the district (Niedzwiecki, 2007). It has been my experience that this approach usually does not sit well with the professional organizations within the district. As a result, teachers and even principals may be reluctant to allow the coach much involvement in classroom or school affairs for fear of future ramifications.

Additionally, many specialists find that they are welcomed into the school and enjoy cordial and often times collegial relationships with teachers, only to have the relationship quickly sour when trying to engage with them on matters related to classroom instruction (International Reading Association, 2006; Niedzwiecki, 2007; Sandstead, 2015/2016). Sandstead (2015/2016) explains it best, stating:

> When we teachers are in our own classrooms, we can be whoever we want to be. We can be dictators, mother or father figures, coaches, friends, guides, or mentors. We invent ourselves as we envision and build the environment we want for our students. The possibilities are endless. Teachers are powerful. Perhaps that's why it's so difficult to let other adults into the world we've so carefully constructed. We're unsure of their role and how they will fit in. (p. 78)

The "world" teachers create inside their classroom is a safe space for both the students and the teacher alike. It's a personal space, a second home of sorts for teachers as most spend substantial time and energy creating their ideal environment for themselves and their students. Many carefully craft the learning environment in the best way they know how, and it can be a troubling thought to consider that another might find your space, your practices to be less than ideal. This may explain why many teachers resist the curriculum specialist's attempts to gain access to this space. Sandstead (2015/2016) uses the metaphor of cutting watermelon to describe how she seeks to gain the trust and acceptance of the teachers with whom she works by first getting to know their world and becoming a part of it before initiating change efforts. Borrowing the phrase from Guyot (1977), a grassroots organizer for civil rights, she uses the phrase to symbolize the act of jumping in and helping out with whatever task it is that the people are currently doing as to not "alter the basic format that you walk in to" (as quoted in Sandstead 2015/2016, p. 78). From this, Sandstead understood that to bring about change, you must first be accepted into the community, and to do so required starting where the teachers were and "cutting the watermelon" with them. For her, this meant taking the time to establish relationships, honor teachers work, being willing to meet them where they are at, and "listen to them and learn about their frustrations as well as their goals" (p. 79). While Sandstead's story of her successes as a site-based curriculum specialist provides valuable insight into the possibilities of the position, we learn nothing of the struggles or failures she has experienced or continues to experience in her work with teachers.

The literature is abundant on first-hand accounts of veteran teacher's experiences as a site-based curriculum specialist detailing their work and offering advice to others

(Hanson, 2011; Sandstead, 2015/2016; Wolpert-Gwron, 2016); however, these accounts rarely deal candidly with challenges they have experienced in their role. Granted, their positioning and enthusiasm for the role is important, especially in drawing attention to the potential coaching holds for lasting transformation, but it may also offer false hope and little support to those who find themselves dealing with problematic situations or struggling to find success in the role. Sometimes, it takes more than "cutting watermelon" to engage teachers in meaningful change efforts (Sandstead, 2015/2016). By focusing on the areas of struggle, the ways in which specialists work through sites of difficulty, and how they further negotiate the ever-changing and complex situations they experience, my goal is to provide a more robust understanding of the role of the curriculum specialist in order to expand the conversation about their potentialities for realizing curriculum change efforts.

The Tasks of Curriculum Specialists

What is missing in the literature about the site-based curriculum specialist's role is a focus on curriculum. Little is mentioned about the degree of specialized knowledge or theoretical understandings these workers hold regarding curriculum, their concern for or interest in curriculum issues, or the extent to which they engage in the development of the curriculum change efforts they seek to implement. Historically, this seeming lack of interest or concern with the curriculum has been challenged. For Pinar (1978) and other Reconceptualists, the unquestioning acceptance of the curriculum structure as it is, is problematic, and it is precisely this ahistoric and atheoretic positioning they challenge. Expressing concern for university-based curriculum specialists who lack specialized knowledge, theoretical understandings, or vision in the facilitation of change efforts,

Jackson (1992) questions the appropriateness of the label curriculum specialist for such roles.

In considering whether site-based specialists in schools are worthy of the title curriculum specialist a consideration of the word "curriculum" as both noun and verb is necessary. If one thinks of curriculum as noun, an object manifested in written form, one thinks of the formal or planned curriculum set forth by school leaders or state or national agencies. It is the adopted programs of study, the courses, materials, and content of instruction. Curriculum as a verb encompasses all the things that are acted out in the curricular and instructional process, the *doing* of teaching and learning. Curriculum conceptualized as a verb entails the enacted or taught curriculum, the learned curriculum, the social curriculum, hidden curriculum, as well as the null curriculum.

It is true that curriculum as a noun, at least in the form of state and national standards, is outside the realm of what specialists and others in the school can control. However, the "doing" of curriculum comprises the daily heartbeat of schools. It takes place in the daily interactions between teachers and students in the classroom, in the curricular and instructional decisions teachers make, and in the collaboration of colleagues who seek to improve student learning outcomes. The specialist sits in the middle of these interactions as she engages, supports, and nurtures their efforts. As a result, the work of these specialists is very much a matter of curriculum, and the day-to-day experiences, understandings, and insights they possess qualifies them as curriculum specialists.

What has occurred in education over the past half-century is a metaphoric splintering of cells in regards to curriculum work. Pacheco (2012) sees this "artificial

division between the curriculum as theory and the curriculum as process" as problematic (p. 2). What is needed is not two camps, with separate bodies of knowledge, each speaking past, over, or away from the other. To realize the full potential of these specialists in change efforts and to bring the schools and academia within talking distance, we must move past the theory-practice binary to assume a hybrid view of curriculum work in its current manifestations in education.

In looking to the next step, Pinar (2014) states, "Privileged (and disadvantaged) by his position at the University of Chicago, Philip Jackson provides an integrated historical narrative, one which not only allows us to link the contemporary field with the traditional one, but one which also asks us to think about our work, our identities as curricularists" (p. xxxiii). Like Pinar, I argue that a new step forward is needed in the contemporary curriculum field on this journey of becoming. I seek, in this study, to explore the identities of contemporary site-based curriculum specialists in the field of education in order to theorize how we might more productively engage in curriculum conversations of change within schools.

Because her work directly relates to improving instruction, hence calling for some form of curriculum or pedagogical reformation/reconstruction, it is imperative that the curriculum specialist be able to engage teachers and administrators in dedicated, persistent, and meaningful collaboration (Knight, 2005, p. 21). The three must forge a working relationship where each perspective is valued and respected, and where all three are seen as equal partners in the curricular reform conversation. In order to develop a true partnership with both the teachers and administrator(s), she must carefully nurture positive, trusting relationships, while providing both with relevant and constructive

feedback. This is not an easy task as each of the relationships in this dynamic--teacher-administrator, teacher-curriculum specialist, and administrator-curriculum specialist--are laden with complex and irrevocable binaries. The curriculum specialist confronts tensions, attractions, and conflicts in the relationships to make possible mutual transformations in their understandings of curriculum and instruction as they seek to influence, and be influenced by others.

Current Research on the Role

As the curriculum specialist position continues to evolve, so too does research on the role. There has been a significant increase in the number of empirical studies on this type of role in recent years. In this section, I discuss current research most relevant to this study. It should be noted that while I refer to these professionals throughout my study as site-based curriculum specialists to minimize confusion, I may identify them in this section by the title used in the study being presented. The discussion of literature in this section focuses on several key areas including the curriculum specialist's construction and renegotiation of identity in response to the ever-changing contexts, issues of professional identity development and (re)negotiation, challenges specialists face in the role, and other areas of research that while not directly related to my study, are important to consider.

Curriculum Specialists' Identities

The curriculum specialist's ability to (re)negotiate her identity within the complex and shifting culture of the school is crucial for providing guidance and support necessary to influence curricular and instructional change. In this study, I am interested in understanding how they perceive themselves in their role and the ways in which they

actively or passively position themselves among other key players in the school. There are a number of recent studies exploring issues of identity in regards to this role in the school.

Crowell's (2015) qualitative study of the ways in which instructional coaches negotiate the space between teacher and administrator was of particular interest to me due to similarities in the language of the title in relation to the concepts I sought to explore in this study. Using interviews, a focus group, and scenario responses, Crowell (2015) explored how six female instructional coaches understood and conceptualized their work and "how they negotiated the space between teachers and administrators to affect systemic school improvement" (p. 14). She was also concerned with the instructional coaches positioning within school improvement efforts, the coaches' perception of their own power and influence in these negotiations, and their negotiation of the political structures of the school system. She, too, wanted to give instructional coaches a voice in sharing stories of their work and as a result, their "place" in the school. Like me, her study arose out of an interest for exploring issues central to her own identity as a practicing instructional coach.

Crowell (2015) focused on issues of gender, more specifically on how power was dispersed through the male/female binary operating within the school, and its effect on identity of female instructional coaches. She illustrates this binary by positioning the instructional coach as voiceless female and the administrator as authoritative male. She both structures her study and analyzes participants' stories through this lens, and in doing so, emphasizes parts of the stories that reinforce this binary logic rather than on the ways participants resist, negotiate, or disrupt the power binary, although she does provide

occasional commentary to the latter. Throughout the study, Crowell (2015) alludes to "the space between," but never really articulates the negotiation(s) that occur within, focusing her analysis instead on the interactions between coaches and teachers or between coaches and administrators, but never the work of the three together.

Crowell (2015) interviewed six instructional coaches who had at least five years of coaching experience and also years of experience as classroom teachers so that they would "have developed their own coaching identity" (p. 86). Crowell (2015) used a feminist lens to interpret their stories, concluding that the coaches' identities were expressed in the way they presented themselves to strangers. These identities included being "'helpers,' 'giver of resources,' 'or supporter'" (p. 120). She further concluded that the coaches enacted these identities because they wanted to be perceived as good girls, "pleasers," and because they did not want to make others uncomfortable if they didn't know what a coach was (p. 119). Although Crowell (2015) analyzed participants' stories to understand how they reinforced gendered metanarratives in education, her analysis did not offer much insight into the multiple and shifting identities instructional coaches assume in their work with others. It also lacked an in-depth look into the negotiations these coaches navigated in their work with teachers and school administrators.

However, Crowell's (2015) findings were not too dissimilar from that of other researchers in terms of the types of coaching instructional coaches were likely to engage in. She characterized the coaches' work in their schools as "coaching light" (Killion, 2010), meaning the coaches in her study were primarily involved in isolated or insignificant projects that focused on individual support for teachers rather than an effort toward school-wide improvement. Fensel's (2016) findings shed light on the identities

Crowell (2015) ascribes to her participants, that of helper, supporter, and giver of resources. In her study, Fensel (2016) analyzed self-reported evidence of the relationships literacy coaches had with teachers to gain insight into their identities, as she believed these relationships generally reflect coaches' identities and how they perceive their work with teachers. She used Kegan's (1982) constructive-development theory to determine the level of cognitive development the coaches worked within. There are six stages of consciousness including (from earliest/simplest to more complex/developed): incorporative, impulsive, imperial, interpersonal, institutional, and interinstitutional. Fensel (2016), however, uses Drago-Severson's (2009) terminology, socializing, self-authoring, and self-transforming, to describe the last three stages of Kegan's theory as these are the only stages that apply to the participants in her study. Fensel (2016) claimed that coaches working at the lowest (adult) level of cognition, the level of socialization, depended on relationships with those with whom they work as the basis for their professional identity. She found that coaches working at this level resorted to "light coaching" (Killion, 2010) to avoid conflict and maintain positive relationships with teachers. Fensel (2016) further noted that coaches operating at this level tended to use abstract ideas to define themselves because "they are unaware that the ideas do not originate internally" (p. 41).

According to Fensel (2016), coaches can and often do progress to more self-aware and self-transforming levels of cognition with experience and professional development. If this is true, it would seem that more of Crowell's participants should have been functioning at a higher level. Only one out of the six coaches in Fensel's study remained at the socialization level whereas five out of the six coaches in Crowell's study appeared

to be at that level. Taken together, however, the findings from these studies suggest that the (re)negotiation of identity I seek to explore in this study occurs as site-based curriculum specialists negotiate their relationships with teachers and administrators.

Evidence of more self-aware levels of cognition can be seen in Chawla's (2017) poststructural narrative inquiry into her work as literacy coach with two high school teachers implementing a literacy initiative in a high poverty, diverse urban high school. The purpose of her study was to explore how teachers' identity, beliefs, and agency were negotiated amidst difficult teaching situations, oppressive reform efforts, and bureaucratic and institutionalized structures. However, as the research participant and the only literacy coach involved in the study, Chawla's (2017) framing of the study and reflections both before and after provides insight into her own changing identity as she transitioned from teacher, to literacy coach, to district consultant, and beyond. She reflected on her successes and failures working with teachers in the tumultuous environment, and she attempted to provide explanations for how things unfolded throughout the study. This included interrogating decisions she made from a privileged position of power within the school's hierarchy that enabled her to skirt responsibilities to support a struggling teacher in one of the neediest classes in the school (p. 216).

Her analysis further provides insight into how structural forces at both the macro and micro level created a culture in the school that served to reify the status quo, race and class-based achievement expectations as well as teacher agency in response. Reflecting on her study, I am more aware of the complex, multiple and likely fragmented layers of identity my participants may hold about themselves in their work as curriculum specialists. As a result, it was important for me to provide multiple opportunities for

participants to uncover the layers of their self through the stories they share, and to present their stories in a way that is representative of and meaningful to their work as curriculum specialists.

In sum, Crowell (2015), Fensel (2016), and Chawla (2017) explored issues of identity through their studies into the role of curriculum specialists in the curriculum conversations of change unfolding in their respective contexts. Another issue at the heart of both Crowell's (2015) and Chawla's (2017) studies, if partly in theory, is the cultural forces at play within the schools that shape how curriculum conversations, and thus the specialists' identities, unfold. Chawla (2017) finds "If the culture of the school was already frail, no amount of piling up new strategies and programs will yield promising results" (p. 216-217). Likewise, if the culture of the school is already hegemonic, dismissive, volatile, or otherwise punitive it may prove difficult if not impossible for the curriculum specialist to overcome. As Chawla's (2017) statement suggests, these forces establish the limits of what is conceivable within the school, so it is important for me to document and to understand the unique cultural context within which participants participate in order to consider its significance on their work in the school.

Challenges of Coaching

Another area of current research I found relevant to my study centered on exploring the challenges site-based curriculum specialist experience in carrying out their work in the school. I have already discussed existing literature documenting this reality; however, it is important to explore findings from the latest studies related to the issue. These studies confirmed much of what has already been said, but a few offer fresh insight to the discussion.

In a case study involving secondary instructional coaches, Wilder (2013) studied the tensions and negotiations involved in generalist coaches "coaching heavy" in cross-disciplinary situations (Killion, 2010). Wilder found (2013) three significant tensions in the generalist coaches' attempts to "coach heavy." First, coaches were positioned as "disciplinary outsiders" due to their lack of disciplinary knowledge causing them to spend considerable time and energy to "stay one step ahead" in coaching activities. Second, coaches learn to balance their own understanding of what students need while building a novice teacher's capacity to provide it. Finally, knowing when to let the discipline-area teacher lead the inquiry and when to exert their own expertise into the situation. Although the coaches in his study found some level of success in engaging in substantive work with teachers, and teachers admitted growth and enthusiasm for continued refinement of their craft, the voluntary nature and the extent and duration of the interactions are not typical of secondary coaching situations.

In concluding his study, Wilder (2013) questioned the use of generalists in coaching disciplinary teachers, wondering how much better or more meaningful the outcomes might have been had the coaches and teachers disciplinary background been more closely aligned. This was also an area of contention for Chawla (2017) who questioned whether she, as a literacy coach, might have been more successful in coaching a struggling math teacher if, perhaps, she had had more extensive knowledge or training in mathematics. Wilder (2013) further challenged teachers, coaches, and school leaders to think critically about the intent and purposes of the coaching role "amidst the disciplinary complexities" of secondary school setting (p. 235). The conclusions he draws give pause as he presents challenging questions for teachers, coaches, and district leaders to ask if

they are to realize a truly collaborative, student-centered, and inquiry-driven coaching model. If not, Wilder (2013) predicts that instructional coaching may "face a potentially shortened life span" (p. 235).

Another crucial understanding I gained from Wilder's (2013) study is that the position of site-based curriculum specialist is in itself a reform effort. Yes, school districts implement the position as a "support" for teachers in meeting the demands of external reform mandates, but it is based on the premise that teachers would not or could not do so without intervention. Even when specialists perceive and approach their work in a sincere, supportive, and collaborative way, it should be no surprise that teachers may be hesitant and even resistant to their involvement. As gleaned from Cutrer's (2016) study below, this is especially true when the collaboration is required, monitored, and documented by district leaders. For this reason, the very philosophy underpinning the position itself is perhaps its own greatest challenge! I conducted this study with an awareness that even as I seek to disrupt the hegemonic notion of reform currently reverberating throughout education, through my use of language such as curriculum conversations of change and even site-based curriculum specialist, I am, in a sense, using an instrument of reform to do so.

Cutrer's (2016) study highlighted a challenge well documented in existing literature, teacher resistance to coaching as a mandatory reform initiative. Cutrer (2016) sought to identify best practices in coaching by documenting the interactive process between coaches and kindergarten teachers in a mandatory coaching cycle that was part of a larger literacy intervention initiative across multiple school districts. She wanted to know if the type of coaching enacted by literacy coaches affected the way teachers

respond and engage in the process. Participants in the study were teachers who had been identified as resistant due to their unwillingness to meet participation criteria during the first year of implementation. Cutrer's (2016) study took place during the second year of the reform's implementation, in which this group of resistant teachers were required to participate in weekly webcam coaching sessions of their live "performance" teaching the scripted lessons. In addition, the teachers were required to participate in weekly data meetings and other follow-up counsel with the coach. Cutrer (2016) found that all participants in her study became high implementers of the literacy initiatives requirements during the second year of implementation. She credited the change to the literacy coaches who intentionally altered their approach, either relations, processes, or results in working with these teachers. Cutrer (2016) further found that while the same approaches were generally successful across the board with high implementers, low-implementing teachers required differentiated approaches in order to minimize the "cultural mismatch" between coach and teacher. She also found that the coaching needs to be in tandem with positive support from administrators and collaboration between low-implementing teachers and high-implementing teachers that was intentionally positive and supportive as well. It is often difficult to negotiate the relationships necessary to make this a reality as Lancaster (2016) finds below.

In her mixed-methods study into the challenges coaches face, Lancaster (2016) surveyed 90 coaches in order to identify factors influencing instructional coaches to leave the position. Survey results indicated the "root cause" of coaches' leaving was the lack of clearly defined roles. She also found a number of other issues that negatively impacted feelings of efficacy and initiated desires to leave including: emotionally and

psychologically stressful and even hostile relationships with other instructional coaches, teachers, or administrators; feelings of isolation; structures and limitations of the position; and assignment of menial tasks that hindered meaningful engagement. She further concluded that coaches surveyed who had stayed in the position for six years or more cited the opposite of these conditions as reasons they continued in the role. These coaches were in situations in which they felt successful, had support from others, and were able to see how they fit into the larger context of the school.

Lancaster's (2016) study also provided evidence for something Crowell (2015) highlighted in her research; that coaches who left the position (in Lancaster's study), or were asked about leaving (in Crowell's), returned to the classroom as teachers. This insight is significant to my research as it suggests that these coaches may have not been successful in renegotiating their social and role identity in this new position, and chose to return to that which was successful and familiar to them. It also suggests the likelihood that coaches, having a common understanding with classroom teachers, have a sincere desire to support teachers in their efforts to better meet the needs of students. However, the opposite could also be true. Because of their success in the classroom, coachers make it their life's work to "fix" teachers to ensure that all students have access to effective teachers. As a result, this finding may highlight underlying motives and intentions for the curriculum specialists' work in the school, and how they approach their work with both teachers and administrators. It also hints at the identities curriculum specialists must navigate as they engage in conversations of change.

Effectiveness of Coaching

The effectiveness of site-based curriculum specialists has been a hot topic in recent years, as researchers seek to connect this role to an increase in various teaching and learning outcomes. Studies have attempted to identify the most effective components of coaching (Bennet, 2013; McCrary, 2011), best practices for coaching (Cushman, 2013), and the impact of coaching on student achievement and teacher self efficacy (Taylor, 2017). However, the majority of these studies drew their conclusions through one of two methods: by establishing a causal link between the work of the curriculum specialist and quantitative, standardized measures of student achievement (Cushman, 2013; Taylor, 2017), or survey analysis measuring the perceived effectiveness based on perceptions of those connected to her work (Bennet, 2013; McCrary, 2011). Collectively, this research came to similar conclusions as that in the existing literature – that coaches can have a positive impact on both student and teacher learning outcomes (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight et al., 2015; Mraz et al., 2008; Routman, 2012; Snow et al., 2006). However, the findings lacked substantive insight to provide a true understanding of the complexities involved in the curriculum specialist's day-to-day work that leads to improvement. While the effectiveness of the curriculum specialist's role, or at least the effects of it, is a concern related to this study, I seek to question hegemonic measures of "success" that limit our understanding of what authentic teaching and learning could or should be. Although standardized assessments, and the mandates and sanctions that go along with them, are an inescapable reality in the current educational landscape, it should not be the barometer by which to determine the value of curriculum specials' work in schools.

Summary

This review of existing literature reveals the historical roots of the site-based curriculum specialists' role in both the theoretical and practical realms of education. Born close to a century ago, out of an understanding that teachers need support in order to grow as professionals, to reflect and refine their pedagogy, and to provide the best possible learning environment for students in their charge, the position has rode the waves of reform and continues to be a promising beacon for improving curriculum and instruction in schools.

The literature reviewed in this section also highlights both the ambiguity and the complexity of the site-based curriculum specialist's work today. The role of the site-based curriculum specialist is a fluid and dynamic position that often changes over the course of a school year or from year to year as new change efforts or funding sources lead to a shift in the way the curriculum specialist position is utilized. Because the position is situated in the space between the binaries that exist in the school and is charged with engaging all members of the school staff in conversations of change, it is one that is no doubt filled with tensions and incommensurable differences that can hinder progress towards change efforts.

Empirical studies have further confirmed contextual factors affecting how the curriculum specialist's work unfolds in the school, including the magnitude of the change efforts, ambiguity surrounding the specialist's role, teacher or administrator agency, the overall professional and instructional capacity of the school, as well as the other aspects of the social and cultural

milieu of the school. Some researchers have even recognized the curriculum specialist's role as a unique space of inquiry and collaboration (Chawla, 2017), existing between teachers and administrator(s) (Crowell, 2015), providing room for teacher learning and growth and school-wide change efforts (Olson Bell, 2013), and questioning external mandates and promoting a common vision for authentic change (Lang, 2012). However, few studies have specifically explored how curriculum specialists work through the lens of the third space to actively negotiate the challenges of engaging others in necessary conversations of curriculum change. That is the focus of this study.

In the following chapter, I provide a discussion of the methodology used for this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I extend the conversation on methodology begun in chapter one. I provide additional discussion on the theoretical framework underpinning this study, further articulate the research design, contend with ethical considerations, and demonstrate the rigor of this study.

Theoretical Framework

Third space theory serves as the theoretical framework for this study of the site-based curriculum specialist's role in the school's curriculum conversation of change. Third space theory is grounded in the postcolonial notion that there is always a fissure between different, often competing, forces or identities within a culture that provides a space for the two to interact and transform each other in mutually beneficial ways. In his work on the 'location of culture,' Bhabha envisions a third space that is "based on unequal, uneven, multiple, and *potentially antagonistic*, political identities" (as quoted in Rutherford, 1990, p. 208). This space between opposing identities provides an opening where colonizing discourses, and the cultural identities thus produced, are disrupted. Bhabha (1994), borrowing Heidegger's (1971) metaphor, relates this interstitial passage to a bridge that carries passengers back and forth between the two entities who, in their

crossing, both influence and are influenced by the Other leading to the development of new identities and ways of thinking. Over time, the ongoing interaction and negotiation has the potential to change the culture in a way that allows for new and alternative ways of perceiving and participating in the world. The third space Bhabha emphasizes is a collective space in which members of a culture work with and against the dominant culture to negotiate and reconstruct the public sphere.

It is this reconstruction of the public sphere that I envision as the work of the site-based curriculum specialist as she works to bring other members of the school staff, primarily the principal and teachers into curriculum conversations of change. In theory, the site-based curriculum specialist position evolved out of the need or desire for curricular and instructional change, and has been tasked, in many cases, as the catalyst for such change. However, district leaders rarely consider the ways in which social, cultural, and political forces, as well as dominant discourses, within the school affect change efforts.

Third space theory is helpful for exploring how these forces establish the conditions within which individuals operate, thereby influencing individual as well as collective identities. This framework provides the theoretical insight necessary for understanding the ways in which participants attempt to overcome barriers to their work through their active (re)negotiation of their identity in the curriculum conversations occurring within the school. This theory further serves to enrich my analysis of the complicated interactions and negotiations of difference that occur in bringing others into a third space of curriculum change. Finally, third space theory is useful in determining

how these ongoing curriculum conversations hold potential for transforming the culture of the school, and in doing so, change the nature of teaching and learning therein.

For the curriculum specialist, this task often involves confronting her own preconceived ideas about the processes of schooling while simultaneously attempting to negotiate a way forward when incommensurable differences stand in the way of such progress. This resonates in Wang's (2004) contemplation of conflicting doubles:

> Here we stand at the crossroads of multiplied conflicting doubles. At the boundary of the borderless border, along the rugged curve of the whole which is constantly pushed by its own parts, identity unites with the differences of non-identity. (p. 137)

There are numerous crossroads intersecting in the current landscape of education. Standardization or individualization, prescribed or organic curricula, and externally-enforced mandates or internally-reflexive governance, are all "conflicting doubles" to be negotiated as we seek to improve educational experiences for our students and ourselves. Each of these dichotomies is an ongoing and ever-present reality in education, and each one along with a host of others presents a challenge to contend with in permeating the "borderless border" of curriculum change (Wang, 2004). Site-based curriculum specialists are directly situated in these complexities and tensions, and must find a space to negotiate the polyphonic discourses occurring simultaneously within the school. I believe the theory of the third space serves as a supportive theoretical framework.

The curriculum specialist occupies a special place within the hierarchy of the school, neither administrator nor teacher – nor all the duties, privileges, and identities those positions hold, she becomes an island of her own. As a result, she has the potential

to act within a third space, as a metaphoric bridge across and through the political and social forces impacting the work of school administration and practicing teachers. It is, by nature, a fluid, creative, and doubled position, a position that continuously seeks to move others beyond existing ways of being, acting, and participating in the educative process within the school. Holding this view of the curriculum specialist, I conducted a narrative inquiry, using third space theory, to understand the ways curriculum specialists can create a third space in which to generate transformative possibilities in the curriculum conversation of change.

Research Design

Narrative inquiry is the methodology used for this qualitative study of the roles and identities of site-based curriculum specialists as they engage school staff in curriculum change efforts. According to Clandinin (2013), "narrative inquiry comprises a view of experience as composed and lived over time, as studied and understood as a narrative phenomenon and as represented through narrative forms of representation" (p. 15). As such, stories are the primary mode through which individuals make "the contexts of [their] storied lives visible" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 50). This understanding of narrative inquiry compliments the postcolonial and poststructural view of the centrality of language in the organization of human experience. As such, it is an appropriate methodology for this postcolonial, third-space inquiry into the site-based curriculum specialists' work as revealed through the experiences they share. This occurred through ongoing storytelling as the participants were given the time and space necessary to allow their stories to unfold.

Clandinin (2013) identifies three commonplaces of narrative inquiry – temporality, sociality, and place – that must be considered and accounted for in studying experiences. Taken together, these commonplaces create a three-dimensional space in which the narrative researcher explores how participants' experiences are situated and impacted through time, within broader social and cultural conditions, and within the contexts of place as well as through the relationship developed between researcher and participant. Accounting for these commonplaces in the collection and analysis of the data enables the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study (Clandinin, 2013). I have taken into account each of these commonplaces in the design of this study, so that I remain attentive to its entanglement in the stories participants' tell during the interviews, in the events and interactions captured during my observations in the school, and in the conversations that unfolded during the focus group.

In narrative inquiry, the researcher is concerned with understanding the experiences of participants, through the stories they tell and the way(s) in which they choose to tell them, in order to shed light on the phenomenon under study. According to Clandinin (2013) and Reissman (2008), the researcher and participant(s) are actively engaged in the storytelling process as the researcher works alongside participants to co-construct meaning(s) from lived experiences. This process requires an unlayering of multiple levels of storytelling as the researcher and participant(s) engage in the negotiation of a shared narrative unity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 3). Working together, the two engage in a collaborative relationship with the shared goal of better understanding the phenomena under study. This relational interchange gives authority and validity to the stories being told.

In this study, I particularly adopted Clandinin's (2013) view of narrative inquiry as "the relational living alongside" participants as "We, as inquirers, think narratively about our experiences, about our participants' experiences, and about those experiences that become visible as we live alongside, telling our own stories, hearing another's stories, moving in and acting in place – the context – in which our lives meet" (p. 23).

As a narrative researcher, I am cognizant of my entanglement in the collaboratively-constructed, storied landscapes that comprise this study. The relational interactions that transpire as we, the researcher and participant(s), engage in storytelling and re-storying of our identities and experiences as site-based curriculum specialists provide greater depth and meaning to the common goal of better understanding our multiple roles and identities and how this shapes our work in the school(s).

My choice of narrative inquiry as the methodology for my research reflects my concern that the information I seek would not be readily accessible through other means of inquiry. Understanding the complex nature of the curriculum specialists' role is difficult enough when participants have had the time beforehand to reflect on and make note of key experiences; however, I presume this was the first instance participants had the opportunity to really consider the meanings and connections of their professional work. For that reason, I believe the opportunity to simultaneously sort through and share stories of their experiences was mutually beneficial in that it provided the space for participants to reflect on and gain insight from their work and resulted in more authentic and robust data for my research.

This study, then, is a "story about stories" in which I provide my interpretative story of the stories told by participants and affirmed by my observations of their work

(Reissman, 2008, p. 6). It is a narrative inquiry to document the lived experiences of curriculum specialist's daily work in schools. This study shed light on how they negotiate their roles and identities to engage others in curriculum conversations of change.

Participant Selection

I employed purposeful sampling to select participants for this study. According to Creswell (2013), participants in a qualitative study must have experiences to share in order to contribute to the understanding of the phenomena under study. They must be able to serve as providers of significant accounts of the "experience under investigation" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 140). As such, it is important for qualitative researchers to purposefully select participants who are able to provide the data needed to answer their research questions. Although the site-based curriculum specialist position continues to gain popularity nationally, the availability of participants working in this type of role locally has significantly decreased in the last few years as the result of ongoing funding issues at the state level, stakeholder buy-in within school districts, or other factors. As a result, the number of districts who employ these specialists varies considerably across the region as does the number of specialists employed within a given district.

I located potential research locations through an internet search of school districts within the state who employed site-based curriculum specialists. I sought permission to conduct research in six school districts. Three districts approved my request, two districts denied my request due to work loads and time constraints, and the last district never responded to my later communications after initially approving (verbally) my research request. Of the three districts who approved my research request, I solicited participation by emailing the initial survey (see survey in Appendix A) to every individual employed

as a site-based curriculum specialist in those districts. I found contact information for these individuals from the school's website or from a list provided by the district representative with whom I communicated in obtaining approval for my research. I sent the survey to twenty-five potential participants of which eight responded. A second email was sent out encouraging more to participate, and five more responded. Of the thirteen who agreed to participate in the study, I narrowed the pool to eight participants whose responses evidenced negotiation in how they approached or attempted to resolve the given conflicts in the scenarios included in the survey. From those eight, I chose six participants that established the most diverse group possible and invited them to participate in the study. This number is sufficient for qualitative research as it enables the researcher to compare and contrast their experiences in order to notice the essential aspects that appear across the sources and to recognize variations" leading to a deeper understanding of their experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 140).

My goal was to select individuals from diverse backgrounds including years and areas of teaching experience, qualifications for the position, and school demographics as well as age, ethnicity, and gender, in order to offer the widest range of viewpoints and experiences possible. However, due to the limited availability of those working in this type of position, the resulting sample population is not as diverse as I had initially hoped. Four of the six participants work together in the same school district, two of which work in the same (secondary) schools in different subject areas. The two remaining participants are colleagues in the same district as well, though in a different district than the other four. The six participants chosen for this study all identified as Caucasian, or white, and female. Of the thirteen who responded to the initial survey, only one participant identified

another ethnicity claiming "Native American/white." This individual was the only specialist from the third approved district to submit the survey. She was not chosen for the study because she responded to the survey after the other participants were chosen. Her responses to the scenarios did not include anything to suggest she could provide more diverse viewpoints than the participants already chosen for the study. Additionally, there were no male curriculum specialists employed in any of the school districts solicited for participation in the study. There were some levels of diversity among the other criteria for selection (see survey in Appendix A). This diversity is highlighted in participants' biographical information in the following section.

Participants

Leona

Leona was a Caucasian female in her fifties who had been in education for more than twenty years. Leona held a bachelor's degree in education and was a National Board certified teacher. She had taught various grades over the years including kindergarten, 4th grade, and 7th grade social studies. Leona worked as a secondary social studies curriculum specialist in a large suburban, high performing, high socioeconomic school district. The district's graduation rate and average ACT score were well above the state average. Leona worked with social studies teachers at the district's four secondary sites including the middle school, high school, freshman academy, and alternative academy. In the course of a week, she worked with approximately fifty teachers who directly serve more than 5,100 students daily (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2017). Leona was the only secondary social studies curriculum specialist in her district. Her schedule (and stories) primarily centered around the middle school and high school as her offices

are located there, as are the majority of the teachers with whom she worked. This was her fourth year as a site-based curriculum specialist.

Julie

Julie was an elementary-level, site-based curriculum specialist in the same large suburban, high performing, high socioeconomic school district as Leona. Julie was a Caucasian woman in her early forties who held a Master's degree in Teaching & Leadership. She had fifteen years of experience in education; fourteen of those years in the current district. Her teaching experience was in upper elementary (grades 4-6), having spent seven years in the classroom before moving into the curriculum specialist position at the same school where she taught. She worked as a specialist at the school for three years before becoming the district's Director of Professional Development. A position she held for three years before returning to the site level. This was Julie's first year back as a site-based curriculum specialist in the same school in which she previously worked and taught. It was her fourth year overall in the role of site-based curriculum specialist.

Having previously worked as the district's Director of Professional Development, Julie came back to the school as curriculum specialist because she believed she had a wealth of knowledge that can benefit the school as a whole. "I have district knowledge, and the site-based knowledge, and historical knowledge of both to be able to make some of those decisions." And finally, she loved knowing she's making life easier for teachers, students, and administrators. "The larger piece [is that] I love helping teachers. I really do love being able to say, same way as it is with kids, 'What can I help you do? Let's get there. Let's do it together. Let's figure it out.'"

Julie had quite a bit of training in areas relevant to her role as a site-based curriculum specialist. Shortly after starting the position, she received training on Jim Knight's (2007) coaching model. She had participated in several book studies on coaching and educational leadership. She was also trained and provided regional training for the Reading & Writing Project out of Teachers College at Columbia University.

Lauren

This was Lauren's first year as a site-based curriculum specialist in a brand new elementary school in the same school district as both Leona and Julie. She was a Caucasian woman in her late 30s who held a Master's degree in Reading and was a certified reading specialist. This year marked Lauren's sixteenth year in education, and her eleventh with the district. Prior to this new role, she taught 3rd grade for five years in another district, came to the district as an elementary reading specialist, a position she held for 8 years, before working as a part-time elementary literacy coach the past two years. Lauren currently worked as a curriculum specialist in one of the districts' four elementary schools. She served roughly 60 teachers who worked daily with more than 1,000 students in grades pre-kindergarten through fourth grade. The school also had a literacy coach, a math specialist, and two and a half (time) reading specialists.

Lauren moved into the position because she loved the work she did as a literacy coach, and she saw it as a natural segue into a probable career in administration. Lauren previously received one week of training on Jim Knight's (2007) coaching model. She also met regularly with the district's other curriculum specialists and district leaders to discuss their work, participate in book studies, and other relevant activities.

Norrine

Norrine was a Caucasian woman in her fifties who has worked, for the past nine years, as a secondary math curriculum specialist in the same high performing, high socioeconomic school district as Leona, Julie, and Lauren. Although her position began at the high school level, it expanded over the years to include the middle school grade levels as well. Norrine's work now encompassed all four secondary school sites in her large suburban district: the middle school, freshman academy, alternative academy, and high school. She worked with approximately fifty teachers who directly served more than 5,100 students daily (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2017). She was the only secondary math curriculum specialist in her district.

Norrine was a veteran teacher with 14 years of teaching experience in the same high school where she now worked as a site-based curriculum specialist. Norrine had a Bachelor's degree in a non-education field plus fifteen additional Masters' level hours (in education). She was an alternatively certified teacher, having previously worked "in the corporate world." Before moving into the curriculum specialist position, she had no specialized training or experience in the role.

Norrine came into the role at the urging of a former principal who wanted someone in the position "who's positive…somebody who smiles and knows themselves." Reluctant at first, to step into the role, Norrine was happy teaching the upper-level, honors math courses and had never considered leaving the classroom. "I never questioned my ability to do the job. I did question whether I wanted to be in this position because I love teaching," she explained. Despite her initial hesitancy, she finally agreed to do the job because she knew she would be good at it. She knew the district needed someone

who would look after students' best interest. She also admitted, even if apprehensively, that she was a little concerned as to who might get the job if she did not go for it. However, even upon agreeing to take the job, she still was not convinced she would stay in the position long term.

Katherine

Before sharing Katherine's story, I want to share background information I feel should be disclosed in order to be transparent about my entanglements in this study. Katherine and I were colleagues in the same school district for ten years, both as classroom teachers and in our first few years as site-based curriculum specialists. However, we never worked together in the same school, nor did we work together regularly as specialists. There was also little contact between us in the five years since my departure from the district. As mentioned in chapter three, participation was solicited from this school district due to the small number of school districts currently employing these specialists in my geographic area. Katherine submitted her survey and was selected for participation following the same criteria as the other five participants. We discussed several shared experiences during our time together, and I was able to relate to many of the stories she shared because of my experience in the district. I believe this is the reason she felt comfortable opening up to me about her experiences.

Katherine is a Caucasian female in her fifties who worked as an elementary site-based curriculum specialist in a mid-sized, highly diverse, low socioeconomic school district. The graduation rate for the district was well below the state average, while overall ACT scores fell just above the state average. Katherine served as the site-based curriculum specialist for three of the district's ten elementary schools. She spent two days

each week at two of the lowest performing, highest need schools in the district, and spent one day each week at the district's highest performing elementary school. Altogether, she worked with approximately 75 teachers who work daily with more than 1150 students (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2017). She was one of four elementary site-based curriculum specialists in her district.

Katherine had more than 32 years of experience in education. She had taught every grade level from kindergarten to 5th grade as well as middle school art. She held a Master's degree in School Administration which she obtained during her first few years as a curriculum specialist. She had been with the district for fifteen years having taught first grade for seven years before becoming a site-based curriculum specialist. Katherine worked as a specialist for three years before moving into an elementary principal position with the district. After two years as a principal, she moved back to the curriculum specialist position where she had remained the past four years. In total, Katherine had worked as a site-based curriculum specialist for seven years. Other than a few book studies and what the team of specialists had learned together over the years, Katherine had not received any direct, specialized training related to the position.

Sophie

Sophie was a Caucasian female in her mid-40s who worked as a secondary site-based curriculum specialist. She worked in the same mid-sized, highly diverse, low socioeconomic school district as Katherine. The graduation rate for the district was well below the state average, while overall ACT scores fell just above the state average. Sophie was assigned to the district's high school and alternative academy. She worked with roughly 85 teachers and just over 1500 students (Oklahoma State Department of

Education, 2017). Her work encompassed grades 9-12 and all content areas. She was one of two secondary curriculum specialists in her district; the other specialist served the district's middle school. This was Sophie's first year as a site-based curriculum specialist. However, she had worked at the school her entire career, some twenty years, as a science teacher and department chair. Sophie held a Bachelor's degree in Science Education.

Sophie became a site-based curriculum specialist because she saw a need in the school for providing new teachers more consistent and meaningful support in order for them to be successful. She believed she did this as department chair, and wanted to extend her influence to a larger degree. Sophie did not receive any training prior to assuming this new role, nor did she receive a formal job description for the position. She did receive a brief list of tasks from the person who vacated the position the year before; however, the school's new administrative team had not used her in the same way.

Data Collection

Multiple sources of data were collected for this study including an initial selection survey, individual interviews, observations of participants, as well as an online focus group. These methods were chosen because as Polkinghorne (2005) asserts, "The data required to study experience require that they are derived from an intensive exploration with the participant" (p. 138). This is because, as Polkinghorne (2005) points out, the data collected from oral retellings "are not identical to the experiences they are describing" (p. 138). Therefore, it was important for me as the researcher to provide multiple opportunities for the participant to be able to discuss, reflect on, and add to the stories they shared of their experiences, and for me as the researcher to be able to probe "to discover and explore areas of the experience that did not emerge initially" (Polkinghorse,

2005, p. 143). The methods of data collection chosen allowed for a richer description of participants' experiences and served to strengthen the rigor of this study (Creswell, 2013). Data collection took place over an eight-week period in which I met or communicated with participants approximately once a week. According to Creswell (2013), another aspect of a rigorous qualitative study is spending an adequate amount of time in the field with participants. I further highlight the extent to which I engaged with participants in my discussion of data collection methods below.

Selection Survey

An initial selection survey was sent electronically to twenty-five individuals in three school districts who were identified as potential participants during the first week of the study. Individuals were identified as potential candidates based on their employment as site-based curriculum specialists in the three districts who approved my research request. An email reminder was sent out during the second week of the study to encourage more candidates to complete the survey. The survey collected relevant background information about potential candidates, school demographics, and responses to hypothetical scenarios that encouraged participants to articulate their approaches to working with teachers or principals. The scenarios and follow-up questions were designed to draw out instances of negotiation in participant's approaches to the scenarios. Doing so increased the likelihood of identifying participants for which third space theory would be useful for analyzing their work because their responses allowed me to make inferences as to whether the individual had strong allegiances, tendencies, or leanings toward one entity in the educational setting over another or if they embraced a middle or alternate way in dealing with the issue. I further used school demographics and

background information to select as diverse a group of participants as possible in order to strengthen the robustness of data collected. Information collected through the survey further allowed me to develop interview questions that drew out stories of these negotiations.

Individual Interviews

I conducted individual interviews with participants using a semi-structured format to elicit stories about their work in the school. I conducted two 1-1.5-hour interviews with all but one participant, who did not respond to my attempts to schedule a second interview. I requested follow-up information as needed (as none were significant enough to warrant a third interview). According to Polkinghorse (2005), interviewing participants over a period of time and in more than one sitting helped to "produce the full and rich descriptions necessary for worthwhile findings" (p 142). The day, time, and location of the interviews was left up to the participant, and could have occurred before, during, or after school or on school grounds or any other public location of their choosing. All six participants chose to interview at their school site during the school day.

Questions were used during the interview to initiate and sustain conversation, to draw out and encourage storytelling, and to further probe participants' stories and the meaning they assigned to these experiences (Polkinghorse, 2005). While a list of questions (see Appendix B) was created and available for use during the interviews, participants' storytelling ultimately determined the direction of the interview, and I adjusted my questions accordingly. The interviews were recorded (with approval from each individual) and transcribed. A member check was conducted in which participants

received a copy of their interview transcript and were allowed to confirm, clarify, or elaborate on the information in their stories prior to my analysis of the data.

Observations

Observations served as another data source for this study. I observed participants carrying out the typical functions of their role in the school during two half-day observations with the exception of the one participant who chose not to respond to my emails after the first interview and observation. I communicated to participants my desire to observe them in diverse settings, routines, and interactions during these observations, and asked participants to consider scheduling my observations during a significant event or occurrence they were participating in, such as a meeting, conferencing, or training day. However, the day and time of the observation was ultimately chosen by the candidate, so the events and activities observed varied considerably. Some participants chose to have me observe in conjunction with each interview while others chose a day and time in the week following their interview. The focus during these observations were the interactions and negotiations that took place as the curriculum specialist carried out her daily work in the school, and to confirm or further probe information revealed during the interview(s). I recorded field notes of the observations in a notebook. Overall, the data collected during these observations served to enrich the content and context of participants' work in the school.

Online Focus Group

I also collected data through an online focus group in which participants had the opportunity to engage with each other as they discussed various topics central to this study and to their work in the school. I developed a set of questions based on additional

areas I wanted to inquire about, points of interest or confusion from the individual interviews and observations, and topics I believed would provide me additional information for understanding their role in curricular change efforts in the school. The online focus group was hosted in Google Hangouts during the afternoon hours of a school day. The discussion lasted approximately two hours. All six participants were present and participated for at least a portion of the focus group, with the earliest departure being 45 minutes into the discussion. Participants could join Google Hangouts from the location of their choice; all chose to connect from their school office. While the data collected during the online focus group initially yielded some depth and robustness to the stories participants shared during the interview and observation portions of the study, I found that I was unable to ever really get a conversation going among participants. Although I attempted to rephrase or ask follow-up questions to get participants to engage, it never materialized. The focus group retained very much a question and answer sessions requiring me to probe individual candidates to share their stories. When candidates did participate, their responses overall were very conservative and to the point with very little storytelling involved. Their responses often repeated things they had already shared with me during their individual interviews and observations, or they glossed over or minimized seemingly difficult situations rather than candidly share about their experiences as I had hoped. Several participants chose not to respond to some of the questions at all. There were several factors at work that I believe contributed to this. First, participants joined the conversation at different times, so any difficulties they had getting logged in and ready to participate caused considerable distraction and delays in the conversation underway. I had directed participants to connect up to 30 minutes

beforehand to sort out any of these issues; however, only three did so. Another factor affecting the flow of the focus group was an unexpected fire alarm issue impacting two of the participants directly that lasted for several minutes. While I attempted to mute them and carry on with the conversation as they listened in, it still greatly impacted the conversation so much so that I chose to revisit those questions once the ruckus had subsided. A final and perhaps most significant factor inhibiting the conversation was an unavoidable breach of confidentiality that occurred as a result of how participants signed into Google Hangouts and the fact that participants came from one of two schools. This meant that four participants worked with each other at one school and two participants worked with each other at another school. Because participants used their school email accounts to sign into Google Hangouts, their names prominently displayed on screen. I made participants aware of this situation and suggested they log off and use an alternate email address to sign in with; however, all participants agreed that they were fine with keeping it as it was. Throughout the conversation, I never felt that the confidentiality issue was a concern as far as the interaction between participants who did not previously know each other, but I continued to question whether the collegial relationships outside the study negatively affected the amount and extent to which participants were willing to share. Two participants left the conversation early, and I noticed that three of the four remaining participants began to engage more freely in the discussion. I just happened to notice that the three were all veteran educators close in age with one another. The fourth participant was also a veteran teacher, but was younger in age/experience and was a first year curriculum specialist. I chose to end the focus group thirty minutes early because I didn’t feel I was getting the data needed to enrich the

study. Because I felt the questions asked during the focus group session were valuable in answering my research questions, I decided to email the transcript to participants and ask them to confirm, clarify, and elaborate on their responses to the focus group question.

Before discussing my procedures for data analysis, storage of the data is another important consideration to contend with in outlining the procedures of my research (Creswell, 2013). In this study, I used a personal laptop to communicate with participants, analyze survey results, transcribe data, and in the overall analysis of the data collected. I also used a personal tablet to record the individual interviews, the focus group, and pertinent information during my observations of participants' work in the schools. All data compiled on the tablet was immediately transferred to designated files on the laptop and deleted from the tablet. I also recorded interview and observational data in a notebook. This data was combined with the rest of the interview and observational data during transcription in order to clarify and supplement what was shared during the interviews (Polkinghorse, 2005). The laptop was the primary tool used for collection, coding, and storage of data for this study, and was only used for purposes of this research study throughout its duration. All data was transferred to a separate flash drive upon completion of the study, and removed from the laptop. The flash drive and all hard-copy data was secured in a locked filing cabinet, and will remain there until the completion of dissertation requirements before being destroyed.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2013), "The data collected in a narrative study need to be analyzed for the story they have to tell" (p. 189). As a result, the data analysis for this study will be multilayered. An initial analysis of the data occurred as I made decisions

about the segments of interviews to be transcribed. Echoing Mishler (1987), Reissman (2008) points out, “Because there is no universal form of transcription suitable for all research situations, investigators must make decisions” during the transcription process based on “…the specific aims of a project” (p. 28). The transcription process took place throughout the study as I reviewed the data collected. I analyzed each participants’ stories to develop a “narrative sketch” of their individual experiences considering the particular contexts of their work in the school (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, pg.11). This first layer of analysis allowed me to explore the “social, cultural…and institutional narratives within which individuals’ experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 18). This is a particularly important force impacting the specialists’ work that I seek to better understand through this study. Observational data, and focus group discussions were compared to the experiences shared by participants, and was further analyzed for new insights it might reveal.

Thematic narrative analysis comprised another layer of data analysis. I used third space theory as a lens through which to interpret participants’ stories, coding for themes such as difference, tensions, and negotiation in the stories participants tell. According to Reissman (2008), thematic analysis involves an inductive analysis looking for particular topics or themes of interest to the study. I then employed deductive analysis looking for themes across participants’ stories. I conducted multiple readings of the transcripts looking first to identify commonalities in order to determine themes or codes to look for. Subsequent readings were used to code the transcripts. I employed the use of a codebook to organize major codes and to keep track of specific definitions or criteria for each code (Creswell, 2013). Transcription and data analysis occurred throughout the research

process enabling me to make changes, follow up with participants, or explore new trails as I sought to understand how the curriculum specialist enters into a third space in her negotiation of curriculum change efforts.

Riessman (2008) finds that while it is commonly understood that narratives are collaboratively constructed renderings of past events, researchers in the thematic narrative tradition rarely account for investigator involvement or the situational and contextual factors that take place in the act of storytelling. This results in a retelling that reads as “a vessel, uncontaminated by human interaction” (p. 58). She likens the elimination of researcher involvement to more objective modes of analysis, and considers this tendency to be a limitation of thematic analysis. In this study, I consciously inserted myself into the research process by conveying details and the particularities of each encounter and conversation with participants as it relates to the stories being told, and by making explicit my involvement in the study by weaving my voice throughout the interpretation and presentation of data. Because I am concerned with how the social, cultural, and political contexts within the school influences the curriculum specialists’ work, it was important that I attend to these factors in my collection, analysis, and presentation of data.

I added to the richness of the analysis by further exploring the “shadow side” of stories participants told by considering what is left unsaid or not emphasized in participants’ stories (Creswell, 2013). This is important in considering the complexities involved in the curriculum specialists’ work in the school. If one has not experienced or is not inclined to sharing stories of struggle or difficulty, much of those feelings, memories, experiences may be touched on only briefly or left unspoken altogether.

The data is presented first in the stories of each participant, so that the reader learns the unique context and background within which the participant is situated. I then present the findings of my narrative analysis in which I teased out commonalities across participants' stories. I end my presentation of the data with an analysis of the stories through the lens of third space theory. Throughout my analysis and presentation of the data, I allowed participants' experiences to lead to greater understanding of the phenomena under study by retaining as much of participants' stories (and voice) as possible in the writing up and restorying of their stories (Reissman, 2008). Another is that I made explicit my decisions and involvement in the storytelling and re-storying process, and as such, made visible my influences throughout the study.

Ethical Considerations

In adhering to ethical standards, I obtained proper permissions and clearances prior to conducting my research, including approval from the university's Internal Review Board (IRB), approval and appropriate permissions from the school districts, and voluntary, informed consent from participants. I followed appropriate protocol in completing the IRB application process, as well as the specific procedures for each school district.

In addition to the proper paperwork and approvals needed to conduct my research, there were other ethical considerations I contended with throughout my research in order to ensure the quality and rigor of my study (Creswell, 2013). First and foremost, I approached this narrative inquiry through an ethic of care (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Nodding, 2003). According to Nodding (2003), an ethic of care centers on the relational aspects of human interaction. It is grounded in a moral *response-ability* to the other that

values and responds to their needs, perceptions, or aspirations rather than a concern for personal gain or the desire to "fulfill assigned duties" (p. 34). Adhering to an ethic of care required me to be reflexive in my intentions and direction of this study, as well as in my work with participants. Although this research study is a requirement to fulfill my obligations as a doctoral candidate, it arose out of a sincere concern for the challenges curriculum specialists face in finding meaning in their work and fulfilling the duties of their position. As such, I sought to better understand how curriculum specialists actively negotiate their place in the curriculum conversation of change taking place within the school. Doing so, may lead to greater insight into the profession than was previously had.

Clandinin (2013) recognizes "how the ways we represent participants' stories in narrative accounts can interrupt stories that sustain them" (p. 131). She cautions us that the narrative account written by the researcher "may create a silence that does not allow the participant to speak, to be heard" (p. 131). As a narrative researcher, I am cognizant of the need for a relational ethics that allows me to attend, first, to participants' stories and to understand the meaning and significance of those experiences from their perspective. This relational ethics then calls me to maintain communication throughout the study to ensure that my interpretations, and ultimately the presentation of data, is done in a way that values participants' agency as curriculum specialists and demonstrates the challenges and issues they face in carrying out their work.

Conducting narrative inquiry through an ethic of care underpins the notion held by Piper and Simons (2005) that narrative inquiry is good and moral work. They claim, "When the narrator is the investigator, to a certain extent, she is always asking what is right to do and good to be" (p. 747). Throughout this study, I was not only concerned

with doing good and moral work in regards to the researcher-participant relationship, but also in establishing the quality and rigor of my research. For this reason, it was imperative that I remained cognizant of my ethical responsibilities to deal with issues of representation and the problematics of voice and the need for ongoing reflexivity and authenticity in this study.

Rigor of the Study

Because qualitative research is inescapably artistic and political – that it is created, for a purpose – as Denzin and Lincoln (2008) point out, it was imperative that I was as reflective as possible about the decisions and interpretations I made throughout the research process. I used a research journal to actively monitor my changing subjectivity in order to question how preconceptions I hold may unduly influence my interpretation of the research context or participants' stories. I made explicit the ways in which these preconceptions influenced the interpretive or decision-making process, and I provided a detailed account of the reasons and intentions behind the decisions I made in the research design.

Creswell (2013) finds "writing of a qualitative text [and qualitative research in general] cannot be separated from the author, how it is received by readers, and how it impacts the participants and sites under study" (p. 214). As a result, we must view our work as "positioned" and deal with it transparently (Creswell, 2013, p. 215). Trustworthiness, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) includes the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research (p. 300). In articulating the trustworthiness of this study, I focused mainly on creditability and transferability.

Accounting for measures of trustworthiness throughout the research process added to the rigor of my study (Creswell, 2013).

The credibility of research refers to the probability of “truth” in the findings. For Creswell (2013), taking steps to account for the analysis of data helps ensure the researcher “got the story ‘right’” (p. 52). In order to increase the credibility of my research, I engaged participants in member checks to ensure their stories were accurately conveyed in the data collection process, as this “is the single most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 239). Participants were given the opportunity to confirm, clarify, or elaborate on any information they shared. I also used triangulation as another means through which to strengthen the credibility of my research. Triangulation involves the use of multiple data sources in order to add richness and depth to the research findings. Triangulation was attained through the use of individual interviews, individual observations of participants’ work, an online focus group, and researcher reflection. Furthermore, the time and extent to which I interacted with participants and the contexts of their work accounts for prolonged engagement in the field. According to Lincoln and Guba (1989), prolonged engagement increases credibility of the study because it enables the researcher to immerse oneself in the culture, to build rapport, and to overcome preconceived understandings about the phenomena under study.

Transferability signifies the extent to which the findings are applicable to other settings. To increase the transferability of this study, I provided a rich description of the research design, including participant selection, research settings and context, as well as the choices I made throughout the research process (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because much of qualitative research, including narrative inquiry, is contextual,

temporal, and based on personal experiences, the transferability of my study applies on a case-by-case basis.

Other criteria for establishing the trustworthiness of study include the dependability and confirmability of the study. Dependability ensures the findings are consistent and can be repeated. Confirmability comprises the extent to which the study is shaped by participants' input rather than the researchers own bias, motivation, or intentions. I addressed the dependability and confirmability of my research through triangulation of data (as discussed previously), the inclusion of extensive quotes and excerpts of participants' stories in the final presentation of data, and the archiving of the researcher's journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In the following chapter, I provide a rendering of the data that shares the stories of the participants as conveyed to, through, and with me during our time together. I give space in the following chapter for their stories to communicate the meaning and importance of their work in their school's curriculum conversation of change. This analysis will be followed by a deeper analysis of the themes that resonate through all of their stories. But first, their world as shared through their stories.

CHAPTER IV

ENGAGEMENT IN CONVERSATIONS OF CHANGE: PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES

My intent for this study was to gain insight into the site-based curriculum specialist's negotiation of her roles and identities in the school's curriculum conversations of change. I sought to explore how this unfolds in the everyday interactions and processes through which she carries out her work. For this reason, participants were asked to schedule my observations on days that would allow me to experience a typical day of work for them. They were encouraged to share stories of their work as they felt comfortable doing so. Through their stories, I sought to identify the challenges they faced in their daily work in the school(s), and to explore how they work with(in) these challenges to engage others in change efforts. As the first layer of analysis in narrative inquiry, I present participants' stories from their perspective as they perceive themselves as curriculum specialists and find meaning in their work, and also explore the social, cultural, and political context within which this work is carried out. I have given space in this chapter for each participants' story to be told. Each participant's story is organized to highlight the conversation(s) of change taking place in the school(s), her identity as a curriculum specialist, key challenges she faced as well as her negotiations in this work.

Leona: Insider-Outsider Continuum

The morning of my first meeting with Leona, I arrived at the middle school just before the morning bell. It was a brisk winter morning, but the rising sun and calm breeze indicated that it would be an unseasonably warm day for late February. The sidewalk was abuzz as the energy of the students indicated they, too, sensed the changing weather. Slowly walking along, exchanging pleasantries with students along the way, I was reminded of the years spent doing morning crosswalk duty during my time as a curriculum specialist. I was assigned that duty alongside my principal, in order to free teachers up to prepare for the day ahead. My principal broached the idea as a way for me to demonstrate to teachers that I was a "team player." While less than thrilled about spending every morning outside in the weather, dodging traffic and ushering students back and forth across the busy road, I came to value the time I spent in the crosswalk. It was deeply rewarding to develop relationships with students and their parents, getting to participate in their lives if even for just a few moments each day. It was also a time in which the principal and I shared ideas, discussed goings-on in the school, and fostered our relationship on both a personal and professional level. This passing memory reminded me of one of the many hats I donned during my time as a curriculum specialist, and it invigorated me that particular morning to learn about Leona's unique role in her schools.

Leona greeted me at the front door of the main office. After a brief introduction, I joined her on her morning walk through the school. This walk enabled Leona to "be present in the school" and allowed her "to interact with teachers on a more personal

level.[1]" It also reminded teachers that she was in the building that day. Stopping by the assistant principal's office, Leona visited with her about the day ahead. In the workroom, a teacher sought Leona's advice about an upcoming meeting. Leona talked her through how to collect the needed data, and offered to meet with the teacher during her planning period to help her get started. The teacher, feeling more confident, assured Leona she could manage but would follow up if needed. Making our way down the hall, Leona checked in with teachers regarding particular issues or occurrences they were experiencing. In one classroom, she asked about the progress of a long-term intern. In another, she checked in with a new teacher about the unit of study being taught. The teacher had questions about the best way to teach a particular part of the unit. Leona offered to model teach the lesson the following day, so the teacher could see one approach to teaching the lesson. The teacher graciously accepted her offer. They agreed that Leona would teach the first two periods of the day, and the teacher would teach the same lesson the remaining periods while Leona observed and provided feedback. After each encounter, Leona shared details with me about the teacher and situation. It became clear, through these conversations, that Leona treasured the personal interactions and relationships fostered during these morning walks.

Although Leona willingly shared about the difficulties teachers were experiencing, she was much more reserved when sharing stories of her own work and struggles. However, after some nudging and sharing of my own difficulties as a curriculum specialist, she began to share more. Her stories shed light on her identity as it

[1] All quotations, unless specified otherwise, come from interviews.

related to her social positioning in the school as well as to her role as curriculum specialist. Before restorying her experiences, it is important to consider the social, cultural, and political context within which she works. I start with the curriculum conversations of change taking place in her schools.

A Contextualized Approach to Popular Areas of Reform

Leona's stories revealed two conversations of change occurring in her schools. The first conversation of change is the move to standards-based teaching. Leona explained that standards-based teaching centers on "teaching lessons that are aligned to the state learning standards." She added that teaching this way ensures "uniformity in the content from one classroom to the next" as well as to that "taught in other schools in the district" and "across the state" as well. Leona said this change initiative grew out of the "success" she had had "pilot[ing] standards-based teaching during her last year in the classroom." The following year, her first as a curriculum specialist, the principal mandated "standards-based teaching in all seventh grade classrooms." It was then extended to eighth grade, and principals at her other schools soon mandated the change as well. As such, the conversation around standards-based teaching had been ongoing, to varying degrees, in each of her schools over the past four years.

Leona characterized the second conversation of change as a "shift" in the instruction-assessment cycle that she said was a "natural progression" in their move to standards-based teaching. She said the shift focused on "using common assessments to better inform" teacher decision making in the classroom. According to Leona, this change effort was a district-mandated, principal-led effort to synchronize teaching and learning across district classrooms. But "it goes deeper than that," she explained. Pointing to the

benefits of common assessments for student learning, she argued that teachers need to "have at least a portion of our final be the same" so that students' performance could be compared and teachers could share ideas about how to improve teaching. She believed collaboration was an important component of this work as well. As curriculum specialist, Leona was tasked with "support[ing] teachers in meeting these expectations."

As Leona shared more insight about these conversations of change, contradictions emerged between her expressed understandings of the change efforts and what was likely happening in the schools. On the one hand, Leona stated that the changes were initiated by the principal based on her (and perhaps other teachers') success with standards-based teaching. However, the idea originated from somewhere further up in the hierarchy in the broad national context of school reform. The language she used in regards to the teachers' role in the ongoing change efforts further suggested the source and nature of the conversations were much less local or organic than it had first appeared. I probed Leona about these contradictions, and she acknowledged that while these are "popular areas of reform," she insisted the change efforts had "been the focus in our school district for a number of years." She added that most everyone in the district believed in and saw the value in the change efforts. Further considering the implications of these mandates on teachers, Leona concluded, "I don't want them to look at it as reform. I want them to look at it as refinement, reflection."

Leona had no doubt internalized these change efforts, and was committed to this work. The matter-of-fact way in which she spoke of these efforts conveyed a school culture in which (most) everyone contributed to a shared vision for continuous improvement. Even when faced with evidence to the contrary, Leona expressed an

unwavering belief that the holdouts would eventually “get on board with the changes.” To understand this deep-seated loyalty and optimism, it is important to consider the context of the school district and community at large.

The district is located in an affluent, sought-after suburban community. The district traditionally scores well, often above average, on common indicators of school success. District leaders and the community as a whole took pride in the district, and shared a vision of excellence and a drive to be the best in the state in all areas of performance (e.g. academics, performing arts, sports). This vision of excellence is placed front and center across the district, quite literally, from the district webpage, to the halls of the schools, even adorning the walls of classrooms and offices alike. This vision repeatedly manifested itself in the interactions I observed during my time with Leona and the other participants from the district. I explore this further in chapter five; however, it is important to note here that the conversations of change taking place in Leona’s schools were not centered on external reform mandates, per se. Rather, it was driven by internal pressures towards excellence through continuous improvement of educational delivery and learning outcomes for the students and the community it serves. At the heart of these conversations, however, exists a culture of competition in which individuals feel compelled to live up to district expectations and outshine others in a quest to remain among the best in the state, or risk being expelled from the district for not living up to the “[School district’s] way.” It was through this competitive culture of excellence (my understanding, not hers), that Leona found herself navigating the role of curriculum specialist.

Positioned as Supporter: From the Outside, Looking In

Leona's stories revealed a polyvalent, shifting, and often fragmented identity. Two aspects of Leona's identity are helpful for understanding how she both viewed and approached her work as a curriculum specialist: the need for a sense of belonging, and the view of her role as a supporter.

Stories about her work at the middle school communicated a sense of belonging, and a belief that her work was important. The middle school was "home" for Leona, and she felt "very much a part of the team." Because she came from that school, she had closer relationships with teachers there, felt respected, and was much more involved than at her other schools. According to Leona, teachers, and even principals, regularly "text 'Are you here today? Can I come up?'" when they need to close the door and vent or want to bounce ideas off her. Several teachers there even considered her a mentor. Her connection to the middle school, and others' acceptance of her role there, stood in stark contrast to her experiences at the high school.

Leona described working with the high school teachers as "tough" and admitted that it had been harder to get approval and "buy in" because they perceived her as a "middle school teacher" and "not capable of [teaching] high school." She added that many teachers avoided, deflected, or outright rejected her attempts to engage with them, and often assumed a "just tell me what you want me to do" attitude. Leona tried not to take it personally because she believed teachers were "just not really sure what our roles are, and how we really can help them." She added, "And that hesitancy, I think they feel like we're there for a 'gotcha,' and we're not. We're absolutely not!" However, the

resistance and isolation she experienced at the high school led to an identity in which she felt like an outsider, adversary, or informant. This coach-as-spy mentality is well addressed in the literature on instructional coaching (Jorissen et al., 2008; Niedźwiecki, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011). Positioned as such, Leona avoided interactions in which her intentions could be "called into question," like skipping the staff meeting the morning of my second visit where issues were being addressed or not pushing teachers even though she believed they were avoiding the creation and implementation of the common assessments. Maintaining such a distance, however, likely reinforced this identity of outsider and hindered her ability to make progress with the group.

The reason for this distance was that Leona viewed her role in the schools as strictly supportive; one in which teachers (and principals) voluntarily sought out her help. When asked the question who determined her work in the school, Leona insisted the district intended her position to be a "resource and support for teachers," and that it must "always be a choice" for the teacher(s) as to the context and extent of their work together. She was diligent to not "force herself on teachers," nor did she allow a principal to "force teachers to work with her." She was adamant that the teacher needed to be the one to seek out her support. However, Leona was proactive in "encouraging teachers to work with [her]," and made herself "available to teachers" in whatever it was they asked of her. She saw this as a way to establish relationships with teachers and to build their trust and confidence in her. When asked to describe the purpose of her role, Leona used descriptors such as "cheerleader," "encourager," "a sounding board for teachers," and a "teacher of teachers," and insisted that her role was "in no way evaluative."

Listening to her stories, I found myself juxtaposing Sandstead's (2015/2016) notion of "cutting watermelon," of meeting teachers where they are in order to gain acceptance into their classroom, with the problematics of "coaching light" to avoid conflict and preserve relationships rather than addressing needed change (Killion, 2010). I shared this thought with Leona who recognized the dilemma, but contended that she "has to get teachers in their comfort zone" before she can have an impact on them. However, positioning herself as discretionary, even ancillary, likely minimized her potential for engaging and sustaining teachers in the types of conversations needed to realize curricular change.

Becoming a Part of the Team: In and Out of the Cave

Leona said the most significant challenge she faced was getting teachers to see her as "part of the team." She felt largely overlooked, ignored, and excluded by teachers who were "suspicious of her help," "jealous" of her perceived authority, or were otherwise unwilling to engage with her. This was a struggle for Leona as her primary motivation for moving into the position was the opportunity to share "her knowledge," her "love for teaching," and her interest in social studies on a larger scale than she could in the classroom. She had hoped to be a "valuable resource" to help make teachers' jobs easier, but she continued to receive push back from teachers, particularly those at the high school. She believed they disregard her "because of her middle school background" which research shows may be a legitimate concern for teachers. Wilder (2013) found that secondary coaches faced a more significant learning curve in working with discipline-area teachers due to the specialized knowledge and pedagogical demands specific to those disciplines. Mismatches in these areas limit the work coaches can do with teachers.

Wilder's (2013) research suggests teachers have a valid reason for not wanting to expend time and energy working with coaches whom they perceive as lacking in their particular discipline. Mangin & Stoelinga (2011) find that teachers' perceptions and confidence is further eroded when the specialist (they use the term teacher leader) deemphasizes her expertise and avoids delivering hard feedback about teaching practice. It is likely Leona's background as a middle school teacher, her insistence that the teachers, not her, "are the subject-area experts," and her positioning as an "option for teachers" contribute significantly to her exclusion from the team.

I witnessed this challenge first hand during my visit with her at the high school. "This is where I spend most days," she said, welcoming me into her office. "Holed up in my little cave." My time with her there confirmed this sentiment. Our walk around the high school was much more stoic than at the middle school. Her attempts to engage teachers, and even the supervising principal, were largely met with amicable, yet indifferent replies that left little room for sustained conversation. We did, in fact, spend the majority of our time that day "hiding" in her cave. I asked Leona about the encounters and she responded, "I can only do so much… They don't invite me in, and I don't push myself." After a pause, she ended with "So yeah, this is my cell," referring to her office. Her demeanor that day pointed to internal conflict that she struggled to communicate: a deep, personal desire to more meaningfully engage with teachers on curricular and pedagogical matters was unfulfilled while passing time in the "cave" working on administrative tasks. As Leona's demeanor that day suggests, the disappointment and sense of failure brought on by the lack of engagement can be difficult to work through.

Another challenge Leona experienced was the lack of implementation (of change initiatives) across the department. While she often spoke in broad terms about teachers doing this or that in regards to curriculum implementation, she acknowledged that they had "pockets of implementation" rather than overall "buy-in." What was most troubling for Leona was the fact that while some teachers openly resisted or avoided changes efforts, others resisted implementation while maintaining a pretense of commitment to the efforts. As stated earlier, Leona did not question the change initiatives and considered them beneficial to be implemented. However, it was clear that not every teacher shared her vision, and I wondered how different the conversations of change might be if these teachers' perspectives were heard and given the space to evolve, even if different from the dominant discourse.

Leona struggled with how to move teachers toward the identified goals without becoming an enforcer or a lookout for the supervising administrator. I observed one such exchange with a teacher Leona visited during his planning period. The teacher was the team lead, and the person responsible for overseeing the development of the common assessment for his subject-area team. It became clear that he was skirting Leona's questions about the assessment despite maintaining a cheerful and seemingly receptive tone. During the conversation, he only vaguely acknowledged that the assessment was "a work in progress" before changing the subject. He deflected a second attempt by Leona to discuss the matter which confirmed for Leona that he was avoiding the topic altogether. Back in her office, Leona was conflicted as to whether she should continue working to get the teacher on board with the efforts or elicit the help of the department's supervising administrator, acknowledging that either option would have consequences for

her work with the team. According to Niedzwiecki (2007), teachers are the ones who hold the power to enact real change in the classroom, and must be given the impetus and freedom to do so. Requiring "cookie cutter instruction" and surveilling to ensure implementation will never lead to the kinds of engagement needed for teachers to "become reflective practitioners who make conscious choices about instruction" (p. 62). Fullan & Knight (2011) also advocate for teachers' professional discretion in change efforts. In order to make an impact on classroom instruction, Leona must resist the urge to remain in her cave, but she must also find a way to harness teachers' curiosity and care for students and for their work.

Differentiating For Teachers, As You Do For Students

The struggle to work with teachers was a shock Leona was not prepared for. She found the administrative workload partly to blame, adding:

> I really thought when I took on this job it was going to be, "You're gonna work with teachers, and you're gonna be in the classroom, and you're gonna build lessons together, and basically it was just gonna be an extension of a teacher. It was a real eye opener when I saw how much is administrative.... [such as] the meetings we have on a district level, the state meetings I have to attend and address.... I kind of actually hesitated after that first year, and went, "Is this really what I want to be doing?

However, administrative tasks were not the only thing keeping Leona out of classrooms. Teacher resistance was a significant hurdle she faced in her work. She said that much of her time and energy was spent "taking baby steps" to convince teachers to work with her. She continually communicated to teachers:

> I would love to be able to sit in your classrooms… and I would always leave a note or do a follow up and hit the positives… I would say "Is there anything you can see me assisting you with?" And almost every time, there would be a small thing I could do. A lot of times it was curriculum based. "Can you find me some primary sources for this?" Eventually, I did have a couple of teachers who went, 'You know what, I am having a hard time with that one kid there. Can you come in and see what's going on?' And so...building relationships.

Leona explained that a major part of building relationships was getting to know the teachers and learning the dynamics unique to each of them. "Just like you differentiate with students, you have to differentiate with teachers," she said. "It's finding what's gonna work best with them." Patience and empathy were key for Leona as she waited for her efforts to win over the "holdouts." But, "right now I don't push them. I consistently offer," she explains. "They don't usually take me up on it. I don't go pop in their rooms because I'm respecting their right as a teacher to not have me in there." She continued to seek points of entry by locating and sharing resources for teachers to use in their classrooms, suggesting (even hosting) workshops and other professional development opportunities, and engaging with teachers as opportunities arose. Teachers often have different needs and interests, and knowing each of them helps Leona to match her support to that which will be most helpful for each teacher. "So, trying to find those kinds of tools where they don't feel like I'm invading into their classroom, but they're still useful tools for teachers to have." Leona admitted that her work with teachers was an ongoing negotiation to balance her vision for her work with teachers with the teacher's vision of

that work, and then marry those with the expectations of school and district administrators.

Leona's work in her schools centered on helping teachers "refine" their teaching through the implementation of standards-based teaching and the use of common assessments to align their teaching to that of their colleagues. Leona faced significant hurdles in doing so. In general, teachers did not see her as "part of the team," and did not include her in their classrooms or in the larger conversations going on in the school. Leona found many teachers were subverting implementation efforts altogether. Positioned as auxiliary, Leona struggled to play a more active role in the conversations of change.

Julie: A Discerning Perspective

The morning of our first meeting, I arrived at the doors of the school a full ten minutes before our scheduled meeting time. Julie walked in just as I was adhering the visitor badge to my sweater, and called out to me as if to a friend returning home after a long journey. She quickly drew me into her world, which at that moment included hallway duty she was covering for a principal who was away at a meeting. Walkie talkie in hand, Julie chatted about her position, her history at the school, and even facts about the school itself as we monitored the halls and directed students toward their day of learning. Any nerves I had had vanished the instant I assumed hall patrol with Julie. I was back in my element, and Julie and I conversed like old souls picking up where we had left off a lifetime ago (although we had only just met). After receiving the all clear, we made our way to her office-classroom where a morning of ceaseless activity ensued.

We traveled from one end of the building to the other throughout the morning, "popping into classrooms" for impromptu visits, delivering resources, and meeting with individual teachers about identified needs or interests. We also met with a group of math teachers to discuss "increasing rigor for advanced math students." The morning ended with a "lunch bunch" meeting Julie had organized, in which teachers shared ideas about quality nonfiction literature for intermediate (elementary) students. The interview portion of my visit occurred during lulls in the activity due to her busy schedule that day; however, the conversation transitioned seamlessly as we moved from one task to the next. Julie naturally took the lead in sharing stories about what she believed to be the most important aspects of her work, pausing at times to ensure she was giving me the information I needed. Her knowledge and confidence in her role was readily apparent, as she needed only minimal prompting to address the key areas of this study.

Julie spoke openly about her work in the school, and was quite comfortable sharing her knowledge and passion for her work. Julie willingly answered my questions; however, there was a level of discernment in her stories indicative of a seasoned administrator, ever cognizant of the message communicated as a representative of the school and district. This was evident at various points during our time together as she paused to question how the data would be presented in my research findings and with whom it would be shared. She expressed a willingness to share honestly about her experiences in the role, but was concerned that the data portray the school and district in a positive light. She wanted to ensure her stories reflected her optimism and respect for both teachers and district leaders. It was through this filter that Julie conveyed her experiences.

Teacher Growth Through Ongoing Collaboration

When asked about conversations of change, Julie said the focus was on "teachers' professional growth" and a collective effort "to improve student learning outcomes" school wide. She spoke about a mutual vision amongst the leadership team, herself included, to help teachers be more intentional and more proficient at what "they are already doing in the classroom." Julie described the principals' efforts to build a school culture centered on data-driven instruction, implementation of best practices, and student-centered teaching. Through weekly PLC meetings and other collaborative endeavors, and an expectation that all teachers work with Julie as a natural extension of the work they do in their classroom, the principals had created a culture in which teachers were to actively engage in their own professional growth. Julie explained their approach to this work,

> Our site is a little different then some... [it does not] always look like a true PLC if you're going to talk about [being] very teacher-led, always looking at data, but they are very organic... each PLC has its own personality... They kind of have a different vision for where they're headed. Sometimes, it's me showing them something… something that they've [teachers] come up with, or [the principals] might have a vision for something they want us to tackle.

Julie expressed her belief that the meetings provided teachers an opportunity to get together and work through issues or situations they were dealing with. She added, "For us, there's huge value in being in a room together. Talking about students, student work, math and language arts pieces that they have questions about."

Julie led and supported teachers in the varied change efforts, and it appeared - both from the stories Julie shared and my observation of her work with teachers - that

teachers actively participated in this work. I asked Julie how teachers' respond to these change efforts, and she used a sports (coaching) metaphor to describe the current environment in the school. The principals, she claimed,

> had done such good work with culture and climate… [The assistant principal], who was in my position before this year, had done some hard work. They had established some things. So, like a football team; long enough to turn your team around. She's, you know...You got to give a coach time to get their team in place.
>
> You lose some people, you hire some people and so...It’s more of her team now.

Julie said that teachers accepted her role in the process, and most actively worked toward these goals because of the principal's expectations, but also because most wanted to do well in the classroom.

To understand how the social, cultural, and political dynamics factor into the conversations of change, it is important to note that Julie and her peers work in the same affluent, high performing, suburban district as Leona. Recall that both the district and community actively bolster a sense of pride and an expectation of excellence in all community and school endeavors. This vision of excellence manifested in various ways during my visits with Julie. First, there was no reference to outside performance measures (e.g. state testing, reform mandates) in Julie’s discussion of change efforts. There was also no direct mention of district expectations in these efforts. The conversations of change appeared to be principal-led efforts to improve teaching and learning. Her stories pointed to an internalization of these expectations and measures of success by the principals and Julie, herself, that translated into an intrinsic drive for excellence. In one story, her principal, whom Julie claimed rarely mentioned test scores, expressed her

dissatisfaction with an area of the state test on which they scored lower than the other district school. The principal did not approach it from a "must raise test scores" mentality, but rather, convened the leadership team to develop a plan for improving instruction in that particular area with the belief that if teachers "do what's best for kids," the test score will take care of itself.

It was clear that Julie, too, embodied this spirit of excellence. Her internalization of the district's (and perhaps community's) quest for excellence was evident in the level of discernment she demonstrated in her storytelling. The ways in which Julie referenced her previous work, spoke of her relationships with district leaders and with the district's other curriculum specialists, and communicated the connection between research in the field to her current work in the school, also signaled a strong knowledge base and demonstration of merit. I came to this understanding just before my second visit with Julie, and wanted to explore the effects of this discourse of excellence on teachers' participation and interactions with Julie and each other.

Observing this more closely during my second visit, I noticed a discernible performativity in the interactions of teachers as well. During meetings, teachers maintained a positive, upbeat, and harmonious tone, even when discussing potentially divisive topics. Teachers seemed to be keenly aware of my presence during these meetings, some even asking my purpose for being there. It reminded me of the way my students behaved any time the principal came into our classroom: (unusually) well-behaved and eager to show off (by participating in class). I commented on this perceived camaraderie and professionalism, and Julie reiterated that teachers there most always maintained that level of professionalism with colleagues. When I pressed further about

teacher resistance, push back, or issues between teachers, Julie acknowledged that she was not addressing every hard conversation that needed to be had, but credited the principals' open-door approach to leadership for making the teachers feel like their voices are heard.

However, I question to what extent the principal's efforts to "turn the team around" and build "her team" in previous years had regulated, restricted, and even reproduced the public sphere. The lack of dissent or critical questioning signaled an absence of teachers' voice in the conversations of change despite Julie's expressed focus on supporting teachers' work. According to Bhabha (1994), "Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively" (p. 2). Had the teachers, as subordinated subjects, become "estranged unto themselves - in the act[s] of being articulated into a collective body" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 3)? Or, were teachers wholeheartedly committed to the efforts as they appeared? If not, were acts of subversion and agency relegated to individual classrooms or less obvious forms of rebellion? I further probe these possibilities in chapter 5, but for now, I turn to examine Julie's subject positioning as it relates to her work in the school.

Safe Space for Teachers

Julie's identity as a curriculum specialist is multifaceted. She had the unique opportunity to work at various levels within the district, including as Director of Professional Development. She also worked in the same school as both a teacher and a curriculum specialist under two different administrators. This experience led to an identity rooted in a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose, and a sense of ownership in her daily work in the school.

Three key factors underpinned this identity. First, Julie acknowledged that her work at the district level, and particularly her work coordinating professional development for the district's curriculum specialists, provided her with essential knowledge and understanding of the specialist's role in the school. This gave her a breadth of perspectives to draw from in the multiple roles she fulfilled, and it enabled her to see how the change initiatives factored across the various levels of implementation. Moving back into the curriculum specialist position, Julie found that she was much more confident and capable of carrying out her responsibilities in the school. Before, teachers questioned her ability to support their work in content areas that differed from her teaching background; however, "Now, nobody questions it because I worked at the district level, and I was immersed in all of that [curriculum support] all the time."

Another factor is that she was "handpicked" by the principal based on her knowledge and experience. She also had the support of fellow teachers. She explained that "there were teachers who were so excited when I came back." They encouraged her to "'Go apply for it… we want it to be you'… 'We loved you doing it." That support was affirming for her. Julie also felt "called" to take on the role even though she "loved being back in the classroom." She "felt like the Lord was saying, 'You need to go into this position' because there was a piece of support that need[ed] to be there," and she believed she was best suited to provide that support.

Julie clearly saw herself as a key player in the decision making at both the school and district level, and believed she played an integral role in the curriculum work being done in the school. This was due in large part to the support and encouragement she received from her principals, teachers, and even district leaders with whom she regularly

communicated. Lancaster (2016) found that such support along with a common vision for the curriculum specialist's work is critical for the specialist's sense of efficacy as well as her ability to affect change in the school.

Julie's identity that emerged from her sense of belonging and from being a key player in the school no doubt influenced how she approached her work with teachers. She positioned herself as "a safe space for teachers," a place teachers could turn for moral as well as professional support. Julie claimed to have a "really natural skill set for working with teachers," and an even greater desire to ease the mental and emotional burdens teachers bear on a daily basis. She established early on "that I am non-evaluative… That I'm a safe space. They can talk to me about what they need to talk to me about." Julie added that nothing was shared with anyone unless the teacher requested it be shared.

As a safe space for teachers, she also adopted the approach to "come alongside" teachers to meet them where they are, and to learn and grow with them. Julie explained, "The larger piece is that I love helping teachers. I really do love being able to say..."What can I help you do? Let's get there. Let's do it together, let's figure it out." This approach of being a partner in teachers' exploration in the classroom changed the dynamics of her relationships with teachers because it positioned her as a collaborator rather than the expert.

Prioritizing Her Work

Julie said that her biggest challenge is scheduling her time each day to address current and pressing needs in the school, while also making progress on work already underway. She found that her schedule could easily be overrun with administrative tasks or derailed due to unforeseen events. To better manage her time, Julie developed an

annual overview of tasks taking precedence for each month of the school year. She then prioritized across each week, meeting with administrators to identify current needs and outline tasks to be accomplished. Julie kept a detailed schedule online that she shared with her administrators allowing them to stay informed about her work and provide timely support. Despite this strategic planning, Julie still found herself juggling multiple urgent needs at one time, and struggled with accepting that she could not meet every need that arose in the school. To help focus her attention, Julie made student learning her top priority. Whether it is supporting a teacher emotionally or intervening to correct ineffective or even detrimental teaching practices, Julie centered her focus on issues most likely to impact students.

This work often included providing individualized support for teachers, another area in which Julie struggled. Unlike other specialists in the district who served multiple schools but only one content area, Julie served roughly 60 teachers, many of whom taught in areas that she lacked content knowledge and experience. Julie shared that she did not feel adequately prepared to support all teachers she served, so she wanted to make that a focus for her own professional growth "because those are my teachers too, and I need to support them" (Julie in focus group interview, March 13, 2018). To do so, Julie became intentional about working with teachers in content areas in which she was less familiar, including math, science, and even special education, in order to learn how to better meet their needs.

Bridging the Conversation Gap

Julie believed her relational approach made teachers more willing to share with her about difficulties they were facing, and in turn, she learned how to better support

teachers through this ongoing collaboration. She found that her time spent in classrooms "learning from teachers" and building those relationships enabled her to "bridge the conversation gap" – to engage with the teacher in a productive way - when "hard conversations" became necessary. Hard conversations (Abrams, 2009), for Julie, occurred when there was a discrepancy in expectation and performance, whether perceived or documented. She said that these conversations required a hashing out of differences in order to improve areas of needed growth (Observation with Julie, February 15, 2018). Julie had previously struggled with how to be supportive, yet firm, in these conversations. However, she discovered that approaching the conversation relationally opened up possibilities for collaboration and teacher growth because "it [was no longer] about getting to Z. But, going from A to B and B to C and working our way there." Julie credited training she received from Jim Knight (2007) on instructional coaching for teaching her how to focus these conversations on what teachers want to see happening in their classroom. According to Julie, this approach "changes everything. [Asking] What do you want to see your kids do? That is not personal...Feels really different than, 'I saw this [and it should be this way].' Whole different game. Same exact problem, whole different game."

It seemed to me the framing of that question was, in fact, a "whole different game" than that being refereed by the school's leadership team. I wondered how the conversation could center on what teachers truly wanted to see their students do, when the culture of learning was built around more standardized incarnations of learning based on data-driven instruction, best practices, and student-centered teaching. However, Julie's vivacious temperament and enthusiasm for her work, coming alongside teachers to

support them in the hard work they do, no doubt helped her to build relationships while promoting the culture of continued professional growth and improved student learning outcomes established by school leaders.

Lauren: Finding Balance in A New Role

I arrived at Lauren's school on a blustery, late-winter afternoon. The cold wind biting through my coat as I hurried inside the newly erected schoolhouse. The warm inviting office I expected to greet me was instead an empty, austere foyer containing little more than the scanner used to confirm one's suitability for entering the school. The office attendant greeted me through a closed glass window, and told me to "hang tight" until Lauren could make her way down to let me in. She arrived moments later and ushered me back to her classroom where a textbook adoption meeting was underway. The room was abuzz with teachers thumbing through sample textbooks, sorting through supplementary materials, and discussing the most favorable parts of each one. Lauren paused long enough to introduce me to a few colleagues before returning to her conversations with teachers. She, along with the school's literacy coach and math specialist, were fielding questions from the ten or so teachers in the room, providing them with additional information and insight into the available choices. She hosted several more of these meetings throughout the day as I sat at the back of the room observing, taking notes, and visiting with teachers who came over to introduce themselves and inquire about my work. The schedule for the day left little room for authentic dialogue to develop between Lauren and me. My interview with Lauren took place between the meetings in a small conference room near her classroom. She and I hurried down to the room between meetings to squeeze in a few questions before rushing back for the next one. The

conversations flowed naturally and ended at a seemingly logical stopping point each time despite the rigid time frame; however, it felt a bit disjointed overall and I wondered to what extent the interruptions influenced the stories Lauren shared with me that day.

My second visit was equally restrained. Lauren was leading a grade-level meeting when I arrived. I quietly observed several back-to-back meetings. Just as the interview was set to begin, the school's literacy coach came in to talk with Lauren about student assessment data, and remained in the room throughout the interview. The change in Lauren's demeanor (from the first interview) and her discrete responses to my questions indicated a hesitancy to engage in extensive conversation about her work. It seemed to me that the literacy coach's presence in the room impacted the interview. The literacy coach's presence throughout much of my time with Lauren suggested that the two found comfort (and perhaps confidence) in exploring their new roles together. As a new curriculum specialist, Lauren's reluctance to share openly about her work or the school in general was evident by the careful framing of her stories, telling me at one point that she wanted to "proceed cautiously not to drag out our dirt." It was through this guarded lens that Lauren shared with me about the conversations of change taking place in the school.

Establishing a Common Vision in the School

When asked about change efforts currently underway, Lauren spoke about the logistical aspects that needed to be addressed in getting the new school up and running. She explained that the administrative team had not previously worked together, and several were new to the administrator role. There were also differences in the experience, understandings, and expectations of teachers. The school year to that point had been about making sure teachers and students had what they needed in the classroom and

ensuring grade-level teams were building positive, productive relationships. Lauren said that although there were numerous avenues of needed change still being negotiated, the focus had begun to center on establishing a common vision for the school grounded in "best practices and what's best for kids." These included developing common assessments, and implementing several literacy programs.

Lauren said this work was in the early stages as the leadership team was still working to align their expectations in order to move teachers toward common understandings of what good teaching (and learning) should look like in their school. These efforts led to the implementation of weekly grade-level meetings in which teachers met to plan various aspects of their work including their day-to-day lesson plans, student assessments, and anything else needing to be coordinated across the grade level. The meetings were designed to build a collective unity as teachers worked through issues and came to new understandings as a whole. Lauren, and the other specialists, regularly attended these meetings to stay informed of the group's work, to offer help where appropriate, or to intervene as needed to ensure the group was moving in a productive direction. The specialists often provided training during these meetings on topics of interest or need identified through teacher survey responses or administrator or specialist observations.

Lauren further teamed up with the literacy coach to further establish expectations and move teachers toward a common vision by organizing "coaching days" in which teachers learned about best practices and saw them modeled in classrooms. The two also conducted shorter "learning walks" during teacher's planning periods so that teachers could observe other classrooms and make connections and identify their own goals for

improvement. Lauren explained that these efforts were “to make sure [teachers] were...walking away with some of the same understandings,” that aligned with “the [District’s] way” of doing things.

It should be noted that Lauren works in the same affluent, high performing, large suburban school district as both Julie and Leona. During my first interview with Lauren, I noticed a sign on the wall of the conference room that outlined “Expected Attributes of All Employees.” The list included such traits as understanding how the employee’s work aligned with the goals of the district, a focus on the needs of all customers, removing obstacles to the enjoyment of work, and striving to reduce variation (based on data). I wondered what effect these posted expectations, along with other more (or less) implicit pressures to assimilate to district standards, had on the learning environment. I asked Lauren about the sign and she responded that the district’s expectations sometimes differed from what teachers were often used to (in other districts), so it helped to ensure that everyone was “on the same page, and moving in the same direction” (Observation with Lauren, March 1, 2018). She claimed these “non-negotiables” were necessary for ensuring teachers do what’s best for kids.” Although Lauren was hard at work promoting a common vision for the school, she struggled to differentiate her work and define her own role in the school.

No Longer the Coach, But Now What

Lauren previously worked as a literacy coach before moving into the curriculum specialist position in this new school. She discovered that the lack of clearly defined roles, her inexperience in the position, and her close proximity to the school’s literacy coach led to an overlap in the work they did as she continued to revert back to the same

tasks she did in that role. Lauren explained that the specialist position varied across the district because it was tailored to the principal’s vision for the position as well as the specialist's individual strengths and personality. Some schools did not have a separate literacy coach position, so the curriculum specialist assumed that role in the school. However, since her school had a literacy coach, Lauren struggled with how to differentiate her work from her colleague’s because her identity was very much grounded in a coaching perspective. She said coaching teachers was a natural fit for her, and one of the most meaningful aspects of her work was spending time with teachers talking about their work. She explained,

> [Coaching is] my favorite part, and what I have gotten the most positive feedback on…Our setting up coaching days, our teachers so appreciate that…making sure we are supporting their understanding of district practices and expectations...The feedback has been incredible… I want that to be a support, and the fact that they’re excited about it.”

She shared with me that she had originally planned to apply for the literacy coach position in the school, but sought out the specialist position instead as a natural next step to moving into school administration. She added,

> My one hesitation in moving here [her current position], because I love working with teachers and spending time in classrooms, was knowing that it was not going to be 100% coaching. And that’s really my love. I love setting up these days. I love the learning walks. I love the conversations. I love popping in, pulling up next to a child and conferring.

Throughout her stories, Lauren did not clearly delineate what of her duties she considered "coaching" work and what was not; however, based on my analysis of her stories and observations of her work, the bulk of her work appeared to center on coaching teachers. She described at length her collaborations with the literacy coach to ensure they were fully supporting teachers' needs in the classroom. However, Lauren recognized that the district intended her position to be something more, or other, than that of the literacy coach, and she wanted to differentiate her work from that role. She said that the specialists, and leadership team, had been "dog paddling our way through the year," trying to figure out what everyone should be doing, but that she now needed "to sit down with [her] principals" to "get a clear vision of where they see my job and where they want me to go." Although Lauren felt good about the work she had done to that point, she admitted that she still did not have "the bigger picture" of what her role should be in the school.

Melding Differences, Building Relationships

Opening a new school comes with a host of challenges to overcome in getting things running smoothly, so it came as no surprise that the most pressing challenge for Lauren was getting teachers working together to establish common goals within the grade levels. She explained that each grade-level team had different needs due to the diverse combination of experience levels, personalities, and teaching styles within the group. The leadership team recognized that they first needed to work through the individual differences of the teams in order to build a cohesive vision for the school. Lauren found that her role in these efforts varied considerably as she worked to encourage and support their work. Some groups needed minimal guidance or reassurance as they found a

productive rhythm to their collaboration, while others needed "heavy intervention" from Lauren to get the group on the right track.

I witnessed Lauren's efforts to lead one group through the "storming" phase (Tuckman, 1965). She shared with me that differences of opinion were distracting them from larger curricular and instructional work. According to Lauren, two veteran teachers, and outspoken members, of the group were vying for control of the group dynamics. She explained that tensions were brewing amongst various group members,

> They're coming from different experiences, and we've had a hard time melding. Theyare "coming to me…with frustrations on the way things are being done, and they don't feel like they're being done the [District's] way…This grade level, we had so many issues, I just kinda needed to lead."

Lauren stepped in temporarily to help redirect their focus. She hoped that moving them back toward district expectations would quell any disagreements, and steer the group in a more positive direction. She admitted it was an ongoing effort, but felt that bringing the group together under different terms had been productive. She planned to turn the group back over to the team lead within a couple of weeks, but would remain heavily involved until they were collaborating more effectively.

Defining Her Role by Doing Her Work

As mentioned previously, the ambiguity that comes with having multiple specialist positions in the school as well as the unsettled dynamics of the leadership team, left much uncertainty about Lauren's role in the school. She had spent the better part of the school year negotiating the role she played in the school and what exactly her work entailed. According to Lauren, that was true of the whole administrative team.

> It's not sorted out yet. I am working under/with all of them. We try and meet weekly…that is really helpful for us to all sit in one room. We really just try to get together and divvy out who will do what, so those roles haven't been tightly defined.

Her principals agreed that the best way for her to establish her position was to "define by doing what [her] role is." She added,

> We have a lot [of staff] that have come in from other school districts that all have preconceived ideas of what a [specialist] does, and have either positive or negative experiences from where they've come from…So, there are some things that people have expected I'll do because someone at their previous school or site did. Then there's some things I don't think they've expected. It's just kind of feel our way out; finding what that role needs to look like here.

Her stories indicated that she was still uncertain about what her duties entailed, but she attempted to define her work for herself and others by focusing each day on tasks she (and her administrators or teachers) felt were important in the school. She hoped that this would show teachers over time what they could expect from her. She recognized that building relationships was the best way to accomplish this work. She added, "I try weekly to at least pop in to all our classrooms just to be available…I try to go at different times. I go with a coffee or tea in my hands. Just very relaxed. No paper or pencil. I'm in no way evaluative. I'm a support, so just popping in."

Overall, Lauren said that she felt good about where she stood with teachers, and believed she had made great progress in establishing her role in the school. She said she also felt included in decisions that impacted her work, and felt supported by her

administrative team. The principals regularly encouraged teachers to reach out to and engage with Lauren on different levels. Even though the year had been about the "logistics" of opening a new building and establishing "basic practices" across the grade levels, Lauren looked forward to delving deeper into more significant aspects of the curricular and instructional practices within the classrooms.

Norrine: All About the Facts

Norrine's confident, competent, and matter-of-fact approach to her work was apparent within minutes of our meeting. Checking in to the school, the secretary pointed me in the direction of her office where I found her busily working on the computer. After a brief introduction and exchange of pleasantries, Norrine set to task giving me a rundown of her work. Moving back and forth between the bookshelf, computer, and her desk, she feverishly pulled documents to share with me as it related to the stories she told. Her zeal for this work evoked my own passion for curriculum matters. During my time as a curriculum specialist, I treasured most the opportunities to work with teachers to play with curriculum in ways that brought authentic engagement and inquiry into the classroom. Engaging with others to solve curriculum issues remains at the heart of my ongoing professional work, and it served as the conduit through which Norrine and I connected during our time together.

"I'm a little pointed. I'm not a 20-year-old kid. I've been doing this a long time," she remarked as she spoke of her approach to working with others. I found this to be an accurate characterization of Norrine as it was indicative of the conversations that ensued. She spoke, and I listened. Norrine was unapologetically goal-oriented and on a mission to provide students a rigorous and relevant mathematics education. We were on the move

and engaged with teachers, students, or other specialists throughout our time together, and she even enlisted my help to pack up and move textbook adoption displays during one of the interviews. “Let’s go,” she said, “I can answer questions and we can talk as we go.” It was from this air of efficiency that Norrine framed the conversations of change grounding her work.

Directing the Pathway to Learning

Norrine’s stories pointed to one overarching conversation of change in her schools, ensuring that every student graduated having reached their highest potential in mathematics. She identified two change efforts she was currently leading to accomplish this goal. The first was refining and implementing the “district math continua,” a document that outlined the scope and sequence of instruction for each math course offered in the district based on state and national standards. She explained that this went above and beyond what other districts typically used because it aligned teaching to national standards as well as state standards, but also filled in other critical components of mathematics as well. The second conversation of change was improving the placement process to ensure students were enrolled in courses according to their demonstrated ability and interests in math. Norrine said that this work included identifying students, as early as fifth grade, for placement on the advanced mathematics track, providing appropriate alternatives for general education students and those wishing to pursue other career routes, and expanding course offerings to ensure that juniors and seniors have the opportunity to take advanced math courses to prepare them for entrance into top-tier universities.

Norrine spoke at length about the extensive work that went into the creation of the math continua. She prided herself, teachers, and the district for achieving a high level of rigor and relevance in the document. Norrine believed it set both teachers and students up for success because it strategically outlined key standards and methods of teaching for every course. She and teachers were continuing to refine the document as they prepared to adopt new textbooks. Norrine saw this as a significant undertaking because they had to be sure the curriculum prepared students for the knowledge demands required in each math discipline. This is because, as Norrine argued,

> If you teach the curriculum like it is supposed to be [taught] in our subject, you can give them any test and succeed. We do, and we get good scores. I'm not teaching to a test. I want to teach the depth and breadth of that course. In math, everyone in the math field knows what that is.

Norrine insisted the instructional focus was on student learning, not test scores, but she reiterated that test scores were a part of the game and were a concern for advanced students preparing for college and future careers. She believed it was the district's responsibility to prepare students to be successful on those as well.

Placing students in appropriate math courses based on their abilities and interests was another priority for Norrine (as well as school and district leaders) to ensure student success while also maintaining the integrity of the math curriculum. Norrine claimed that the trend had been to place students on the honors track, often prematurely, based on test scores or teacher or parent recommendation with little consideration as to the fundamental skills missed by skipping preparatory courses such as Pre-Algebra. The district also tended to side with parents who sought to enroll their student in the honors

track whether or not there was demonstrated readiness. Norrine found that teachers were then "compromising the curriculum" by spending significant amounts of time reteaching skills covered in earlier courses at the expense of teaching the fundamentals of that particular course. Norrine said that student placement had been "a big conversation over the past 3 years or so" because the data showed that student learning was significantly impaired when they came into the course without the prerequisite knowledge or interest in pursuing more advanced understandings of mathematics (Conversation with Norrine, February 15, 2018). Norrine claimed that this was neither good for the district nor for the affected students.

With roots in the social efficiency movement and the Progressive Era of the early twentieth century, the practice of placing students on a specific academic trajectory based on demonstrated ability in the early grades, commonly called student tracking, has been a controversial practice for more than a century (Carbonaro, 2008; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2006; Rubin, 2006). This practice lies in stark opposition to the ideologies underpinning this study; nevertheless, Norrine and her district believe this differentiation of student populations is necessary to ensure they are meeting the unique and diverse needs of all students. Norrine found it critical to place students on the appropriate pathway early on because math "is [a] progression. There are prerequisites… since math is a spiral curriculum." In order for students to reach the higher-tiered classes in high school, they must take the required courses in middle school, and that preparation must begin in late elementary. Her current efforts focused on preparing teachers to collect the necessary data and educating parents on their students' readiness, so that everyone was better informed in making those determinations.

It is important to note that Norrine worked in the same affluent, high-performing, suburban school district as the other three participants. It goes without saying that she embodied the culture of academic excellence, high expectations, and professional standards set forth by the school district and community at large. It was clear that she embraced these attributes, and that she was respected and held in high esteem by students, teachers, administrators, and colleagues from across the state. All of whom she coincidentally or creatively planned for me to observe in collaboration with her during my visits.

Content-Area Expert: Improving Educational Outcomes

Norrine considered herself a content-area expert, and spoke from the perspective that others viewed her in this light as well. She felt respected, protected, and supported by district leaders, including her school principals, and that she had the same level of trust and respect for them. These dynamics elicited a sense of belonging in Norrine. Her affinity towards her district and the students therein, translated to a sense of urgency and intentionality in the purpose and meaning for her work. When asked to describe her role in the school, she said that she was a partner in education, working with teachers, students, parents, administrators, and others to ensure positive educational outcomes for students (Norrine in focus group interview, March 13, 2018). For Norrine, student learning took precedence, and her work with teachers centered on that priority.

One aspect of Norrine's identity that stood out to me was that unlike her counterparts (in this study) she did not consider her work a choice or option for teachers. Rather, she saw it as both her and teachers' professional obligation as employees of the district to ensure they were working together in the best interest of students. She

reiterated her respect for teachers and their value in the conversations of change taking place. "I don't change anything without getting input from teachers," she assured. Norrine recognized that she could not force teachers to work with her, but she had no problem engaging with (and pushing) them on curriculum issues needing to be addressed. She also had no problem moving on without them. Explaining her approach to resistant or indifferent teachers, Norrine explained,

> It is not me. It is not my position. It's [them]...I work with them as much as I can… I mean, otherwise, you can stand on your head. I have so many teachers, I don't need to [wait for them to get on board]… No, I'm moving on.

It was clear through her stories that she left little room for the negotiation of personal feelings or the back-and-forth disputations that can occur in group dynamics, and instead focused her efforts on working with those who were willing, to "get the job done anyway." However, she does so with a perpetual hope that teachers will "change and grow and evolve" and want to "do the right thing" which to her is ironing out a rigorous curriculum and teaching students to the best of their abilities.

Changing Teacher Mindset

The challenge Norrine recognized as a significant undertaking in her work was changing teachers' mindset about remediating students' learning needs in a way that maintained the integrity of the intended curriculum and taught students at the expected level. The concurrence among teachers had been that students were coming into their courses without the prerequisite skills needed to learn the content for that course. This had been a problem across content areas, and teachers were spending several weeks reteaching skills that were taught in previous courses to the detriment of the skills

required for their course. Norirne said that she had to keep reiterating, “You're better than that. You're a better teacher than that. We will not compromise the curriculum. We will figure out how to get the kids to rise to that level.” (Observation with Norrine, February 15, 2018). She took a lot of flak for her stance, but insisted there were standards that must be held to in teaching the various disciplines of math. She said that teachers were beginning to understand this reality, and prided herself and teachers on the progress they were making on these efforts.

Norrine pointed out that in addition to having students placed incorrectly, difficulties in student learning was also a reflection of classroom instruction, and that it was a challenge to get teachers to see the shortcomings in their own teaching. She often reminded teachers that it was much easier to criticize someone else's teaching, but it was equally as important to reflect on your own. This message was not always well received by teachers, but Norrine did not take their responses personally. She continued to communicate her belief that everyone had something to improve upon, and she encouraged her teachers to adopt a growth mindset towards continuous improvement. She suggested they do a coaching cycle with her, go in and observe their colleagues teaching, or attend professional development opportunities. Recognizing that it was up to teachers to do so, she and the administrators worked to praise their efforts no matter how small. “And, no matter what, they're improving. They're trying to take a risk. They're trying to increase their knowledge and hone their craft in teaching, and we love that,” she added.

Norrine viewed the challenges she faced in her work with the same matter-of-fact, pragmatic attitude she had about her duties and responsibilities as a curriculum specialist. She stated, “My first priority is the education of the students in [the district] in secondary

math, and then it’s the support, the resources for the teachers ‘cause they are the ones right there. That is my focus.” Norrine admitted that some of the challenges that arose were miscommunications or misunderstandings between the expectations of herself, teachers, and district administrators for the particular situation. She believed it was easier to handle this with math people because ‘Math teachers are pretty open. We’re pretty factual. They're like, this is what happened. And I said, ‘Okay, tell me about that.’” Norrine believed her teachers “don't take me as I am challenging them or challenging [their abilities]... and I don't take them as they're challenging me. It's like, ‘Let's pour it all out here on the table. Let's mush it up, and let's figure out what we are going to do.’ By the end of the result, we all end up agreeing. No matter what. And, I tell them, “Well, you guys have been heard.” She recognized and celebrated the ongoing conversation because it moved them closer to meeting the needs of students.

Facilitator of Compromise

Norrine did not consider negotiation a part of her work. Having worked as a negotiator in the corporate world before her career in education, she did not see its connection to her current role. She characterized herself as more “a facilitator of compromise” (Norrine in focus group interview, March 13, 2018). Elaborating on this idea, she explained that negotiating was between two parties that have very different interests. She did not think was the case in education, adding:

> Working with administrators and with teachers and state level perspective, a district perspective, a department perspective... I think it’s more, we’re all of the same team. We all have the same goals. How can we compromise to get that handled and planned? (Norrine in focus group interview, March 13, 2018)

When it comes to hashing out the politics of the role, Norrine argued that it was all about the facts! “Everyone in the math field knows [what good math is],” she claimed. She believed it was her responsibility to get everyone on the same page about what that needed to look like in the district. “And, I’m very factual. Sometimes, I gotta learn that I need to be a little bit more delicate because my intent is to not hurt anybody’s feelings. My intent always has been the education of the students,” Norrine explained. But professionalism was important to Norrine, and she expected others to do the hard work of overcoming their limitations or mindset in order to provide a rigorous and sound education for students. She held to her faith that this was ultimately what all teachers and staff wanted as well. “We have our district goals that we own. We don't just look at them on the wall, we do try,” she added.

Norrine worked to ensure that decisions were based on group consensus and input as much as possible, and she believed this was the reason teachers trusted her advice or guidance. She said that teachers knew that she would take their concerns into account, and that she was not afraid to represent teachers in “hard conversations with administration.” However, they also knew she would be unapologetic in leading them to find workable solutions when decisions made were not in their favor. She explained:

> Because, you know, not all the time do teachers make the decisions. Sometimes it is the superintendent. Sometimes, it is the administration building. And, I’m sorry, but that’s what it is. That’s where it is. And, sometimes we don’t have that vision when we’re in the classroom. We have to respect who we have. You have a voice, but sometimes the answer’s no. Sometimes the answer is yes, but you have to be big enough to be able to accept when the answer’s no. And, I get them there

without too much getting upset and getting mad. It's kinda tough, but I do think that dealing with math teachers is a little bit easier. Because, once I show them the facts, they'll be like okay, now it makes sense.

Norrine understood that cooperation and compromise were a natural part of the education process. She expressed time and again her trust for district leaders, whom she felt were "put in those positions for a reason," and could see the bigger picture when it came to making difficult decisions. She stated she had no problem approaching anyone up the chain of command with a question or concern because she believed they were listening to her or the teachers' concerns even if making the necessary changes took time. She stated, "We have a voice. That's why I feel so comfortable. I never feel like we can't say something. If there's a real issue…It might take time, but we [will get] it."

Katherine: Holding on to Hope

Arriving at Katherine's school the morning of our first interview felt a lot like going home. Katherine and I had been colleagues in that district for a decade before I moved on to work elsewhere. We were hired as teachers the same year, and each moved into the curriculum specialist role at different points in our career. Although our paths paralleled during that time, we did not regularly work together. However, we shared a bond of mutual respect and admiration, and there was a familiar comfort in visiting with her again. I believe it was due to this familiarity that Katherine felt comfortable enough to open up about the crises she was experiencing in her role as curriculum specialist. It seemed Katherine recognized this as well, even stopping at one point to tell me how much she appreciated being able to talk openly about her experiences.

The school district in which Katherine worked was a low-performing, low-socioeconomic district located in a mid-sized city. According to Katherine, the district had had mixed support from the community over the years, but the public generally held optimistic views of the district and tended to vote in favor of district initiatives. However, she highlighted major imbalances in the amount of parental and community support among individual schools in the district. Katherine witnessed the inequities first hand working in both the most affluent school in the district as well as the school with the highest needs. The change efforts and challenges she shared were relevant to all of her schools, but she claimed the impact was felt most in the school already facing much adversity.

Leading Change Through Accountability and Direction

Katherine found it difficult to identify a consistent conversation of change occurring in her schools. She said that there had been numerous mandates and changes made in the past several years as the district responded to external pressures to raise test scores and improve the district's standing on state indicators of success. Katherine blamed the "fix-it-quick" mentality that led district leaders to spend significant amounts of money on the latest programs and processes that promised increased student achievement. She said teachers were often required to implement several new initiatives in a single year with minimal training or time to prepare. Just as teachers got their bearings with those, others were introduced to cure another ill. It was not uncommon, she said, for the district to toss an initiative after a year or two, and replace it with yet another new idea. Katherine recalled a conversation with a longtime principal regarding this

issue. He told her that “when you're a failing district, you'll try every single thing there is and that's what we have here…Steven Covey, whole brain teaching, Teach Like a Pirate.”

Katherine said that the district was still implementing bits and pieces of programs adopted during the Common Core era, along with a host of new initiatives “with no improvement in test scores.” She questioned how teachers could improve their teaching when they had to exhaust such time and energy figuring out a new way to teach every year. She believed many of her colleagues felt the same way, and pointed to the staggering attrition rate of teachers and even administrators across the district which only exacerbated their problems. Katherine found this to be especially true in her “highest needs” school where more than half the staff had been at the school less than three years. Katherine admitted that it was a struggle for her to engage in meaningful work each day because teachers were disenfranchised and even contentious, and morale was at an all-time low. However, Katherine held out hope that the new assistant superintendent would provide a clearer and more consistent vision for the district. She shared several stories about the changes the assistant superintendent was working towards.

Katherine said she and the other specialists had largely been left to figure out their own work in the schools. Despite meeting monthly, Katherine found that they rarely talked about their daily work. She believed this was because none were engaged in substantive work, but were afraid to admit it to one another. This had become more obvious now that the assistant superintendent led their monthly meeting. The district leader outlined specific areas of need with the specialists, and sought their input on issues she believed were important to their work. Katherine admitted that the leader had been sharply critical of the specialist’s work to date, and that the conversations had been

uncomfortable for most of them. But, it made her feel like the district leader saw value in their role, and desired to have them play a more central role in change efforts. The assistant superintendent also asked the specialists to join the book study she led with principals and district administrators, and she began including them in her ongoing conversations with principals. “Most of the emails she sends to principals also goes to [us],” Katherine said adding that that had never happened before. “It sounds kind of funny, but it makes you feel like you're a part of the [team].”

According to Katherine, the assistant superintendent further promoted conversations of change by actively engaging with the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) across the district. In addition to attending meetings, she committed time each week to read and respond to the minutes submitted by each group. “And, it goes to the [specialists] and the principals, so everybody that is involved in that group reads it. And that’s powerful... So now the principals are picking that job up.” She noted that principals had been inconsistent, and somewhat dismissive, about ensuring quality work from the PLCs in their building. Katherine believed that the assistant superintendent's efforts to hold everyone to higher standards and to encourage more professional and productive collaboration would go a long way towards improving culture in the district.

Katherine talked at length about the changes being made by the assistant superintendent, from accountability procedures during district professional development meetings to being present in the buildings and classrooms. The district leader had also increased the amount of training teachers received, and had had “fierce conversations” with building principals. Although these changes had been unsettling for some, amid the

current climate of distrust in the district, Katherine viewed them as efforts to increase accountability and to get everyone participating in the same conversations when it came to school improvement efforts with hope that they would lead to positive changes for her work.

A Desire for a More Meaningful Role

Katherine had had a long and storied career with the district. She came to the district as a veteran teacher, and spent several more years in the classroom there before becoming a curriculum specialist. She was then hired as a school principal for a few years before transitioning back to the role of specialist. Katherine had also worked in some capacity at nine of the ten elementary schools in the district. The challenging dynamics she experienced in these roles, and her changing relationships with colleagues over the years led to a complicated identity she struggled to resolve. Katherine's stories, and her overall demeanor during my visits, signaled this distress. There was a noticeable disconnect between her current work and that which she aspired to be doing. Her stories revealed tension not only among her colleagues but also within herself. Recognizing the heaviness of her stories, Katherine prefaced some of them with what she wished were happening, or by reminding me (herself, really) that she had not always been so dispirited. Having been an avid supporter and advocate for the district throughout her time there, her connection, commitment, and sense of belonging were wearing thin as she struggled to find meaning in her work.

Katherine saw herself as a teacher of teachers, and felt most fulfilled and accomplished when her work had a positive impact on classroom practices. This was especially true with new teachers. She spoke at length about the training she and the other

specialists did with new teachers at the beginning of each year. Katherine was proud of this work, and believed it provided them with much needed support. However, she felt that it was not enough to get the teachers off to a solid start instructionally. Despite her efforts to continue engaging with new teachers throughout the school year, she found the lack of principal or district expectation limited the impact she had with them. She claimed she had been urging district leaders to improve the induction process for teachers for years, to no avail. That, coupled with veteran teachers who routinely communicated to new teachers that there was little need to work with her, left Katherine feeling doubtful about collective efforts to improve instruction. She claimed it was getting more difficult to do her work.

Katherine's identity was also stressed by an unfulfilled desire to play a larger role in school improvement efforts. Having worked as an administrator, she missed the ability to take action on needed change, and to lead efforts that had a true impact on teaching and learning in her schools. Katherine relished the chance to take the lead in these efforts. "Give me projects. Give me tasks. Give me purpose," she exclaimed as she talked about the sense of meaning she sought for her work. She shared a story about a principal who asked her to lead a monthly PLC meeting for new teachers. Katherine cherished the opportunity because it served a real purpose, and it gave her an opportunity to build relationships with teachers. It was through this desire for more: more direction, more meaning, and more involvement in work that mattered that Katherine shared about the challenges she faced.

Becoming a Core Part of the Educational Team

Katherine did not feel her work contributed in any meaningful way to the larger conversations occurring in the schools, and found that she was often left out of important work being done. Katherine believed the uncertainties surrounding her position resulted from the lack of vision or direction from building principals or district leaders. That, combined with a culture of mistrust contributed to her struggle to play a more significant role in her schools.

Katherine argued that the curriculum specialist position remained an ambiguous role in the district despite having been in existence for more than a decade. She claimed that little effort had been made to clarify the role, and that principals largely left the specialists to their own devices. Because she was in the schools just one or two days a week, neither principals nor teachers viewed her as a consistent presence or partner in their work. Katherine found that principals left her out of key communications with teachers and staff, and rarely included her in the work they were doing in the school. She believed this was a detriment to their efforts, asserting that the principal laid the groundwork for the kinds of collaboration and curriculum work he (or she) expected to occur in the school. She explained, "My last principal used to grab me and we used to do walkthroughs together. That was really powerful. We'd question each other...That [was] a good thing. It demonstrated unity to teachers that we were committed to this together." This collaboration, she said, helped them to make decisions about the issues they saw occurring in the school, and helped to ensure they were communicating a consistent message as they worked to initiate change.

Katherine believed the current climate in the district further hindered her work in the schools. Her stories highlighted a culture of mistrust that had developed from years of reform, accountability, and surveillance measures implemented by district leaders to root out bad teachers. According to Katherine,

> Teachers don't feel safe. We talk to teachers all the time that students don't learn when they're not safe. Well, teachers don't either, and that is really prevalent in this district. And, I don't know how you change it… Even principals. Just like we talk about induction with new teachers. Principals don't get any induction. You are flying by the seat of your pants. They just didn't trust my word... So, no, I didn't feel safe [as a principal] because they didn't always support me. I do think that is a serious issue… It sometimes hides and people don't see it.

She believed that her position as a district employee made it harder to forge relationships in her schools. She acknowledged that principals and teachers were likely hesitant to work with her out of fear that their faults could lead to punitive repercussions. Katherine knew this was a real threat, because she had been informed by a district administrator that one of her schools was under the radar for major changes in staff. Katherine felt vulnerable as well, and wrestled with the dilemma she faced, arguing:

> I know [site-based curriculum specialists] are not an evaluatory person, but I do think that we have to. And, I am very, very cautious about this, but at the same time my job is on the line if I have a teacher that [is not doing her job].

Despite having been with the district for fifteen years, the possibility of losing her job weighed heavily on her. She reiterated this concern as she described how she carefully documented and reported her work to ensure that nothing reflected badly on her.

Navigating the Internal Need for Fulfillment and Self-Efficacy

There was little Katherine felt she could do to change the external circumstances within which she worked, so she resigned herself to make the best with what she could do each day. However, she found the day-to-day variation and constant negotiation of her work left her with inner turmoil she had to work through. Katherine explained that she had to make decisions each day about how to spend her time based on her own convictions or belief about what was worthwhile to pursue. On the one hand, she worried about whether district leaders or her principals or even teachers would find her work to be sufficient; yet, on the other hand she rarely had much engagement with any of them anyway. Her attempts to build relationships with teachers left her doing mundane tasks and things teachers wanted to avoid doing, rather than making progress towards more meaningful engagement. She found much of her work to be of no real consequence to the daily life of the school, and struggled to find fulfillment or a sense of efficacy in that with which she occupied her time. Katherine expressed that this ongoing struggle was taking a toll on her mentally and emotionally.

Katherine did not directly link her struggle with self-efficacy to her previous work as a school principal; however, her stories indicated that her removal from the position was still a source of contention she wrestled with. Several times during our conversation she expressed regret for not standing up for herself and pressing district leaders as to their reason for asking her to resign the position. She believed she had been doing a great job in the role; however, the district removed her after only two years in the building. "I still regret that…I wish that I had gone to the superintendent and asked him...That will always be a question in my mind," she said. It seemed this lack of closure in regards to a

perceived failure further complicated her feelings of efficacy in her current position, and likely her beliefs about her standing in the district as well.

Sophie: Navigating the New

On the morning of our one and only meeting, I navigated my way across the high school campus until I reached the auditorium where Sophie had asked me to meet her. I had attended school there, and had spent the first decade of my career teaching in the district. Most district functions were held on the high school campus; so much of my life had occurred within those walls. On the way to the auditorium, I passed the classroom in which I led my very first district-wide meeting as a new curriculum specialist. I remembered being so nervous that my body trembled as I introduced myself and got the meeting started. Throughout the meeting, I struggled to quiet the voice inside my head telling me that the teachers in the room could see right through the painstakingly polished slideshow and carefully choreographed activities to the part of my soul that felt unworthy and unqualified to lead experienced educators in solving real-world issues related to our profession. I also remembered the tremendous relief I felt when teachers stopped me afterwards to ask my advice on a particular issue, invite me to their classroom, or exchange emails to continue the conversations started there. Shaking my head to clear the memories that had flooded back, I continued on to our meeting place eager to hear about Sophie's experiences in her first year in the position.

"Church!" Sophie called out as she spotted me coming down the hall. I had arrived just as a faculty meeting was getting underway. She quickly introduced me to the group of colleagues she was conversing with, and we joined them at the back of the auditorium. To my surprise, it was a required training for the upcoming state tests. Sitting

through the meeting, I wondered why Sophie had chosen to make that part of my observation. As we made our way to her office, I noticed Sophie's upbeat, outgoing demeanor began to change, and her body language communicated her apprehension as we sat down for the interview. Sophie's initial stories sounded rehearsed as she summarized her accomplishments for the year and outlined all the positive aspects of her work. She began to share more authentically as time went on; however, the change in her voice when the first teacher came in indicated she was relieved to no longer be the center of conversation. As I observed the two discussing Sophie's observations of the teachers' classroom, I noticed that both struggled to associate Sophie with her new role, They both attempted to follow the coaching script laid out in the paperwork Sophie had in hand; however, much of their conversation remained informal banter. Sophie seemed to downplay her role in an attempt to identify with the teacher, and several times she deflected directives and expectations as coming "from downtown" (where district-level administrators are located) rather than owning them as needed changes. This occurred with the other teachers she met with that morning as well. Sophie's behavior in these interactions sharply contrasted with her expressed interest to play a key role in change efforts by leading teachers in the hard task of improving teaching and learning in the school.

Several factors likely contributed to the disparity between her expressed goals and intentions and those carried out in her work with others. First, Sophie was the only high school curriculum specialist in the district, tasked with supporting teachers across all grade levels and subject areas in the school. The school had also experienced significant changes in leadership that year as two-thirds of the school's administration team was new

to the school. As school administrators busied themselves figuring out their roles in the school, Sophie was left to figure out the role for herself. Because no one in the district held her same position, she had little support navigating this new role. It was through this transitional, displaced lens that Sophie shared her experiences.

Leading Through Transition

Sophie worked in the same low-socioeconomic, low-performing school district as Katherine. According to Sophie, the district had a negative reputation which she believed hindered their ability to recruit and retain quality teachers. According to Sophie, this exacerbated the teacher attrition issues experienced over the past several years. Not only were they losing veteran teachers, but new teachers coming in were only staying a year or two before leaving. She said the conversations of change taking place that year centered on trying to manage a grossly under-experienced teaching staff while also figuring out how to boost student achievement scores on the various state indicators of success (e.g. attendance rates, academic performance, graduation rates). According to Sophie, school and district leaders were not yet on the same page as to the direction these efforts should take. She described three levels of change occurring simultaneously in the school: those initiated by the assistant superintendent, teacher-led initiatives carried over from previous years, and those she sought to initiate as she worked to carve out her role in the school. Sophie admitted the changes, "because they are coming from everywhere all at once," felt chaotic and disconnected, and she feared the pace at which the changes were being implemented would ultimately hinder their efforts to improve the learning environment for students. She added:

> [Change] is something you have to work on as a school… You have to agree it's

what you are going to do together. I think for us. What are the one or two things we are going to focus on? And, then you add to it. We can't do all of these things at once and be successful.

Sophie spoke of the efforts of the new assistant superintendent to improve educational outcomes by making the teacher evaluation process the primary instructional focus. The district leader believed this would improve instruction thereby raising student test scores. The assistant superintendent directed the building principals to be in classrooms observing instruction every day, and tasked Sophie (and the other specialists in the district) with training and supporting teachers on the key areas in which they were to be evaluated. The district leader also renewed efforts to implement a literacy program the district first adopted more than a decade ago, and was working to re-establish common planning for grade-level and subject-area teams across the district. These efforts had been implemented throughout the school year, and had already faced resistance from teachers and even administrators who had their own ideas about what should take priority. As the school's curriculum specialist, Sophie was conflicted as to which direction her work should go. She recognized that if she sided with district leaders, it would all but ensure she was ostracized from her colleagues; however, if she sided with teachers or principals, she risked repercussions from district leaders.

In the Trenches with Teachers

Sophie viewed herself as a teacher, first and foremost, and believed her role as curriculum specialist was to help teachers learn how to better meet students' learning needs. Having served as department chair for most of her twenty years in the district, helping others was a natural extension of her life in the classroom. Sophie found meaning

in sharing her knowledge and experiences with others, and valued working with others to improve aspects of teaching and learning across her content area. It was this passion for collaboration and collegiality that pushed Sophie to become the school's curriculum specialist, and she was excited to be able to focus her full attention on the work she had already been doing with teachers in her department.

Her priority in this new role was to be available to teachers, and to support their needs in the classroom, whatever that entailed. Whether it was coming in early to work on something she had promised to help with, staying late to give feedback on lesson plans, or even coming up on the weekend to cut out words for a word wall, Sophie wanted to show teachers that she was willing to do what was needed to make life easier for them in the classroom. She explained:

> I've really just tried to be available for any kind of support, even the little things like PowerSchool issues. This is how you do this. To be available not just for [teaching them literacy] strategies. To let them know that I'm not just here to push you to do this and this and this, more work… So, being just a resource and be out and be seen. Even 5:00 at night, being available if they need and really want my help.

Getting "in the trenches" and working with teachers was something Sophie felt passionate about, and she saw it as a way to build relationships and gain trust. Discussing curriculum issues with other teachers, and helping them to make more informed decisions about the curriculum they used, was one of the things Sophie enjoyed most as department chair, and she wanted to be involved in that work with other subject area teams as well. She had been working overtime to learn the state standards and become more

knowledgeable about key components of other content areas in order to gain teachers' trust and to get them to see her as a worthwhile
support.

Another part of Sophie's identity that influenced her work was her connection to the school, the district, and the town as well. She very much saw herself as a "[insert school mascot here]," (i.e. Tiger, Bulldog) and actively participated in school and community events. Her love and loyalty to the school had kept her there despite the ongoing adversity, and she found meaning in sharing its history and working to maintain its traditions as they reestablished the culture of the school. She shared with me that morale was low among veteran faculty who had shouldered the instructional burdens caused by the ongoing staff turnover. The toll had been felt throughout the school. She explained that "In some grade levels and some departments, I only have one experienced teacher and that person may or may not have taught here last year." This stress, coupled with the attrition of school and district-level administrators, meant a tremendous amount of historical knowledge had been lost. Sophie felt compelled to lead her colleagues through the transition, and to better inform school and district leaders about what had or had not worked for them in the past. She felt she had a lot of insight and wanted to inform the planning and decision making in the school.

Not the Enemy

Sophie had to contend with a number of new initiatives and expectations as she negotiated her work in the school. She expressed bewilderment and frustration about trying to build momentum for her work within the school's existing climate. She struggled to find a focus; moving from one task to another without any real sense of

accomplishment, often feeling “stuck” as she waited for direction from school or district leaders. She explained:

> [In the beginning,] I thought my priority was to help people know what procedures were there, like the word wall or lesson planning. Well, once we got settled in, it's “Okay, now on to the instructional piece.” So, when I jumped on the instructional piece, I seem to be the only pony going down that street. I can’t really look to the elementary [specialists] because they are a whole different world. They do more of the task-y stuff. Like with technology and stuff, but I see my role as more instructional.

The only thing Sophie had to go on that year was a list of tasks the previous specialist left her to finish, but those tasks were no longer relevant due to the change in administrators. Sophie had also found a district job description. but it was outdated and too vague to be helpful. Other than that, she had received little direction or support from anyone. Sophie shared that the new assistant superintendent had begun to engage with her about her work; however, their interactions had been contentious. She felt the district leader was condescending, and regularly expressed consternation about the specialists’ lack of knowledge or understanding on issues she believed were the specialists’ responsibilities. Much of the criticism expressed in their monthly specialist meetings had been directed at her, but Sophie felt blindsided because she often had no prior knowledge of the expectation before the conversation took place. This left Sophie deflated because she exhausted much energy trying to figure out her responsibilities and do meaningful work, yet was still viewed unsatisfactorily by her superior.

Another challenge Sophie faced in her role as curriculum specialist was getting experienced teachers to be good role models and mentors for the new teachers. She believed the current discord in the school had contributed to disgruntlement and complacency among veteran faculty members, which had negatively impacted the quality of classroom instruction. According to Sophie, professional development days had turned into gripe fests with no buy in or follow through on the part of teachers or administrators. She added, “It’s also been a struggle because I’m trying to send new teachers in to see good instruction or model for them. And, I’m like, “Um, we have nobody to mentor them.” The most difficult realization for Sophie was that these were her friends and longtime colleagues, but she had already experienced strains in those relationships as she tried to encourage them to rise to the occasion. Sophie struggled, both personally and professionally, with the changing dynamics of these relationships, and the inner turmoil eroded her sense of belonging. Sophie expressed her frustration:

> I'm still me. I'm still speaking for the people… I’m thinking it will ease up, but right now, I'm the enemy. Most people have not been suspicious of me, so I have been very blessed. I’ve tried to make my way in by saying, “Hey, the new teacher is struggling next door. What are they saying? Have you seen anything I can help them with? Many have been very helpful, but it's been for me personally, the hardest.

Despite the challenges she faced in carrying out her work in the school, Sophie still looked forward to more productive days ahead. She knew her colleagues were resilient, and that if they could just weather the difficulties that year, she held out faith that they could rekindle their passion and dedication for their work.

Fighting for Relevance

Sophie, however, did not have the same confidence about her own work. Differing priorities had led to differences of opinion and expectations as to what role, if any, she should play in school improvement efforts. Even into the third quarter of the year, school administrators had yet to inquire about her work with teachers, or provide direction as to her role in their efforts. The assistant superintendent had tasked Sophie with working with teachers to improve areas of concern identified on their evaluations; however, Sophie did not want her work to be associated with the teacher evaluation process, and had not yet figured out how to go about this work in a supportive rather than punitive way. Her exclusion from the bigger conversations was evidence, Sophie claimed, that she was not seen as an instructional leader, and she questioned the purpose of having the position if it was not included in the larger, more collective efforts to bring about necessary changes. Sophie expressed the psychological weight she felt by being able to see areas of needed change, and being in a position to initiate and support that change, yet having to fight to be given the platform to do so.

Sophie desperately wanted to help change the culture of her school, and to lead change efforts that would improve the school environment for teachers and students alike. She recognized that much of the turbulence experienced that year had been due to the newness of staff at all levels of the school and district, and she knew it would take time to work through “all the craziness” in order for things to begin functioning more smoothly. However, the conflict and uncertainties Sophie had experienced in the position left her questioning her ability to be successful in the role. This was especially difficult for her because she had been an accomplished and well-respected educator throughout

her career. Sophie felt the difficulties she had experienced were unnecessary, and blamed administrators for failing to communicate a unified vision for her work and for leaving her out of the important conversations of change taking place within the school. She explained:

> The last teacher trainer was part of the team. I'm not part of the admin team. At first, I was not included in any meeting. I'm like, if I'm not in the department chair meetings, when new teachers, any teacher, asks me what about this I'm like, "I have no idea what you're talking about." That's not effective. Now, I am included in the curriculum coordinator department chair meetings. I've battled [for it].

Sophie's frustrations stemmed from having to fight so hard to establish herself as a worthwhile member of the instructional team. She continued to negotiate this role because she felt compelled to make a difference for her school; however, it was evident that Sophie had started to disconnect from her work and from the school itself. In talking about the kind of changes she still hoped to make, she ended the conversation with, "If I'm still here next year, that will be my focus." I asked her what she meant by this, and she replied, "I don't know. I'm gonna work it out. I feel like I've done a good job, but… I don't want to be seen as the enemy." She went on to question whether or not she was living up to expectations, and said that she was keeping her options open so that she could make the best decision for herself if she had to go "back into the classroom."

Tracing the Intersections

In concluding this chapter, I sum up three recurring themes that intersect throughout participants' stories. These storylines weaved, bumped, and at times diverged during our conversations; differing somewhat between the specialists' unique experiences

and perspectives, but also within the stories told by individual participants as they sought to make sense of their complicated entanglements in the school(s). These themes will be extended in chapter five, but it is important to trace these intersections from the participants' perspectives before doing so.

Supporting Teachers in Conversations of Change

The participants in this study all held to the belief that the role of the site-based curriculum specialist is to support teachers in their efforts to provide effective instruction in their classrooms. All had been classroom teachers for many years prior to taking on the role, all still identified as teachers, and all indicated that supporting teachers was a top priority for them as curriculum specialist. However, participants' stories revealed that each had their own understanding of what it meant to support teachers, and that influenced how they approached their work.

Some of the specialists privileged their relationships with teachers or teachers' agency and autonomy over the school or districts' change goals in their work with teachers. The specialist's loyalty to and desire to identify with teachers caused the specialist to assume a more consultative approach to her work with teachers rather than one that actively sought to affect change. Despite Leona's professed commitment to the school's change efforts, she held firm to her belief that district leaders intended for her (position) to be an encourager and supporter, rather than an evaluator, of teachers' efforts to carry out their responsibilities related to the change mandates. As such, she yielded to the teacher's wishes (e.g. to not engage with her, to not participate in the change efforts) and "bit [her] tongue" to keep from over asserting her opinions or being too critical in her interactions with teachers. She instead sought to reaffirm their feelings, make suggestions

rather than declarations, and otherwise wait for teachers to include her in their work. Sophie, too, had a difficult time transitioning her collegial relationships with her peers to assert herself as a critical observer or advisor. She spoke with great distress about wanting to be accepted and included by her colleagues as she had always been before. She believed those relationships needed to be in place before she could get teachers onboard with changing their curriculum or instruction. Both Sophie and Leona struggled with amalgamating the need and desire to identify with teachers and to respect their autonomy and agency, while also encouraging introspection and critique as a means to advance teachers' instructional and pedagogical capacities. Their passive, uncritical engagement with teachers limited the impact both had on the conversations of change occurring in their schools.

Others, however, viewed their support of teachers' work in a different light. Student learning was the primary impetus and focus for Norrine, Julie, and Lauren, and all three believed their primary responsibility was to provide teachers with both the knowledge base and the means to improve their instruction and felt an urgency to do so. The three were unapologetic in their efforts to get teachers to implement best practices to meet students' learning needs. While the three spoke of their commitment to support teachers, held teachers in high esteem, and acknowledged that teachers could choose whether or not to work with them, they also were not afraid to cast a discerning eye and provide the necessary feedback to move teachers toward more effective teaching practices. This willingness to position themselves as expositor, and to engage with teachers in hard conversations, enabled them to play a central role in their schools' conversations of change. The conversations and interactions I observed indicated that

teachers viewed each of them as instructional leaders, and readily sought out their advice on curriculum matters; however, the privileging of student learning, and of change efforts in general, over teachers' interests and priorities for their own classrooms can also have unintended consequences and undermine change efforts as well.

Exploring participants' stories about their work with teachers indicates that the specialist's understanding about what it means to support teachers impacts how they carry out their work in the school. Some view themselves as allies, offering moral support, helping to alleviate the stress or demands of teachers' work, or prioritizing teachers' professional interests or needs. While others see themselves as change agents, seeking to improve the educative process for students, increasing teachers' instructional capacities, or implementing changes imposed by school or district leaders. Others find themselves somewhere between these two spectrums, or find themselves holding conflicting views simultaneously as does Katherine. Her stories revealed her desire to provide support she believed teachers needed. She pushed back against attempts by district leaders to use the specialists' work in punitive ways, but still struggled to approach her work with teachers in ways that were not punitive or authoritative in nature. Each of these approaches (i.e. teacher-oriented, change-oriented) has implications on the conversations of change occurring within the school, so it is important for the specialist and school and district leaders to establish expectations and to maintain open communication while leading changes efforts.

Navigating the Undefined

Another point of intersection in participants' stories was the vagueness of the obligations and expectations for their work, and often the complete lack thereof.

Participants by and large found that the job description for their position was not readily accessible, only partially correct, outdated, or no longer relevant to the current work being done in the school. For some participants, the obscurity of the position was further compounded by the principals' or district leaders' lack of understanding or direction for the role. Several participants struggled to explain their role, and some were apprehensive about sharing the details of their daily work because they felt it may not be deemed sufficient by their superiors or commensurate with the work the other participants were doing in their schools. Although participants recalled their initial excitement about having flexibility in their daily routines and looked forward to having the ability to determine the work they did each day, many of them soon realized that finding meaningful work and engaging with teachers on a daily basis was much more difficult than they had expected. As a result, participants experienced varying levels of support and success in carving out their own space/work in the school.

Julie and Norrine had both adapted well to the initial uncertainties they experienced in their work. Julie credited the culture her principals had built as the reason she was able to move into the role and establish her work so quickly in her first year back in the position. Her stories highlighted the effort she had put into mapping out her school year and building monthly and weekly schedules, with feedback from her principals, that ensured her daily work was leading to the larger goals she and her principals had set for the school year. Norrine had also found a focus for her work, and had built her daily schedule around revising the math curriculum, ensuring implementation and continuity across the district, and refining the assessment and placement process for students. It seemed her tenacity and her commitment to the field was the driving force behind her

ability to gain momentum for her work. She explained that she was heavily involved in all of her schools, and had no problem filling her day with the important work she was during therein.

However, that was not the case for Sophie and Lauren, who as new specialists found the lack of clearly defined roles and expectations to be overwhelming and at times distressing. Lauren faced unique challenges in leading teachers in the opening of a new school and struggled to gauge the effectiveness or the appropriateness of her work. Sophie also had to contend with a new administrative team and a large number of new and new-to-the-district teachers, and remained unsure as to what her role needed to be in the transition. Both desired more structure and direction for figuring out their roles; however, the uncertainty of their work had differing effects on each of them. Lauren, who otherwise felt supported by her principals and fellow specialists, remained optimistic about the likelihood of charting her own path forward; however, Sophie, who lacked that support and even faced criticism from the assistant superintendent, doubted her ability to be successful in the role despite her desire and determination to make it work.

Katherine, too, felt the lack of direction and support for her work hindered her ability to engage in the conversations of change taking place in her buildings. There had been little expectation for teachers to work with her, and there were even indications that principals dismissed the importance of working with her in their communications with teachers. She believed the continued indifference shown by school and district leaders towards the position in previous years had sent the same message to teachers as very few reached out to her on a regular basis. It seemed as though Katherine had accepted her fate, and now focused her attention on doing enough to keep her documentation log filled

without greater effort to make a space for her work in the daily life of her schools. Leona, too, seemed to have given in to the ease of busying herself in her office rather than earnestly seeking entry into teachers' lives/classrooms.

The lack of clear guidelines and parameters for the curriculum specialists work no doubt increases the difficulty one has in playing an active role in conversations of change. The perplexity often leaves teachers guessing, perhaps even doubting, how the curriculum specialist fits into their work or the impact she can have on change efforts. Likewise, with little oversight or expectations for her work, it is often too easy for the specialist to disengage from the hard task of affecting change in her daily work. However, being a supporter of teachers comes with an ethical responsibility to engage, and to search for pathways through sites of resistance contestation, or indifference in order to play a meaningful role in the school.

Rethinking the Notion of Change

In this study, I positioned the efforts to improve educative processes and outcomes in a school or district as *curriculum conversations of change* to highlight the temporal and fluid nature of change, and to acknowledge that this work is an ongoing negotiation between school and district leaders, teachers, students, and other invested stakeholders, whether or not it is seen as such by those involved. Positioning the processes of change in this way recognizes that change is inevitable, continuous, at times unpredictable, and that it may or may not always be productive. For this reason, it was important to frame participants' stories within the conversations of change unfolding in their schools in order to understand the motivations or impetus that drives the change,

how the change is understood within the local context, and how those efforts are acted out among the various levels of implementation.

The conversations of change participants' highlighted in their stories most often centered on change mandates that came from the top - that is from district leaders or somewhere further up in the hierarchy of school governance - down to be carried out by principals and teachers in individual schools. For Katherine's and Sophie's schools, these efforts were motivated by the need to improve test scores or the school's overall performance standings. For the others, it was motivated by the desire to maintain their high standing, standards, and reputation. This was evident by the recurring use of the phrase, "the [district's] way," to indicate the correctness, superiority – or that which sets them apart/above other districts – in the way they do things. This motivation was further confirmed by Julie's recounting her principal's reaction to receiving a lower test score than their counterpart, and Norrine's insistence that teaching the right way results in good test scores which she believes is the reason her district is held in high esteem around the state.

However, regardless of the motivation behind these mandates, participants' stories indicated that these top-down directives met with much resistance from teachers and principals, and sometimes by the specialists themselves. Katherine asserted this was because the change efforts do not account for the individual contexts and unique challenges schools face. Sophie contended that repeated calls to increase test scores and improve the graduation rate, and the added demands that occurred as a result, ignored the underlying issues of teacher attrition and an inexperienced teaching staff, among other factors that already contributed to the initial failures. The ongoing pressures (and threats

of punitive repercussion) led to push back from teachers and even principals who saw the expectations or requirements as unrealistic and out of touch with the school's more pressing needs. Katherine and Sophie both attributed the ongoing struggles and failures in their schools to the overemphasis on test scores rather than teacher development or other more pertinent aspects of the school culture. Teachers in the other district also seemed much more resistant to mandates coming from the top. Leona's teachers continued to resist efforts to standardize their teaching and the assessment of their students three years into the process, and Norrine's teachers appeared to be pushing back against those efforts as well.

Participants' stories indicate that an outgrowth of the move to standardize teaching and ensure student preparedness to perform is the emphasis on implementing best practices. Most of the participants used the term "best practices" to describe the things teachers should be doing – and that which specialists and administrators wanted to see - in their classrooms to improve student learning. Norrine retorted "Well, that's best practice" when a teacher reported back to her on something she had tried in the classroom. Lauren used the term to explain that her and her principals' expectations of teacher's work "always comes back to best practices" which is "what's best for kids." Julie, too, asserted they "teach best practice because that's what grows students as learners." However, none of the participants clearly delineated what those practices were. In reviewing participants' stories, it remained unclear to me as to the specific practices they considered to be best, and it seemed at times to serve as a sort of stamp of approval to accept or reject practices that did not align with the specialist's perception of good teaching. At one point, Lauren referred to the district's "framework and our non-

negotiables" as the best practices expected of teachers, and her stories suggested that teachers had internalized this understanding, often reporting others who were doing things they felt did not align with "the [school district's] way." Used in such a way, it is easy to see how ambiguous the phrase must be for teachers when trying to gauge the suitability of their decisions, actions, or behaviors in the classroom. The term seems to serve more to regulate teachers' behaviors based on a vague set of norms or what another considers to be good teaching rather than as a means to improve their instructional and pedagogical capacities or gauge their professional growth.

Another intersection worth noting is that the conversations of change highlighted in this study position teachers as mere receivers of and laborers in carrying out perfunctorily constructed plans of reform, even though it is contradictory to participants' intention to be loyal to teachers. Teachers' voices – their commitment, concerns, ideas, professional acumen, and understandings - were largely absent from participants' stories and were virtually nonexistent in my observations of participants' work. What I witnessed was passive acceptance and compliance with externally imposed mandates. This was evidenced in the lack of participation in Norrine's meeting with teachers on the creation of common formative assessments related to the district's math continua. Several of the teachers were no shows, and those who were in attendance said very little and agreed to whatever it was Norrine was asking them to do. However, it was clear from their demeanor that very few were actively invested in the work. This was the case with most of the meetings I observed between participants and teachers. Teachers either remained quiet throughout the meeting(s) or spoke in accordance with what was being discussed. I observed very little disagreement, debate, or sustained dialogue around issues

of change in participants' work with teachers. Leona attributed this to a "just tell me what you what me to do " mentality in which teachers just wanted to do what needed to be done to avoid unnecessary attention from administrators while also engaging as little as possible in the change efforts. She recognized that the work they were doing would never lead to improvement in their teaching or in student learning outcomes, but was unsure of how to get them to see the benefits of such work.

In sum, participants' stories suggest that change can be far more productive, and more sustainable, when it includes teachers in the process. Engaging teachers in these efforts is less about getting them to see the benefits of proposed changes, and more about involving them in the process of determining the needed change, and seeking their active participation in planning, implementing, and assessing the impact of the change efforts. Fruitful change cannot be done apart from teachers, as they are the conduit through which that change occurs. Certainly, teachers' resistance is not so much against curriculum specialists *per se* but against the system of standardization that does not respect their expertise. Although not always readily apparent, there were traces of these understandings of teachers' important roles in participants' stories. Norrine reiterated her desire and efforts to get teachers' input and participation in refining the district math continua. Although the project appeared to originate from her own ambition to streamline instruction and increase the rigor of learning across the district, it held potential for providing teachers a space to engage in ongoing deliberation about the curriculum if Norrine could relinquish control of the outcomes and make room for other paths to emerge.

Additionally, Julie's focus on teachers' professional growth holds great potential for positively impacting educative processes in her school if that space is left open for teachers to determine what that growth should be and what it should look like for them and their students. Leona's emphasis on relationships could also prove fruitful if she can learn how to engage with teachers in more constructive ways. There was clearly a breakdown in the change efforts as they were, but refusing to acknowledge the disjuncture will likely further strain those relations. Influencing change is good, but forcing change or dictating what that change is/looks like undermines the effort. Currently, teachers seem to be doing more complying and operating within the constraints of the school environment/culture, but how much more might teachers participate and the possibilities for authentic engagement and creativity multiply if those boundaries were opened up to allow teachers the freedom to explore based on their own professional curiosities and interests.

CHAPTER V

TOWARDS A THIRD SPACE IN THE CONVERSATIONS OF CHANGE

In chapter four, I analyzed participant's stories as they made sense of their work in the school through the stories they shared. I discussed the curriculum conversations of change occurring in the school, how the participant (as curriculum specialist) positioned herself within those change efforts, the challenges she faced in carrying out this work, as well as instances of negotiation in the stories she told. For the most part, participant's stories confirmed the research in the field that these specialists: (1) can have a positive impact on the teaching and learning in the schools (Olson Bell, 2016); (2) face ongoing challenges that hinder their work (Cutrer, 2016; Wilder, 2013); (3) are uniquely positioned to offer both teachers and administrators support in growing their instructional capacities (Chawla, 2016; Crowell, 2015); (4) need to be supported and have a sense of belonging in order to sustain her professional identity in such a tumultuous role (Lancaster, 2016).

In this chapter, I searched for moments of third space negotiation in participants' stories, and used the lens of the third space to problematize predisposed ways of thinking, acting, and relating, both within the position and among the stakeholders upon which these specialists depend for the successful functioning of their role and negotiation of their identities. Clearly, from the stories told in Chapter 4, participants do not often

situate their work in a third space, although all but one readily made connections to how third space relates to their work. The specialists, however, are constrained by internal and external expectations to adhere to the school or the district's vision for change which hinders their ability to think or act outside that scope.

However, there are moments of negotiations in their experiences that I want to highlight in this chapter to shed a light on how these participants' efforts to engage in curriculum conversations of change in their daily practices can open up a third space of hybrid possibilities. I explore moments of identity (re)negotiation and differences as borders and border crossing to imagine transformative possibilities for teaching and learning through finding a third way. The contemplation shared here consists of both what was said, and what was left unsaid, in participant's stories, as well as my interpretation of their work as it relates to key tenets of third space theory. As expected, not all participants readily shared stories of their struggles. Several participants expressly communicated their hesitancy to reveal these details about their work, and despite my urging, shared only carefully constructed, or obscured responses to my inquiries. It was between the layers of their stories and observed experiences, what Bhabha (1994) sees as the point of translation, where these spaces were more clearly illuminated. My second layer of reading of participants' stories works beyond words to make connections through contexts and situations, informed by my own experiences working as a curriculum specialist.

It is important to note here that my interpretations of participant's stories are a layered and subjective undertaking that risks neglecting participants' agency and ways of knowing and relating to themselves and the work they do in the school. Aoki (2004)

warns of a reductionism that occurs in educational research, that "in order to arrive at these generalizations and idealizations, the uniqueness and messiness of any lived situations tend to be reduced out" (p. 17). However, Serres (1991/2006) envisages the patching together of these bits and pieces as the point of articulation in which one begins to make sense of the brilliantly crafted, yet always shadowy Otherness. I remain ever aware of my privilege as the researcher and the impact of my own lens; however, this is a risk worth taking in order to expand the conversation on the role of the curriculum specialist to realize a more organic notion of curriculum change.

The (Re)Negotiation of Identity

Like a traveler, emboldened by the security of home and a longing to experience other worlds, a teacher leaves the safety of her classroom to embark on a new adventure exploring unknown landscapes. Just as new sights, sounds, and experiences breathe life into the wanderer's soul drawing her to distant lands, the teacher imagines the possibilities lying ahead of her in her new role as (site-based) curriculum specialist. She envisions this work, sharing her love for students, for the curriculum, and for the profession with others. The hope of making a real difference in students and her colleagues lives propels her into this new world with great optimism. Credulous and assured in her mission, she ventures forth. Determined. Impossibly unaware of the rupture of self she will soon experience. As the neophyte traveler struggles to gain her bearings amid rush hour traffic in a foreign transport terminal, the new curriculum specialist finds herself standing in the empty hallway on the first day of school struggling to merge her past life with her present reality. The energetic pulse of life reverberating from behind classroom doors, reminds her of the lost connections to students of her own,

and to a part of herself, as teacher. Grief envelopes her. Immobile, she wrestles with an unyielding pull towards the familiar dance of the classroom and the whisper of freedom luring her to explore paths once obscured by the constraints of teaching. A crossroad. One, that opens up new realms of possibilities while threatening to erase an essential part of her very being. Moving forward requires a reorientation of self as she works to position herself in the new landscapes she encounters.

Participants in this study recounted similar experiences in their first days as a curriculum specialist. Each talked about the rupture of identity and the range of emotions experienced in the transition to the role. Shifting her perspective from teacher to embracing her new identity as curriculum specialist, while simultaneously navigating the expectations of others in this new space, was a significant and somewhat turbulent undertaking for each of them. Reading participants' stories through third space notions of displacement, difference, and negotiation is helpful for understanding how the loss of (a sense of) home and feelings of estrangement and even exile impact the curriculum specialist's identity and her engagement in her work. I will discuss the role subjectivity plays in the specialist's interactions and negotiations with others, the generative tensionality of dwelling in an unbalanced existence in the school's hierarchy, and how curiosity and vulnerability can lead to personal and professional growth and new ways of engaging with others in curriculum work.

Homelessness: Becoming displaced

The loss of (a sense of) home and the displacement that followed was a common theme in participants' stories. Leona and Norrine both spoke of missing the connections they had with students and the fulfillment they received from being in the classroom.

Julie recalled the grief she felt missing out on the small moments and nuances teachers share in their day-to-day interactions with students and with each other. The other participants also described the sudden shift they felt in the dynamics and relationships with their colleagues as each became ever more aware that she was no longer "one of them," even though each insisted and still desired to be seen as a teacher. However, participants' stories indicated these feelings were further intensified by a changing identity and sense of self that no longer fit neatly into the teacher role either. Lauren saw the move to curriculum specialist as a natural next step to becoming an administrator, and she found herself viewing and contemplating things from that perspective as well. Julie and Norrine, who both moved into the position because they believed they were the person best suited to fill the role in their schools, also saw themselves as and desired to be something more than a teacher. Interestingly though, the unfamiliarity and uncertainty of the new position had each of the participants contemplating a return home, back to the classroom, as memories of her life there brought a comfort and familiarity that was missing in their new role.

Caught between these two worlds, that of teacher and of curriculum specialist, participants recalled the ambivalence and disconnection they felt as they worked to orient themselves and their changing subjectivity to the shifting dynamics of their new social world. For Bhabha (1994), this *unhomely*-ness occurs from the decentering, or splintering of the self, one feels in becoming displaced. O'Loughlin (2010) and Simonis (2012) describe this loss of connection to an existential home or place as a *homelessness,* and find that it has real implications on one's ability to (re)integrate into their new world as well as their old. Simonis (2012) used Etoroma's (2006) definition of home to inform her

understanding of the impact the sense of home and belonging has on an individual's identity (re)formation. According to Etoroma (2006),

> Home is a physical or nonphysical place or situation with which one identifies and where one is and feels unconditionally accepted. […] Rapport and Dawson (1998: 9-10) state that 'One is at home when one inhabits a cognitive environment in which one can undertake the routines of daily life and through which one finds one's identity best mediated' (as quoted in Simonis, 2012, p. 16).

From this sense, then, one might see how the classroom becomes a home for teachers as they spend a significant portion of their time and energy devoted to the life that occurs within those walls. Sandstead (2015/2016) finds that when "We teachers are in our own classrooms, we can be whoever we want to be…We invent ourselves as we envision and build the environment we want for our students" (p. 78). In the classroom, the teacher becomes the master craftsman and orator of a carefully constructed and choreographed world. Her identity as teacher and her connections to her classroom often become parts of her very being. The success, comfort, and security one feels in that space often serves as the catalyst for expanding her professional reach beyond the walls of her classroom; however, as the opening vignette portends, few anticipate the effects the loss of that home can have on one's identity moving into the curriculum specialist role.

Estrangement and Exile

The loss of a sense of home, of one's identity, or a sense of direction or control of one's work can lead to estrangement, even exile, from oneself and one's colleagues in the school. Sophie, in her first year as a curriculum specialist, found that she no longer recognized herself in her current work. The loss of her standing and sense of belonging

and community in the school, her inability to resolve the tension with her colleagues, the criticism of her work by a district administrator, and the real and perceived shortcomings she identified in her work, all left Sophie struggling to come to terms with this new self/reality. “That’s not me! …I’m not liking this,” she retorted, both chiding and defending herself as she talked through the difficulties she had had. It was clear that a schism had formed in her identity, undermining her confidence and causing her to question and want to withdraw from her work and from the social dynamics of the school.

Katherine’s stories and her demeanor during our time together also signaled an estrangement from/within herself. The tension and uneasiness in her voice and in her body language, the questioning of herself (and me) throughout our conversation, and the telling of stories about a past self and past reality that positioned her differently than that which was occurring in the present revealed a “compulsive retrospection,” in which she sought to come to terms with herself and her work in this current moment (Aciman, 1999, as cited in O’Loughlin, 2010). Aciman (1999) found that the exile, in working through the pain and deceit of their exilement, “with their memories perpetually on overload,” becomes doubled (In O’Loughlin, 2010, p.147). That is, they come to see that everything has two sides or two faces, and they are always looking to account for that which may be hidden, missed or excluded before.

The contradictions that surfaced in Katherine’s stories signaled a doubled sense of existence in which who she saw herself to be and her expressed desires and intentions for her work differed from who she had come to be in the present moment as a result of the ongoing mistreatment and conflict she felt in her work. At times, she spoke about being a

supporter of teachers, desiring to gain their trust, and feeling compelled to protect information that could be used punitively against them even going so far as criticizing district administrators who sought to use the specialist's work in this way. However, she also recounted instances in which she acted in opposition to this belief, willfully documenting this information and providing it to administrators in an effort to "cover [her] own behind." Katherine further expressed her desire to work with teachers in more meaningful ways, yet missed an opportunity to engage with them during a meeting in which the principal left early. Choosing instead to busy herself on her laptop rather than engage with the teachers, who talked amongst themselves for the remainder of the meeting. This disconnect signaled that Katherine was struggling to reconcile her past identity with her changing subjectivity in the present moment.

Displacement can also lead to estrangement from one's colleagues. Like Leona, many new curriculum specialists are relieved to be freed from the constraints of teaching: the cognitive load of managing students, lesson planning, and grading student work, and perhaps even burnout from over exerting oneself mentally and emotionally. And, as Lauren's and Norrine's stories indicated, specialists often look forward to carving out their own path in the school by exploring areas of interest or gaining expertise on their own terms. This can lead to self-estrangement, be it an intentional or consequential distancing, from teaching, classroom life, or others as she focuses on new areas of exploration or growth, or perhaps seeks to establish herself as something more than a teacher. This separation can provide the specialist the space needed to come to see herself and her work in a new light. It can also enable her to gain new perspectives and insight to bring to the conversations of change.

Each participant shared stories about different approaches or theories they had been learning about or discovered, and each spoke energetically and optimistically about the potential these new understandings had for improving teaching and learning in the school. Participants were eager to share this knowledge with teachers, but found that her efforts were not always well received by those with whom she worked. This can cause or further compound feelings of estrangement when her enthusiasm for her work is not reciprocated by teachers. Despite initial naivety about working with teachers in close and mutually-fulfilling ways, participants found that their efforts to engage with teachers were often rebuffed due to feelings of jealousy or resentment towards their new role, skepticism about her ability to help or support teachers' work, or suspicion of her intent for their work. This estrangement, both within herself and with her peers, has significant implications on the specialist's identity and engagement in her work, and can lead to permanent exile (both personally and socially) if not successfully negotiated.

Negotiating at the Margins

Many specialists find themselves pushed to the margins of the teacher realm as she or her peers dissociate her from that role. No longer part of the teacher world, she often also finds that she cannot fully immerse herself in the administrative realm either as she holds no authoritative power and is still classified (and seen) as a teacher from an administrative perspective. Alone, caught between these two worlds without a place to belong, the differences, tensions, and contradictions one experiences in the role are further amplified by what Spitzer (1989) calls "the predicament of marginality" (as cited in O'Loughlin, 2010) in which the path she chooses in any given context is ripe with possibilities as well as potential downfalls. The curriculum specialist, living at the

margins, is caught in a delicate and fluid posture in which she can never be too comfortable, confident, or complacent in her work with others as the line is thin between acceptance or expulsion from either realm.

The precariousness of this unbalanced existence can be quite challenging for the curriculum specialist who finds she is unable to grasp too tightly to any one way of thinking (i.e. doing, behaving, becoming). Both Sophie's and Lauren's stories highlight their struggles, as new curriculum specialists, to determine what they were to prioritize and the direction their work should take. Sophie felt she had to walk a fine line with teachers and school leaders or risk them shutting her out of conversations altogether, but she also faced criticism and potential repercussions from the assistant superintendent for her lack of progress or accomplishment in the position. Lauren also felt unsettled in her work with teachers as she sought to define her role in the school through the work she did each day, while ensuring teachers adhered to district expectations and at the same time working to build collegiality and community among teachers. At times, Sophie and Lauren were perplexed by the difficulties or uncertainties they encountered while making their best efforts to negotiate and find openings with multiple parties in their everyday practices. Sophie continued to believe in herself and in her abilities to lead teachers through the changes they were experiencing. She recognized that even though her relationships with her colleagues had changed, she could still find new ways to reach out and engage with them in meaningful ways.

Katherine, too, found herself struggling from the margins in her schools, and also felt alienated from the other curriculum specialists in her district. The other specialists had garnered approval to document their work with teachers through videos and other

anecdotal records which had then become an expectation for all specialists; however, Katherine opposed these changes because of the potential ramifications it could have for teachers. She felt that her objections cast her in a negative light with her peers, and she felt ostracized from the group. Although she was greatly distressed by the ongoing difficulties with her colleagues, there were moments in her stories where she imagined herself, her reactions and her interactions with others differently than she had before. In telling a story about being excluded by her colleagues, she recalled that a district leader had once told her she was an introvert. She lingered briefly to consider this realization further before moving on to contemplate how she might approach their conversations differently next time in order to find common ground. She reiterated that she had a wealth of knowledge and experience that could benefit the others, and she expressed hope in that moment about the possibility of engaging with her colleagues in more productive ways.

As their stories indicated, feelings of displacement and estrangement can be troubling for the curriculum specialist. These feelings threatened to erode both Sophie's and Katherine's sense of self, identities as educators, and even their commitment to the role. However, living at the margins can also provide the specialist with a unique vantage point. Wang (2006) contends that "the alien gives up the privilege of both worlds, but has a unique opportunity to see two landscapes simultaneously" (p. 112). Both Sophie and Katherine seemed to wrestle with this doubled vision as each struggled to merge her understanding of the ongoing change efforts from both the administrative perspective as well as the teacher perspective. As an alien, outsider, or third perspective within the teacher-administrator binary, the specialist has the potential to use these new insights and understandings to move conversations of change forward if she can learn to use the

tensions, ambiguities, and differences she encounters to initiate a third space of mutual collaboration with others.

Subjectivity at Play: Dwelling in the Unbalanced

To understand the complexity of engaging with others through difference, it is helpful to understand how the individual's internal landscape shifts and changes as they interact with the external world. According to Pinar (2016), everything we experience is subjectively situated by the uniqueness of our singular selves in social and cultural contexts. One interprets their surroundings through an "I" lens in which our past, present, and perceived future selves connect (or disconnect) with others based on the meaning we make of the world. This means that everything we encounter is filtered through our past experiences, our positionality, and even our intentions in a given context. This, in turn, determines how we (inter)act and engage in our daily lives.

Aoki (2004), too, highlights the subjective filter through which we interpret experiences and give meaning to the outside world. He explains:

> You are situated with yourself as center and that central point is your "I." You are experiencing life as you are now living it in your common-sense conferencing way, defining it by giving your own meaning to things, people, and events about you. You, too, are continuously involved in meaning-giving activities as you construct your own personal world of meanings. The structure of these meanings is your present reality (p.103).

Aoki contends the other person involved in the exchange participates within their own "I" vantage point. Each making meaning in their own way, and each seeking to influence others through a dialectical relationship. Our willingness or ability to embrace and

understand the other person is often complicated by our own internal struggles to deal with antagonistic perspectives we encounter. However, in privileging one's own ways of knowing/being, the other's is often subordinated, disregarded, or excluded, and that is how the binary of self versus others is created. Going beyond such a binary, the mutuality of subjective and intersubjective relationships can create a space in which the self and the other inform and enrich each other. Subjectivity is situated in such a space to claim the self's capacity to negotiate and create in knowing, being, and relating.

This interactive space is skewed toward one direction in Norrine's efforts to create a district math continuum, standardizing teaching across the district and also in her preoccupation with ensuring teachers (or students) do not compromise the curriculum. Positioning and privileging her role as expert, Norrine tended to seek others input and participation only to the extent that it aligned with her understanding and beliefs about what good mathematics entailed. She positioned her ways of knowing and doing math as that which "everyone in the math field knows" is good math, and any other belief or understanding was something to contend with and overcome. This sentiment also held true in Lauren's efforts to quell teacher behaviors or dispositions she believed did not conform to "the [District's] way." Teachers' participation in those conversations were limited to the extent they agreed with her interpretation of what that way is or should be.

Positioning oneself occurs naturally, some would argue subconsciously, as one gains confidence and experience in their work, but it can also occur in an effort to set oneself apart from others. Advancing one's own ideas and keeping oneself distant and distinct from others allows for self-preservation, self-assurance, and an orientation to a stable identity from which to view the world and the self within the world. This is

particularly true for curriculum specialists who are tasked with leading teachers in change efforts. One's success often hinges on their ability to prove themselves to be knowledgeable, capable, and worthy of leading such work. Lauren felt the pressure to do just that as she sought to carve out and define a distinct role for her work in the school, and Norrine felt compelled to improve educational outcomes for the betterment of students. However, one must be mindful of the ways in which she goes about this work as it is her willingness to make room for others' perspectives in the conversation that creates the possibility for meeting another in a third space of creative engagement. It is through expanding the subjective space of internal resilience to incorporate differences that curriculum specialists can play with the limits to open new potentiality.

Contending with the Power Dynamics of the Superior/Subordinate Binary

The fluidity and complexity of subjectivity is intricately related to power relationships that the curriculum specialist contends with in her work. Aoki (1979) posits an individual "as a thinking and willing being within the immediate spheres of his experience and as a social actor involved in interchanges with others in face-to-face relations" (p. 8). These two parts of one's subjectivity are not always in sync which results in a doubled perspective or existence. A conflicting double surfaced in Leona's stories that sheds light on the difficulties curriculum specialists face in negotiating competing perspectives in her work. Leona appeared to wrestle with where her work fit into the teacher-administrator binary, or more particularly, the power dynamics of the superior/subordinate hierarchy in the school. Leona talked about her building principals forty-nine times in the stories she shared. Here are a few examples: "So when I got this position, the principal said…" "My high school principal is…," "The principal here had

us do a survey." However, she used the term "evaluator" when talking about the principal's position in relation to teachers, or about the position in relation to her work with teachers. For example, "[Group meetings] led by their evaluators," "something I really need to talk to your evaluator about...then I'll go talk to the evaluator," "So, in three years, they have had three different evaluators." In total, she used the term "principal" or "administrator" nineteen times in relation to the position itself or her work with the person in that position, and used the term "evaluator" twenty times in regards to the principals work with teachers or to the principal's role in her work with teachers.

The delineation in her use of the terms suggested that Leona held competing viewpoints about herself and her work within the superior/subordinate power dynamics in the school hierarchy. She seemed to view her work and her interactions with the principal(s) as different from that of the principal-teacher relationship, and as separate from her work with teachers. Her stories suggested that she viewed herself as an ally and source of support to the principal, and also as an objective party operating outside of (but in relation to) the hierarchy of the school. She positioned herself as more knowledgeable than the principal on certain aspects of the change efforts, and as above or beyond the realm of the principal in regards to her work with teachers. She stated several times during our time together that the principals were not over her, or that they could not mandate her work if she was not comfortable with it. However, Leona clearly positioned principals and teachers in a superior/subordinate dynamic with the principal's role in the school as that of evaluator and enforcer, and the teacher's role as meeting the principal's demands. She viewed her roles in this dynamic as helping to inform the principal's decision-making, and helping teachers to "comply with what their evaluator expected

them to do." However, she discussed several instances where she avoided meetings or interactions where she could be perceived as dictating to teachers what needed to be done or evaluating if they had done it. This conflicting double, in which she identified as an autonomous supporter (i.e. cheerleader, encourager) of the work teachers do in the classroom, yet centers her interactions with teachers on the expectations of their evaluator, highlights Leona's struggle to locate herself and her work within the traditional hierarchy of the school.

This doubled perspective is common for curriculum specialists, although often repressed and unexplored. Who determines the work she does? To whom is she accountable and in what ways? What authority does she have in this work? Each of the specialists shared stories highlighting tensions related to their positioning in relation to the superior/subordinate binary in the school. Some struggled with being perceived as - or accused of being - a superior (i.e. evaluator), others struggled with not knowing who their superior was (or should be), while all of the specialists dealt with how much power and authority to exert (or relinquish) in developing working relationships with those at various levels of the school's hierarchy. The specialists further struggled with whose authority - including district-level administrators, principals, the specialists, teachers, or even parents/students - takes precedence in particular situations. For the specialist, her subjective balancing of the self and the other in her work, whether conscious or not, and the unsettled fluidity of her role in the school can limit or expand the possibility of bringing others into a third space depending upon how she negotiates these dynamics in her work.

Dwelling in the Unbalanced

Participants' stories suggest that the curriculum specialist's work is inescapably situated in complicated conversations with others. However implemented, the role serves to improve teaching and learning within the school which carries with it an undercurrent of surveillance and reform for both teachers and principals alike. As a result, the specialist finds herself perpetually positioned, displaced, and repositioned in ongoing negotiations with her colleagues: never quite sure how one perceives of her or her work, and never quite sure how to perceive or approach this work herself. This precarity was front and center in the stories told by Sophie and Katherine was an unacknowledged undercurrent in Leona's stories, and was something Norrine touched on in discussing the initial insecurities she felt due to the lack of feedback or affirmation from teachers or administrators. This subjective uncertainty and unbalance can be difficult for the curriculum specialist to deal with, but it is necessary to dwell in the unbalance if she is to find pathways to sustain her work productively, as Aoki (2004) suggests dwelling as the mode of making connections and seeking the third.

Their stories indicated that the fixity of positioning oneself amidst the flux – as enforcer, cheerleader, or even skeptic – can limit the possibility for creative engagement with others, and that non-positioning (e.g. refusal to take a stance or engage in the conversation altogether) can be equally disruptive or stagnating. Serres (1991/2006) finds that creative possibilities flow "from a deviation of equilibrium that throws or launches position outside of itself, toward disequilibrium, which keeps it from resting, that is, from achieving a precarious balance" (p. 12). In a sense, the curriculum specialist is tasked with creating and maintaining this disequilibrium, so to speak, as she continuously pushes

others to rethink and reformulate their own positioning in conversations of change as they work to improve educative processes in the school.

Of course, this does not always occur. It can be difficult and disconcerting to be a catalyst for change, to disrupt dominant discourses, taken-for-granted assumptions, or ways of knowing, or one may not feel it necessary to do so. None of the participants in this study proactively worked to resist or disrupt the normalizing discourses of accountability and reform (e.g. best practices, standardized teaching and assessment, emphasis on test scores) that dominated their school's conversations of change, and only a few actively engaged teachers in frank conversations about the work they were doing in their classrooms, or their perceptions of the change efforts being implemented. This was largely out of fear of being further ostracized from the role, or due to participants' buy-in of the change efforts, in which case, they saw their role as getting teachers on board with those expectations rather than as an independent supporter of teachers' efforts to improve the learning environment (and outcomes) for the students in their classrooms. Their subjective construction of curriculum change was shaped by institutional expectations.

However, there were moments in both Katherine's and Sophie's stories where they questioned the demands and expectations being placed on teachers, voiced their support and understanding of teachers' frustrations and distrust towards reform mandates, and both communicated their desire to help make life in the classroom easier for teachers. Both also told stories and acted in ways that contradicted these claims, suggesting a fragmented identity in which each struggled with competing priorities in their work. Their subjective world was pulled into different directions at the same time. According to Bhabha, it is this fragmentation of identity that can lead to "the construction of forms of

solidarity that do not "totalise in order to legitimate," but rather seek to create and embrace an "articulating world of difference" (In Rutherford, 1990, p. 213). If Katherine and Sophie can resist the urge to assimilate to the dominant discourses and embrace a generative tensionality (Aoki, 2004) in their subjective re-construction and in their work with teachers (and others), they can greatly expand the possibility for dealing with differences in a way that opens the door for collaborative exploration towards new ways of knowing and doing curriculum work.

This requires an intentional opening of the self to others and a movement across tension and differences in search of ways to move forward in this work. Sophie showed promise for realizing such a space. Although she admitted there were days she hid in her office not wanting to face teachers or deal with the pressures involved in her work, she had become more intentional about getting out into the school and engaging both teachers and administrators in conversations. It was emotionally draining for her, but she hoped that by pushing in when she found an opening, she could build relationships and make progress towards changing the dynamics in the school. In order to sustain oneself in this position, one must be willing to live along the edges of a stable, locatable, agentive self to embrace subjective fluidity and movement and seek to transform the environment in which she is situated. However, the curriculum specialist's ability to (re)negotiate her identity and subjectivity within the complex and shifting culture of the school is crucial for sustaining curriculum conversations of change, and doing so in a third space of mutual engagement and transformation.

Potential for New Directions: Resisting Insulation, Embracing Vulnerability

The specialist role is a lonely walk, and the turbulence one experiences in the role - both internally and externally - impacts the work she does. This was a reality faced by all of the participants in this study; albeit some to a greater extent than others. However, each silently struggled in their own way, seemingly unwilling to talk about the difficulties they faced. This insulation from others was evident by their reluctance to share openly with me or with the other specialists during the focus group interview. Despite communicating the purpose of the focus group was to discuss the challenges they faced in their work, and encouraging participants to share candidly about their individual challenges by sharing my own, most participants refused to enter the space, only echoing or extending what another had just shared. The conversation did not produce the substantive discourse I had hoped, which was unfortunate as I thought it could provide a sense of community and support not found elsewhere, and it left me wondering why it had been so difficult for the specialists to be vulnerable with others who likely faced the same struggles or who would likely be able to offer insight for overcoming the issue.

Both Katherine and Sophie shared insight with me about their relationships with the other specialists in their district. Katherine faced much adversity with her peers, and Sophie did not feel like the others provided her much support. She expressed her hesitancy to even engage with them for fear of being further exposed to criticism. The other four participants, who worked in the same district, mentioned their involvement in monthly specialist meetings in the district. However, none spoke at length about these meetings. Based on their earlier inclinations “to proceed cautiously not to drag out [their] dirt,” to “do things the [District’s] way,” and to ensure that my work did not cast their

school or district in a negative light, it is likely that they do not feel comfortable sharing their personal struggles openly during such meetings. If we, as specialists, expect both teachers and principals to be vulnerable with us, why are we unwilling to become so ourselves? This is neither productive for the specialist or for the school/district that employs her.

Perhaps this insulation is a residual effect of the age of accountability and reform continuing to plague the profession. Pinar (2012) tells us that "school reform has never been about itself" (p.xvi). Rather, it is the vehicle through which society attempts to deal with its failures of the past and anxiety about its future state. This anxiety is internalized by individuals, and often redistributed to those who hold less power or authority than themselves. This transferal of anxiety no doubt circulates in the school house as none are immune to the threat surveillance and accountability holds for their livelihood. All members of the education team - district leaders, building principals, curriculum specialists, and teachers - are under the gaze of a number of stakeholders that can be friend or foe given the circumstances. The specialists in this study were willing to share about perceived weaknesses in administrators or teachers, but were much more reluctant to open about their own. I imagine the same would be true for teachers, principals, and district leaders alike. However, if all parties remain insulated within themselves and their own ways of thinking, unwilling to engage with others more authentically, it is unlikely that conversations of curriculum change will lead to substantive improvement in educative processes.

As Pinar (2012) suggests, "Our curricular challenge is simultaneously subjective and social" (p.5). In order to reach new possibilities in curriculum change efforts, each

party must be willing to go beyond oneself to engage with others in a mutual space of vulnerability and exploration "through interdependence and connection rather than a purely autonomous thrust into independence through separation [or] rebellion" (Wang, 2006, p. 117). However, moving into the unknown can be frightening and constraining if we allow the impulses within to insulate ourselves in the confines of our current understandings. Sophie must subjectively merge her splintered identities, as teacher/friend and curriculum specialist/Other, or risk withdrawing back into the safety of her former "teacher" self (or abandoning both altogether). The same is true for Leona to emerge from the cave in which she has been hiding.

Opening oneself up to the differences that are presenting and embracing the lessons it has to offer enables one to move forward in a way that seeks to embrace others, herself, and the journey through "a spirit of alterity or otherness" (Rutherford, 1990, p. 209). This does not mean that she becomes passive or complacent in the work she accepts from herself or others. Wang (2004) believes, "both affirmation and critique of self and other are necessary" for moving beyond. (p. 73). A discerning, yet affirming eye enables the specialist to act in ways that draws herself and others into processes of growth. Meeting in a third space requires engagement by both parties; however, a receptive (re)positioning of oneself towards others leaves open the possibility that others can enter this space on their own terms.

Julie, having left the first specialist position before due to the difficulties she experienced in navigating her work with teachers, found that she was now better prepared to engage with teachers in sites of difficulty. She did so through a playful spirit of curiosity and vulnerability in which she came "alongside" teachers to explore unfamiliar

territories with them in their efforts to find answers or solutions to the challenges they face. She found it “super fun. Especially when it is something I don't know a ton about because then I get to learn something new, and let’s try it out. And, let's experience and see how it goes.” She explained that it could be easy to let difficulties wall her off from her peers, but it was through an intentional reaching out to teachers and an openness to being vulnerable with them that enabled her to remain in the conversation and to build relationships in the process. Sophie, too, demonstrated a willingness to embrace the uncertainties of her position by pushing herself to step out of her comfort zone and try new things with teachers especially in areas where she lacked content or background knowledge. Her focus that year had been on growing her abilities and understanding related to social studies as well as writing. Coming from a science background, both of those areas had been somewhat intimidating and challenging for her; however, she actively sought out opportunities to engage with teachers in those areas so that they could learn together as they went along. Sophie was also intentional in her efforts to reengage with teachers and administrators who continued to be dismissive of her work, even when it was hard for her to do so. She did this by checking in with them regularly, offering her help, and “throwing out nuggets” of information she hoped they would find useful, and in doing so, hoped they would see the sincerity in her efforts and the value she could bring to their work.

As Sophie’s stories indicate, this new walk can be distressing, but it can also be encouraging and productive, leading one to a more compassionate awareness and embrace of oneself and others as she learns to live with the ambiguities within herself and within those around her. Wang (2004), too, finds it helpful to embrace and learn to live

with the tensions that arise in our interactions with others as each searches for their own path forward. According to Wang, "In such a journey, one feels at home but with one foot always stepping out of the gate; one accompanies others but remains truthful to the self; and one both gives up and claims oneself" (p. 178). In this way, the specialist remains grounded in herself and her present reality, yet persistently pushes the edges of her own understanding as she seeks to be influenced through her engagement with others. Through this spirit of curiosity, vulnerability, and play the specialist can come to see that tension, difference, and uncertainty are not to be feared, but welcomed and explored for the new growth and insight it has to offer. In approaching her work this way, she acts as a catalyst for others to cross their own borders to engage in third space conversations of curriculum change.

Border Crossing to Disrupt Binaries

An essential component of third space theory is the necessity of going beyond one's preconceived ways of thinking, acting, and participating in the world, which may create oppositions and differences. Differences can demarcate one from the other, and can both insulate oneself while excluding the other. The polarities between the two often set a binary into play further reducing the likelihood of interaction or engagement. The site of difference, however, can become a third space if both parties move beyond his or her implicit mindset, crossing the border that divides them, to work through difference in a way that leads to a more mutually-inclusive and affirmative coexistence.

In the first chapter, I highlighted key binaries inherent in the inner workings of the school including the administrator/teacher binary, district goals-initiatives/school goals-initiatives, scientifically research-based curricula/teacher's organically-created curricula,

top-down reform mandates/teacher or school-led change initiatives. These binaries exist and coalesce to varying degrees in individual schools depending on the power and authority exchanged by those involved. In analyzing participants' stories, a more encompassing superior/subordinate binary emerged that proved useful in understanding the balances of power that shape the conversations of change taking place in the school and the work of the curriculum specialist therein. This binary deeply influences and constrains the shifting dynamics between building administrators, teachers, curriculum specialist(s), and district leaders as change initiatives or mandates unfold. Each of these positions is a unique and no doubt integral part of the school system, and each plays a distinct role that requires particular behaviors, actions, and decision-making responsibilities that set it apart from the others. None can behave exactly as the others, and none can replace or eliminate the others and still maintain efficient operation of the school. Rather, each must maintain the independent functioning of its role while recognizing and embracing the interdependent network in which it is involved. The borderlands within these dynamics are multiplied and ripe with differences, disputations, and potential conflict, but also curiosity, creativity, and synergy depending on how each communicates, interacts, and responds to the other(s).

In this section, I explore the implications in going beyond this binary on participants' engagement in the conversations of change taking place in the schools, the complexities of dwelling with others in sites of difference, and the need for relationships that encourage and enable all parties to cross borders towards a more generative approach to curriculum change.

Contending with Resistance

The power imbalances in the relationships among colleagues and the friction created by the superior/subordinate binary, manifested itself most distinctly in participants' stories through narratives of teacher resistance. It was a theme resonating throughout these stories, and whether expressed explicitly or not, it was seen by the specialists as a significant hindrance to change efforts. Katherine, Sophie, and Leona all recounted instances where teacher defiance, lack of "buy-in," or refusal to engage undermined change efforts, and more particularly, the specialist's work in the school. Lauren, too, expressed frustration about teachers unwilling to listen, to participate, or do whatever it was that was expected of them by the principal or curriculum specialist. Participants spoke of their efforts to bring about change *in spite of* the teachers who refused to collaborate, to allow them access to their classrooms, or to have their work scrutinized by others.

However, their stories also revealed acts of resistance (to conform, submit, acknowledge, or act) on the part of curriculum specialists and sometimes administrators as well. Katherine was forthcoming in sharing her resistance towards the changing modus operandi for her work. She opposed nearly every change that had been proposed by the newer curriculum specialists in the district and put into practice by the new assistant superintendent. She drug her feet on implementation, and sought to plead her case to the district leader in hopes she would see her side of the issue. Sophie, too contested others' expectations of her work, and sought to forge her own path as a change agent in hopes to bring about change she saw as most relevant to the needs of the school, and in doing so, to also avoid, or at least minimize pressure, scrutiny, or negative pushback from her

colleagues. This same goal appeared to lie at the heart of both Leona's and her principal's hesitancy and seeming resistance to confront and overcome teacher resistance in their change efforts. Both seemed to prefer to ignore the resistance and lack of buy-in, and hope it would improve over time. Katherine shared a story about a principal who told her not to worry about whether a teacher "stuck to the program" as long as their test scores were good. Each participant articulated what she considered to be a reasonable explanation or justification for her (or their) stance; however, these instances still point to an unwillingness to conform, refusal to act, and even to rebel against, the seemingly unreasonable expectations of the powers that be.

These acts of resistance, whether by teachers, curriculum specialists, or administrators regardless of the person/position, stemmed from the complexities and complications inherent to the superior-subordinate matrices operating within the school. Some resisted in an effort to retain a sense of agency in their work. Katherine was determined to do things her way, the way she believed things were to be done; as was the case with many of the teachers highlighted in participants' stories. And Leona refused to engage in any work that was not voluntary for or supportive of teachers. In this refusal to push teachers to do what they do not want to do there was an element of resistance against uniform mandates of change. For others, it was a matter of principle or opinion, or out of a need for self-preservation. Sophie found herself navigating both as she sought to make changes that honored her teacher-self and the plight of teachers in the classroom, while also feeling the pressures to conform in order to retain the position so that she could continue to make a difference. Her stories also indicated that the new administrative team in her school were working through many of the same dynamics as

each member had their own ideas for moving the school forward, but were also concerned with making a good impression in their new role.

As these stories suggest, resistance can occur at all levels of the school's hierarchy, and is often (partially) displaced onto colleagues rather than being directed at those in authority who mandated unfavorable, unjust or impractical expectations or reform. Many times, though, the resistance ultimately led to the individual closing themselves off to the influence of the other, and to the potential for learning, growth, and collaboration those interactions can bring. However, organic curriculum change - that which stems from the actual needs or interests in the classroom/school - has positive contributions to students and teachers' lives. Transformative curriculum change requires a space in which different voices, and positions of authority and power, come together to solve the real issues impacting the classroom. Norrine envisioned creating such a space in her school. She talked extensively about her desire to get teachers involved in the processes of change that were being undertaken, and the efforts she had taken to promote that participation. She spoke of advocating for teachers, and of her efforts to take teacher concerns, complaints, or questions to district administrators in search of a way forward. Julie and Lauren, too, communicated their desire to engage with teachers in such spaces. Each prided themselves on their openness to teachers' needs and of their efforts to support teachers' work in the classroom. They also shared about the progress they had made in getting teachers to collaborate toward common goals. This seemed to be the ideal Sophie, Katherine, and Leona aspired to as well. However, despite their professed commitment to including teachers' voices in the change efforts, paradoxes existed in which they all demonstrated a tendency to undermine or suppress dissenting or resistant

voices from the conversation. As such, participants' border crossing efforts were incomplete and inconsistent. This decreases the likelihood of third space interactions, and no doubt limits the realm of possibilities that can emerge for solving the critical issues related to teaching and learning.

According to Bhabha (1994), in a third space, one does not seek to control or contain the other. Rather, differences become seeds for rumination in order to move the collective to more innovative and productive modes of thinking, being, and becoming. Curriculum conversations of change in a third space include the teacher as an active and knowledgeable pedagogical being capable of making critical decisions about her work with students (Aoki, 2004). Other educators, including curriculum specialists, principals, and district leaders, in the conversation also draw on their own pedagogical understandings, experiences, and knowledge to support her professional growth, as well as their own, through ongoing dialogue, influence, and negotiation rather than authoritarian expressions of power.

Seeking Communities without Consensus

In envisioning what third space interactions might look like in a school setting, comprised of real-time interactions among colleagues who might not yet hold the same vision of mutual collaboration and influence, I kept coming back to thoughts I had while reflecting on my time with Norrine. I remained perplexed by her seeming acceptance of the inevitableness of disagreement and dissent. On the one hand, she readily dismissed those who were not willing to work with her, or agree with her for that matter. She was relatively unphased by their lack of involvement, and seemed to let be what was, although she continued to include those individuals in her correspondences with the rest

of the team and engaged them when the opportunity arose. Her mantra was that they would either come around or they would not, yet she continued on with the work regardless of their participation or acceptance. In this sense, there appeared to be a lack of concern (or room) for those teachers' perspectives, or even an eagerness to exclude dissenting voices from the process; however, an alternate reading of those instances could be that she allowed those individuals to retain some agency as to their level of engagement and participation in the process. There was one instance in which she talked about how teachers' input influenced some of the changes made to the district continuum, and that those viewpoints did not necessarily align with hers. She also shared a story about a time she allowed teachers to override her opinion/expertise on a curriculum adoption matter because she felt compelled to go with the majority rule. Can rereading these stories through this perspective shed light on what a third space in the conversation of curriculum change might look like in situ, or at least in its germinal, messy, precarious dawning? Her essentialist claim that teaching mathematics can be deduced to a rigid set of facts left little room for negotiation; however, there were moments in her work that indicated an opening, if even just a sliver, to contemplating and hashing out the ideas of others in order to find a more productive, suitable path forward.

Miller's (2010) notion of communities without consensus is helpful for imagining this third space in which the polyphony of voices is not always readily celebrated or successful in bringing about new insights or possibilities to the conversation, but are at least allowed to co-exist and co-mingle with more dominant understandings and modes of operation. In such a space, incommensurate differences, contentions, and contestations are not minimized or excluded from conversation, but are given the space to exist, to be

examined and negotiated in search of new modes of thinking about the task (i.e. problem, issue) at hand. According to Miller (2010), these communities resist "universal notions of 'selves,' collective,' or 'solidarity' read only as 'the same'" and are instead "composed of 'selves' and versions of curriculum work that re-form daily and differently in response to difference and to the unknown" (p. 96). For Miller, solidarity for the sake of a unified whole - embodied in this study as *best practices, standards-based teaching, common formative assessments,* and *The District's Way* (of doing things) - reifies normative practices and ways of knowing, reducing individuals and individual experiences to a "collective condition" (p. 99), and limiting the possibility for imagining curriculum in more inclusive and reflexive ways.

Although normative and normalizing discourses pervaded participants' stories, there were also instances where diverse perspectives sought to challenge, or "make unfamiliar" these practices in order to rethink how we participate in the daily life of curriculum work (Miller, 2010). Recall the two teachers in Lauren's stories, who Lauren characterized as outliers for breaking from the group to push back against a particular district "way" of doing things, or the teachers in Leona's stories who continued to skirt district expectations that they teach and assess in particular ways. And even Sophie, as a newcomer to the district's specialist cohort, sought to disrupt and rethink, traditional ways of doing her work. Although not fully realized, communities without consensus as Miller (2010) envisions allow for differences and disagreement in the process of collaboration without divisiveness or repression. It recognizes each member as a knowledgeable, agentive being committed to the wellbeing of the whole community, even though priorities, goals, or approaches may differ. This commitment to viewing

oneself, one's work, and one's work with others as "always-in-the-making" (p. 97), allowing one to deal with the politics and social implications of the current moment while always looking to generate new understandings for future work. Although paradoxes exist in Norrine's work that no doubt hinder the formation of third space interactions and collaboration; her willingness to make room for dissonant voices and ideas are a step in the right direction.

I think that reimagining schools as communities without consensus releases faculty and staff from the grips of standardization, surveillance, and control, and opens up spaces in which each member of the educational team can become active agents of their own professional knowledge and acumen as well as in their professional interactions and collaboration with others. Rather than seeking to control, constrain, or exclude the other, divergent viewpoints are accepted and respected for the unique insights and contributions they bring to the conversation. Conversations are not sterilized for the sake of getting along, but become complicated conversations (Pinar, 2012) in which differing perspectives lead to new ways of thinking about the situation at hand. According to Buckreis (2012), dwelling in such a place can be "challenging and can even be threatening, to imagine that opposing views must be valued and celebrated rather than dismissed or synthesized" (p. 279). However, Wang (2004) contends that "Feelings of being threatened can be transformed into an expansive reaching out toward the other and returning to the self with something new" (p. 78). This belief undergirds the notion of border crossing. Opening oneself up to be influenced by another is a voluntary movement that requires social spaces in which all parties feel relatively safe to question, explore, and negotiate divergent viewpoints without having to reject one's positioning altogether. I

saw instances of this in Julie's interactions with teachers, in which she sought to connect with them on personal levels and adjusted her support accordingly, and also in her discussion with me afterwards. However, these interactions were still constrained by her understanding of district and school leader's expectations rather than what she thought (or knew) to be what was needed.

Aoki (2004) sees the possibility for engaging with others across differences to lead to new understandings and ways of thinking and living in the social world; however, this involves a critical reflectiveness that forces us to contend with our underlying intentions and assumptions and to act differently based on the wisdom we gain through our encounters with others in such spaces. There is inherent tension confronting habitual ways of thinking, both within ourselves and among those with whom we interact. This tension must be worked through in order for new understandings and ways of acting and becoming to emerge. Such internal work, for Norrine and the other specialists, might uncover the ways in which her assumptions and inclinations about what it means to teach, to lead, and to support impact her efforts to bring others into conversations of change. It could also prove useful in helping Julie and others find a way beyond district or school leader expectations in order to work with teachers in a way that harnesses both of their pedagogical insights to solve the day-to-day circumstances and dilemmas teachers face in the classroom. This occurs through ongoing dialogue that builds mutually beneficial, interdependent relationships situated in acts of vulnerability, connection, and even contestation.

Building Loving, Yet Critical Relationships

Curriculum change efforts require engagement and ongoing dialogue with others in order to transform curriculum into that which is not yet fully understood or even recognized. This work necessitates a safe, supportive environment where individuals feel free to debate, negotiate, explore, and even fail in their efforts to improve teaching and learning without fear of undue repercussions or ridicule. The suppressive environment of surveillance and accountability found in many schools today is not conducive to such relationship forming. School leaders often espouse a unified approach to meeting student learning needs and overcoming challenges in the school; however, such unification of thinking and approach is rarely the reality. Such a juxtaposition was evidenced in an interaction I witnessed between Julie and a new teacher. Throughout her stories, Julie expressed her efforts, and that of the building principals, to ensure teacher autonomy and to approach differences through a relational "coming alongside" to work through issues that arose in the school. She talked about giving teachers choice and respecting their right to not work with her or others. She also claimed that teachers' knowledge and expertise were valued and included in the decision making in the school.

However, a situation arose during one of my visits that countered this claim. The school principal made a decision that sided with a parent over a teacher without seeking advice from a more knowledgeable source or engaging in substantive conversation with the teacher about the issue beforehand. The teacher, both frustrated and concerned, sought Julie's advice for handling the situation. Julie did her best to calm and reassure the teacher without acknowledging the principal's obvious err in judgment, although she did so with me after the teacher left the room. In this instance, the superior/subordinate

binary multiplied its effects and no doubt set dynamics into play that could erode relationships in the school. The principal chose to exert her power and bring an end to the dilemma rather than engage with all parties to come to a more just conclusion for the student. In doing so, she took away the teacher's authority, sent a clear message that her professional knowledge/acumen was not valued, and missed the opportunity to engage the teacher, parent, and even student in meaningful dialogue about the issue. Trapped between "The [District's] Way" and a desire to correct the mishandling of the issue, Julie chose to remain neutral in the situation, which further deprived the teacher of the opportunity to grow in her profession or to participate in decision-making related to her work. Julie counted it as a success that the teacher left feeling better about the situation; however, I question the impact Julie's unwillingness or inability to engage objectively in imbalances of power will have on her relationship with the teacher. This is especially critical because she considers relationship building to be a major goal for her work.

This situation may have been avoided or resulted in a more productive outcome if the principal had been focused on building relationships, providing constructive feedback, and seeking a more appropriate and equitable resolution to the issue rather than relying on her authoritative power to end the conflict. Wang (2004) advocates for loving and critical relationships that are built on differences and a willingness for members to prop up and fill in when another falls short (p. 179). These relationships are rooted in the notion that one's independence is always connected to and in tension with their relation to others. That one must have one's own critical positioning while recognizing that the success of the whole, which one can never fully separate from, depends on insights and contributions from all members in a mutual space of collaboration. In such a space,

differences can be expressed, critiqued, and worked through with compassion and understanding and a communal sense of responsibility. The types of relationships Wang (2004) proposes are difficult to achieve amidst the social, political, and cultural milieu today's educational landscape. However, they are critical for establishing the kind of relationships that make curriculum conversations of change in a third space of mutual engagement and transformation possible.

In the story above, Julie was operating within the fixed borders of the superior/subordinate binary. Her desire to relate to teachers or to engage with them more authentically is suppressed in order to communicate a unified front with building administrators. This, in turn, leads teachers to function within the limits of this binary so that personal frustrations and issues are hidden or minimized. Performative encounters become the norm between colleagues in which no new understandings can be created. What is needed instead is an "intimate revolt" (Wang, 2010) that challenges the limits of this binary. In such a revolt, one does not rebel through acts of transgression, but rather contests the limits through "an open, transformative, and creative process that simultaneously involves cultural, political, and psychic working through and renaissance" (p. 375). This work is done through co-journeying with others through the struggle. Wang (2010) further calls for a "pedagogical benevolence" in which others are given the freedom to explore and play with the limit in order to "bring more variety and flexibility" to it (p. 380). Approaching curriculum work with such compassion and loving critique will greatly expand the possibility for new types of relationships to form in the school. Not only between the principal, curriculum specialist, and teachers, but among district leaders and even students as well.

Loving and critical relationships take much time and effort to establish. It is likely not done in one or even three years, but rather evolves from ongoing trust building and overcoming challenging situations together over time. The ability to establish such relationships is no doubt hampered by significant attrition or movement of teachers or principals from one year to the next as experienced in Sophie and Katherine's district. Katherine highlighted this difficulty, comparing two of the schools in which she worked. One school, a low socioeconomic, low performing school, has experienced significant attrition of teachers in recent years. Several grade levels had all new teachers from the previous year, and the majority of teachers had been at the school fewer than five years. She compared this to her high socioeconomic, high performing school in which the majority of teachers had worked in the school for at least five years, and most had been there for more than ten. She explained, "It takes a community to improve a school, and that happens when you've taught many years together." She attributed the lower performing schools ongoing challenges to the lack of relationships and community in the school as well as a staff that was far less experienced than the higher performing school. This combined with the constant surveillance and interference by district leaders has created a culture in which everyone is suspicious of others and reluctant to collaborate. Katherine admits this is true of herself as well.

Leona shared similar struggles in one of her schools that she believed stemmed from having had three different principals in the last three years. This led to an overall resistance from teachers to conform yet again to a different leadership style. Leona explained, "As the new principal, he has a dilemma of how far does he push them. And, it has been hard because the transition was actually pushed further last year, but they had a

new principal last year." She went on to explain that the new principal this year tried really hard the first semester to meet teachers where they were and to learn how each subject-area team operated. However, he is now experiencing significant pushback from several groups as he attempts to get them to make changes to their teaching. Leona believed the teachers are holding out on implementing the new curriculum mandates hoping there will be another change next year, and maybe they won't have to do it.

Establishing benevolent pedagogical relationships and (re)creating communities that are open to different and even conflicting ideas is an onerous, yet worthwhile task if we are to create collaborative spaces in which teachers, curriculum specialists, principals, and others are free to engage, explore, and reimagine curriculum in yet unforeseen ways. These spaces restore the "dignity in the calling of the profession" by enabling all parties to become participating members in the complicated conversations that are curriculum change (Pinar, 2016). Through such spaces, teachers (and others) are able to cross the borders of their own subjective understandings, to be influenced by others without the threat of surrendering to a collective whole or standardized teaching self. Returning to her own space, she will likely find that she is not the same as she was before the crossing. According to Serres (1991/2006), "learning consists of such crossbreeding" (p. 49).

Julie attempts to initiate this space for teachers when she sees change initiatives coming down the line. She explained that her district wants teachers to center their teaching around essential questions. This will be a big push next school year, and is already an ongoing conversation with district leaders, principals, and curriculum specialists in the district. Wanting to give her teachers the time and space to "play" with the concept, Julie plans to start introducing it to teachers now. She wants teachers to

begin adapting their teaching to this approach, so that they can further explore and build upon their experiences as they go. She will approach teachers with a challenge, “Let’s try it out! What do you think? I’d love to get your feedback. What works and what doesn’t?” and “What could it look like?” Julie finds that taking this collaborative, exploratory approach motivates teachers to play an active role in rethinking and refining their practices. She recognizes that it does not work with all teachers, but that it goes a long way towards establishing a culture of collaborative inquiry and professional growth in the school.

Crossing borders to engage with others becomes more likely through loving and critical relationships in which differences are respected, and individuals are given the freedom to explore new ideas and to become something more or other than they once were as it makes sense to them. This happens through authentic and ongoing interactions with others, without mandates to adhere to externally-imposed ideations of best practices, manipulation, or threat of punitive repercussions. Rather, dominant ways of knowing and acting are interrogated and cast anew based on its reformulation by members of the school staff. According to Wang (2004):

> this coexistence of opposite directions sing the poetics of personal and social transformation in a third space, where individuality and relationality intertwined, collide, and interact. Separate yet together, parted yet holding hands, alone yet with the other, such is a story of seeking independence through and for interdependence (p. 131).

All members of the school staff can initiate such spaces; however, the curriculum specialist is uniquely positioned to identify fissures in the social space through which

these spaces can take root. Actively pushing others to leave their comfort zone and to engage critically with the task at hand, the curriculum specialist can draw all members of the school staff into curriculum conversations of change that can lead to new and transformative ways to reimagine teaching and learning in the school that is not based on the old, routinized, normative modes of schooling, but something that is new or not yet imagined. Such are the transformative possibilities of the third space.

Imagining Transformative Possibilities of Hybridity

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha (1994) contends that cultural differences are experienced and translated by both the dominant culture and the marginalized culture(s), and that these translations lead to new forms of cultural identity that are hybrid versions of the two original sources. According to Bhabha (1994), cultural translation and hybridity happen in and through third space contestation in which both sides engage in ongoing negotiation of accepted modes of being. In this exchange, members of the dominant group seek to normalize and homogenize those differences that are locatable within their "own grid," and work to contain those that do not (In Rutherford, 1990, p. 208). On the other hand, individuals of marginalized groups use cultural differences as a way to subvert the dominant culture's essentialist notions of superiority and authority. This back-and-forth exchange leads to new and hybrid cultural identities as both sides are influenced and changed through their interactions with the other. Hybridity, then, is the result of interacting with differences in a third space with others. This new thing/ understanding/mode of being "bear[s] the trace" of the two previous entities but also "gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of

negotiation of meaning and representation" (In Rutherford, 1990, p. 211). The same dynamics exist in the superior/subordinate binary operating within schools.

In the schoolhouse, this third space negotiation occurs in the teacher's lounge after the morning faculty meeting, in the hallway between class periods, or in the privacy of one's classroom as teachers come to terms with a superior's expectations, and hash out to what extent they agree with or will comply with the imposed demands. Through this negotiation, with self and others, teachers seek to inform their pedagogical authority and understandings with the new information presented. How these change efforts translate into classroom practice depends upon the hybrid ways in which those mandates are recomposed and enacted (or not) by the teacher.

Aoki's (2004) work sheds light on the internal dilemmas teachers face in determining how to carry out imposed mandates, what Aoki calls *curriculum-as-planned*, without disrupting the processes of education already occurring in the classroom. Aoki posits curriculum as *lived experience*, and uses the term *situational praxis* to highlight the uniquely personal and interpersonal exchanges that occur between teacher and students as they work to make sense of the topic under study. The instructional environment, then, is dependent upon the professional acumen of the teacher to initiate and sustain this inquiry as well as students' interests and motivations to engage in the process. For Aoki, teaching and learning are deeply personal endeavors, and part of the calling of the profession is to explore one's own interests and understandings as it relates to co-being and becoming with others through educative interactions. Although Aoki's focus is on the in-dwelling teachers do in negotiating and creating the life they desire for themselves and their students in the classroom, I make the connection that the curriculum specialist's work is

threaded through this tensionality as well, as she draws on her own experiences and understandings as a teacher to engage in this ongoing curriculum work alongside teachers. In her efforts to support teachers, she is also seeking to expand her own insights and understandings about how best to improve the educational environment for students. The relationships that curriculum specialists establish with principals and teachers are also situated in this tensionality. It is through this co-being and becoming with others that hybrid versions of curriculum can emerge.

I believe it has been made clear by now that institutional constraints largely dictate curriculum change taking place in today's schools. The work of the curriculum specialists in this study were no exception. Despite the hard work they do in their schools each day, and their sincere efforts to do what they believe is best for the teachers and students with whom they work, it was evident that their work was hampered by an internalization of the dominant discourses of today's educational landscape. This could be seen in the struggle Katherine faced in wanting to meet teachers where they are in their current understandings and practices in the classroom, but also feeling compelled to document their failures and her acknowledgement of those failures to ensure her "job [would not be] on the line." It also came through in Julie's claim that PLC meetings were an organic way for teachers to come together to learn about things that were important to them, but admitted in the same story that she often led those meetings in order to teach them what she or the principals thought they needed to know. The same is also true of Lauren's tendency to take over grade-level meetings to ensure everyone was "on the same page" when it came to planning for instruction. Normalizing discourses of accountability and reform (e.g best practices, standardized teaching and assessment,

emphasis on test scores) were evidenced throughout participants' stories, and it was clear to see that each was operating under pressures to conform and ensure conformity. Working under such conditions limits the likelihood for third space possibilities to emerge. However, it was also clear that participants desired to make a difference in the daily lives of teachers and students in their charge, and that they worked tirelessly to have a positive impact in the school. Their optimism and willingness to persevere confirms that there is tremendous potential for the curriculum specialist to be a catalyst for more organic conversations of curriculum change if given more favorable contexts for their work.

In this final section of the chapter, I draw upon lessons I learned from participants' stories to imagine how curriculum specialists can open up transformative possibilities of hybridity. To do this, I explore how disrupting current normalizing, dominant discourses in education might open up spaces that allow for individual vulnerability, creativity, exploration, and insight to translate curriculum conversations of change into new and hybrid ways of teaching and learning. I also articulate how this paradigm shift can build bridges and passages through teacher resistance. And finally, I articulate a conception of the curriculum specialist as a catalyst for conversations of curriculum change in a third space of mutual engagement and transformation.

Rethinking Normative, Normalizing, Dominant Discourses

In conceptualizing school improvement efforts as conversations of/for curriculum change, it is important to consider how normative discourses shape the culture of the school, and create the backdrop through which teachers and others participate in this public sphere. Three such discourses that surfaced in participants' stories include the

phrase *best practices*, the mantra *The [District's] Way*, and the notion of standardized teaching and common learning assessments. I have already problematized this discourse in previous sections; however, it's worth further exploration to understand how these discourses reinforce the superior/subordinate binary and undermine curriculum change efforts. Expanding the collective dialogue beyond the limits imposed by this discourse can open conversations of change to the possibility for new insights and new ways forward.

The phrase *best practices* has become a buzzword in education in recent years. It is used to identify and privilege instructional practices deemed most effective by researchers, governmental agencies, professional organizations, district leaders, and so on. These practices are touted as a panacea for closing the student achievement gap, and serve as the cornerstone for most school improvement efforts. This was true of Norrine's efforts to create an ideal curriculum that, if not "compromised" by teachers, would seamlessly transition from one grade level or subject area to the next, and result in students graduating having achieved mastery or their highest potential in mathematics education. The goal being that teachers would align their teaching to mirror the *best* practices outlined in the district math continua, and to ensure the success of such endeavors by tracking student performance on common assessments and making adjustments as needed. This - the implementation of predetermined best practices and common assessments - was a theme common among participants. Leona, Julie, and Lauren sought to implement similar teaching methods in their schools, and Katherine and Sophie believed consistent implementation of best practices district-wide would go a long way in alleviating some of the larger issues their district faced. The problem with this

approach is that it leaves little room for authentic and personal engagement with the subject matter as teachers and students are "cast into nothingness," and become things to be manipulated in order to achieve a desirable outcome (Aoki, 2004, p. 188). Under such conditions, the curriculum specialist position, too, is constrained within these confines, and exists merely to ensure teachers are achieving or adhering to these expectations. Much of the interactions I observed during my time with participants were grounded in this "scientific, technological ethos" (Aoki, 2004, p. 187), in which the lived experiences of the classroom (and the interactions and work related to it) served only as a means to an end.

The current fixation on *best practices* no doubt shapes the curriculum to be taught, but it further infiltrates the classroom through mantras such as, *The [District's] Way*, that are designed to further regulate teacher behaviors as well. This trendy, feel-good phrase is used to characterize the virtues, attributes, and practices espoused by the district. Used in this study by participants from both districts, and no doubt a common catchphrase in many schools today, this terminology serves as a unifying metaphor for what a good employee or good teacher is and does in that particular district. Lauren used the phrase to differentiate one teacher's actions from this perceived good teacher. "That's not the [District's] way; that's just not how we do it here," she explained (Observation with Lauren, March 14, 2018). Norrine used it to set the district's way of doing things apart from and above other districts in the state, as did Julie. At one level, this phrase mobilizes teachers to behave in accordance with an agreed upon standard - although by whom is rarely clear; however, it also serves to regulate, constrain, or exclude anything not becoming of such virtues. This conception of the "perfect" teacher/employee is

problematic for two reasons. First, the mantra typically encompasses a vague or overarching set of values or dispositions that can be interpreted differently by different people or in different contexts. In the previous example, Lauren was quick to conclude that the teacher's behavior stood in contrast to district expectations; however, she was unable to articulate exactly how it differed or what made it less than. Second, the expression becomes a tool through which to judge, manipulate, divide, or ostracize. Used in such a way, regulatory powers are diffused among colleagues who become critics or adjudicators rather than co-experiencers, collaborators and co-creators of the curriculum. Lauren, Julie, and Norrine all shared stories about teachers reporting to them other teachers who they believed were not acting in accordance with "the [District's] way." This normative and normalizing discourse undermines the sense of unity and trust needed to engage in complicated conversations about the curriculum, and the curriculum specialist's complicity in such discourse, whether intentional or not, likely reinforces the belief that the specialist position serves as an apparatus for surveillance and control. Even in less punitive ways, the notion of *best practices,* and one worthy "way" to be, serve as gold standards that are often unattainable in the "stressed necessity of everyday life" in the classroom (Bhabha, 1994, p. 15).

Enmeshed in this call for best practices is a "claim to know what [good] teaching is" (Aoki, 2004, p. 188); however, it is impossible to identify definitively what works *best* across all landscapes and contexts in education, and attempts or claims to do so may hinder teachers willingness to be vulnerable in their practice, as well as efforts to build trusting and collegial relationships that encourage authentic inquiry about the issues at hand. Privileging one *best* way to teach over all others denies teachers opportunities for

critical and creative engagement in their teaching and the curriculum. Minimizing or excluding differences in professional and educational practices prevents the educational team, as a whole, from interrogating the implicit mindsets and taken-for-granted assumptions in the daily life of the school that hinder student learning. Change occurs through differences: of opinion, of perspective, of approach. Dominant discourses that seek to universalize and standardize the act of teaching (and learning) are counterproductive to change efforts and limit the possibility for third spaces to emerge. However, disrupting normative discourses in the school can open up spaces for teachers to regain their voices and more fully and authentically participate in conversations of change.

Hybridity as a Passage Through the Complexity of Resistance

Resistance no doubt manifests from the normalizing discourses promulgated in school improvement efforts. As the stories in this study confirm, these discourses and implementation efforts rarely include teachers' perspectives, and rarely involve teachers in the planning and implementation of such initiatives. As indicated through participants' stories, teachers are presented with the plans, usually in a staff meeting, sometimes in an email (with further information - and requirements - to follow), and expected to adapt their instruction within a matter of days or weeks. Even the slightest push back reifies the stereotype of teachers as "half acquiescent, half oppositional, always untrustworthy" subjects to be contained (Bhabha, 1994, p. 33); a view that has existed for more than half a century and one that surfaced in participants' stories as well. Any form of resistance or revolt reinforces this distrust of teachers, and serves as justification for external forms of instrumentality, accountability, and control of the profession. Teachers, "occupied" and

"invaded" (Serres, 1991/2006, p. 141), bear the brunt of criticism and blame for continued failures in education. The teacher resistance narrative further positions teachers as scapegoats for school officials, including curriculum specialists, to transfer blame for lack of progress and ongoing failures in the school.

However, most of these narratives fail to remember or address extenuating or recurring issues that cause teachers to retreat to the safety of their classrooms in the first place. Participants' stories highlighted a number of factors - outside teachers' control - that impacted their willingness to engage in ongoing change efforts. Many stemmed from the frenetic pace at which reform efforts are adopted or abandoned with little consideration of the ramifications or long-term impact in the classroom. Katherine shared her dismay at how "curriculum poor" her schools were despite more than a decade of ongoing curriculum implementation. She talked about the dozens of curriculum adoptions and changes in instruction that teachers had endured over the past five years, and the vast amounts of federal and state money spent trying to find the "magic pill." She recalled a particular year in which teachers had a new curriculum in every subject area at the elementary level in addition to changes in required computer programs that left teachers to reconfigure their entire day. She explained that despite all the energy that went into this work just a few years ago, teachers are now having to come up with their own resources to teach yet another new mandate. She pointed to curriculum fatigue as the reason many resisted new change efforts. Norrine, too, spoke of the challenges that come with having "a third set of academic standards in five years." The flux of change is further compounded when new leadership brings new expectations to the change efforts. Leona and Sophie both pointed to changes in the school's administration as a source of

ongoing tension and resistance. For Leona, her teachers were coming to terms with their third new principal in as many years. Add these complicated layers to the already taxing work life in the classroom requires, and it is no wonder teachers resist the exhausting political work that is school reform. However, closing the classroom door to teach in spite of the politics going on outside, leaves teachers open to the assault.

This paradox, in which teachers are seen as both the root of the problem but the answer as well, creates the conditions for the perpetuation of teacher resistance in school improvement efforts. Wang (2010) suggests that teachers, as intelligent, creative agents in control of the learning that takes place in their classroom, will continue to create "a parallel space" from which to engage in "curriculum as revolt" (p. 384). Wang calls for an 'intimate revolt' in which the negotiation of differences occurs through compassion, freedom, and play with others to resist and recreate curriculum rather than through acts of rebellion or transgression. However, Bhabha recognizes that subversion and transgression are active forms of negotiation in oppressive sites of political struggle (In Rutherford, 1990, p. 216), albeit much less productive than mutual engagement through differences. Therefore, if subversion and transgression are forms of negotiation, a third space already exists in acts of resistance.

As mentioned before, evidenced in participants' stories were also instances of resistance by curriculum specialists and even principals. Both Sophie and Katherine were more vocal about their discontent with their principal's handling of their positions and with change efforts as a whole, and also spoke out against district leaders' expectations and the way things were currently operating in the school district. Although powerless to change these aspects of their work, both sought ways to communicate their frustrations

and to build bridges around those requirements in order to act in more agentive ways in their positions. For both Katherine and Sophie, that included spending more time in individual teacher's classrooms where both felt appreciated and productive rather than spending that time going over the teacher evaluation system with them as the assistant superintendent insisted. Leona's resistance was much subtler, and perhaps she did not even recognize it as resistance although her unwillingness to engage with teachers in any sort of critical or adversarial way was no doubt a major theme in her stories. Her continued insistence that the district expectation for her position to be a supportive role, and not evaluative, suggested that she was wrestling with and resisting an expectation (whether within herself or externally imposed) that she should be doing something more with teachers than she was. By hiding in her cave, she was subverting the district's expectations for change by refusing to take part in the work. This was also true of the principal who, in avoiding the confrontations necessary to move teachers beyond their resistance, was himself resisting the change efforts. Sophie's principals also seemed to be resisting her attempts to engage with them to discuss change efforts. According to Sophie, they largely ignored her attempts to create a plan or vision of change for the school, nor had they communicated a plan to her.

Rather than ignore, subdue, or attempt to eradicate these acts of resistance once and for all, it may prove more generative for teachers, specialists, and other school leaders to engage in these spaces of contention (or silence) in order to open up more communal conversations in search of a way beyond. Both Leona and Norrine shared a story about engaging in and overcoming such resistance. For Leona, it started with a teacher who sent Leona an email accusing Leona of singling her out with her colleagues.

The teacher challenged how Leona handled the exchange and the message she thought Leona was trying to send about her to her peers. Leona realized that there was a deeper conflict and divide between the teacher and herself, and chose to sit down with the teacher to figure out where the schism had occurred rather than simply respond to or ignore the email. The two were eventually able to work through the differences, and Leona claimed that the teacher became one of her strongest supporters in the school. Norrine, too, shared about a group of teachers who were opposed to a district mandate to use a particular technology. Norrine realized it was becoming a bigger issue and threatened to undermine the group's work, so she met with the team to discuss their concerns and then took the issue to district leaders. Although the group was still required to implement the technology, she was able to get many of their issues and concerns resolved so that the teachers felt good about the compromise.

As the stories above suggest, moments of opposition, defiance, or even silence (which signals avoidance or evasion) can be turned into hybrid sites to move beyond the binary thinking of the present moment, and seek passages toward versions of curriculum that have not yet been considered. Engaging with teachers in this third space, can turn subjective projections of aggression or retaliation into collective efforts to rethink and reformulate change efforts that take seriously the perspective from the classroom. In doing so, individual acts of resistance can be turned into a collective commitment towards new understandings and hybrid conceptions of teaching and learning moving forward.

Crossing the borders of ego, intentions, and expectations to engage with others in sites of resistance, allows members of the educational team to cast off the burden (and

privilege) their official title carries in order to see more clearly “the impacts a network [has] on the singular” (Wang, 2010, p. 383). Doing so, enables instructional leaders to sit with teachers in their everyday struggles. The superior no longer has to convey or exert authority, and the teacher (subordinate) no longer has to submit in order to participate in the conversation. Rather, the two can co-journey together as they seek ways to improve the educational processes already occurring in the classroom. Back and forth through this ongoing dialogue, new bridges and passages open up in which the teacher is emboldened to take the lead in his classroom while instructional leaders are freed from the expectation to survey and enforce, and can instead mentor and guide the teacher in developing her or his pedagogical acumen.

This engagement need not render either acquiescent. Rather, it can stem from a commitment to walk with the other towards a more communal and productive outcome. Such a journey towards hybridity frees both parties from the anxiety of a definitive resolution, or from needing to have all the answers. According to Wang (2004), “Ambivalence in the third space is a generative site on which contradictory directions may move toward each other, without the demand that they meet in the middle, or move away from each other, without splitting” (Wang, 2004, p. 178). Freed from normative discourses that crystallize teachers into proverbial form, and /or the binary trap that positions teachers and instructional leaders as foes, members of the educational team can engage in ongoing dialogue in a third space of contestation and reformation in order to envisage curriculum in a new light. Through this polyphony of voices, new and hybrid modes of being can begin to transform the curriculum, and lead to improved educational outcomes. The curriculum specialist can play a pivotal role in reaching through sites of

resistance to engage with teachers as she is the one most likely to uncover such sites in her work with teachers.

The Curriculum Specialist as a Catalyst for Third Space Engagement

A notion that undergirds this research study is the idea that because of the site-based curriculum specialist's unique position in the school's infrastructure, she has the potential to play an important role in initiating third space conversations of curriculum change. Positioned as a teacher leader, typically just removed from the classroom and placed in the position based on her demonstrated ability or expertise, the curriculum specialist is situated as a liaison or a channel through which teachers can gain support for carrying out their work in the classroom. As a teacher leader, the specialist is also situated as a liaison or channel of support for the school administrator(s) as his/her efforts to lead change efforts. The specialist's close proximity to teachers, her knowledge of the intricacies of the classroom, and her growing understanding and experience in the leadership realm make her a hybrid voice in the conversation of change, a "messenger…that belong[s] to two worlds because [she] put[s] them in communication with each other" (Serres, 1991/2006, p. 163). However, from reading participants' stories, I realize that this third space is not a given, and the specialists are not always able to act in such ways given the complexity and parameters of their work. To realize the transformative power and potential of the curriculum specialist position to initiate and sustain third space conversations of curriculum change, it is imperative that school and district leaders create the conditions that support this type of engagement in the school. It is equally as imperative that her colleagues also support her efforts to engage with them in this role.

This is critical because the specialist's work in this in-between space is inescapably situated in sites of difference, tension, and difficulty as she often becomes a sounding board or a whipping post, or sometimes both simultaneously, depending upon the conversation she enters, and she never knows for sure what she will encounter from one situation to the next. Recall the story of Julie and the new teacher told earlier in the chapter, in which Julie served as a sounding board for a new teacher who had a particularly precarious situation arise with a parent and the principal regarding choices she had made in the classroom. In this situation, Julie suddenly found herself in a predicament that was no fault of her own, and was faced with two undesirable outcomes for the decision she had to make. And Sophie became the target of misplaced frustration, anxiety, and anger during a tumultuous period of transition in the school. For Leona, it was the reverberating tension between teachers and the supervising principal who was seeking to implement curricular changes that Leona did not quite know how to handle. Treading lightly in these fragile spaces between the superior/subordinate realm, but nevertheless pressing forward anyway, the curriculum specialist is caught in a perpetual dance through differences in sites of tension with others. Her journeying in these borderlands holds enormous potential for multiplying possibilities for third space engagement and negotiation if she remains committed to the work, and actively engages others in the hard conversations that need to take place. This can be messy, complicated work. The specialist often bears the weight of this work, as well as the risk involved in being the bridge between the two.

Sophie felt this weight as she sought to find a balance between pushing for needed change while still being sensitive to the realities teachers faced and to their agency as

teachers. Despite her efforts to "speak for the people," she found that many teachers viewed her as "the enemy" if/when her stance aligned too closely with administrator expectations, she refused to get involved in the politics of the teaching staff, or she tried to become too involved in their work. Despite her struggles, Sophie continued to search for ways into those conversations. She did the same with the school principals. Although they had been dismissive of her role in their work, she continued to seek out opportunities to be included in the decision making that impacted the classroom. She felt this was necessary work (although it should not be such a fight for her to do so)! Having access to both worlds could enable Sophie to better translate across borders in order to engage both in negotiations towards hybrid conceptions of curriculum better suited to meet the instructional needs within the school.

Positioned in such a way, the curriculum specialist can become an "intervening space" in helping to translate conversations of change into professional practice for both teachers and principals alike (Bhabha, 1994, p. 7). This occurs through ongoing dialogue and experiences in which teachers are able to draw their own conclusions about their work, and seek ways to grow in their profession. Lauren sought to provide teachers these types of opportunities through "learning walks." During these walks, Lauren led teachers in observing predetermined classrooms, stopping to lead a discussion about each along the way. The walks are designed to show teachers effective practices occurring in the classrooms they observe. Although the emphasis of Lauren's walks was to identify specific *best practices* to be emulated, this type of activity provides teachers much needed insight into others' pedagogy. The possibilities for professional growth, as well as creative engagement in their craft, could be greatly multiplied if teachers were

empowered to choose for themselves the practices that hold promise for improving their instruction, and to lead the conversation amongst themselves as to the implications of observed behaviors to their work. The specialist, would then, become a facilitator and supporter of the conversation rather than the lead architect.

The goal for the curriculum specialist, then, is to harness the creative power of ambiguity in her work, and to recognize that while she can initiate efforts, conversations of change will always remain beyond her control as the work under task does not belong to her alone. Her work is inescapably linked to (and dependent upon) that of teachers and administrators. Working productively in this space requires a hybrid identity and a "position of liminality" that embraces differences through a "spirit of alterity or otherness" (Bhabha, In Rutherford, 1990, p. 209). This does not mean that her work is passive, or that she is powerless to act unless the other parties engage with her. Quite the opposite, actually. The specialist, relentless in her efforts to get others to grow beyond their fixed borders, "pulls and drags this third space throughout the whole space that is thus divided" (Serres, 1991/2006, p. 162). Constantly initiating and instigating, the specialist waits, impatiently patient for signs of new movement and growth. The newness that emerges expands the limits of her work, as she sets to task working along the borders of these new understandings and connections to multiply the possibilities for third space engagement in conversations of change.

Norrine's efforts to engage teachers in the continued refinement of the district's math curriculum is illustrative of the ongoing commitment required to move others beyond current understandings. Norrine reiterated time and again her desire to have teachers involved in the changes being made to the curriculum, and spoke at great length

about the steps she took to ensure their involvement. Norrine held an unyielding optimism for the change efforts being undertaken. She gave teachers the benefit of the doubt when they were less than enthusiastic or outright resisted this work, and was constantly encouraged by teachers who engaged with her in this work. However, in order to move teachers beyond their current "limit-situation" (Aoki, 2004, p. 94), the specialist must be able to recognize and expand beyond their own. Norrine's failure to recognize the ways in which her narrow views of mathematics and curriculum hinders her work with teachers, prevents her from achieving the one thing she professes to desire, mutual engagement and collaboration with teachers. Norrine's insistence on one right way to do and teach math, excludes the possibility of teachers contributing to the expansion of knowledge related to this work. They can either agree or disagree; however, most will choose to remain silent rather than risk exposing their vulnerabilities to others. If Norrine truly desires teachers' authentic engagement she must be willing to rethink her approach to this work. Pulling back so that teachers can take the lead in the conversation will enable her to steer from a distance as she seeks out new opportunities to grow their understanding without the need to take control. Doing so, enables her to provide ongoing curricular or instructional support based on teachers' conceptions of curriculum. This is crucial because bringing teachers into a space of mutual collaboration calls us to rethink our positionality, as curriculum specialists, in order to make room for teachers' voices in the conversation.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter, I conclude this third space, narrative inquiry into the role of the site-based curriculum specialist. I first present key findings as it relates to the research questions. I then discuss the implications of the findings, reflect on what I learned through the research journey, and discuss the limitations of the study. I end the chapter by proposing ideas for future research.

The purpose of this study was to understand how site-based curriculum specialists engaged with others in the school's curriculum conversation of change. Through it, I explored how the specialists negotiated their roles, identities, and the challenges they faced in order to support the principal and teacher(s) in carrying out the functions of their position more effectively. The study was based on open-ended interviews, observations, and focus-group data from six curriculum specialists from two school districts in a Midwestern state; four of whom worked in the same school district and the other two were from another district.

This study was guided by one overarching research question and two sub questions:

What do site-based curriculum specialists' stories reveal about their negotiation of their roles and identities in the school's curriculum conversation of change?

1. What challenges do site-based curriculum specialists face in negotiating their roles and identities?
2. How do site-based curriculum specialists work with these challenges to engage others in curriculum conversations of change?

In the summary below, I present the findings for the two sub questions first and end the section with a discussion of findings for the central research question.

Summary of Findings

Research Sub Question 1

What challenges do site-based curriculum specialists face in negotiating their roles and identities?

The site-based curriculum specialist is a complex and complicated position; one rife with challenges. This has been well documented in research (Dugan, 2010; Fullan & Knight, 2011; Hanson, 2011; Snow et al., 2006), and participants' stories revealed they, too, faced numerous challenges in carrying out their work in their school(s). Participants' unique challenges were highlighted in chapter four; however, those stories point to three larger themes related to the challenges curriculum specialists face in their work, including the isolation and exclusion one experiences in the position, the lack of clearly defined roles and expectations, and the complexity of resistance to change efforts. In this section, I weave in discussion of third space concepts as it pertains to the discussion related to these themes.

Working Through Isolation, Exclusion, & Estrangement

The most significant and widely documented challenge was the isolation and exclusion participants experienced in the position. They reported feeling overwhelmed,

shocked, and disoriented by the changes in the social dynamics going from classroom teacher to curriculum specialist. All of the participants expressed a sense of homelessness in their new position which led to initial feelings of estrangement for most of the participants, even from long-time colleagues. Although these feelings somewhat dissipated with time, participants still expressed varying levels of isolation, exclusion, or estrangement in their current work. From struggling to feel like or be included as part of the team, being excluded from social functions one had once been a part of, or feeling disconnected or disengaged from life in the school, feelings of isolation, exclusion, and estrangement may be inevitable given the nature of the role and its positioning in the school's infrastructure; however, it is imperative that the specialist learns to dwell in this unbalanced existence in order to work in the in-between spaces (of difference, tension, and possibility) in order to build generative relationships and promote loving, yet critical conversations towards curriculum change.

Even Julie, who otherwise enjoyed close connections with her administrative team and teachers in her school, compared the position to a "no man's land," and considered herself an outlier because she did not fit into the normal social categories/groups in the school (e.g. teachers, administrators, support personnel). Julie was able to embrace the loneliness and ambiguity of the position and work from the margins to initiate and sustain ongoing conversations with teachers about their work. However, the isolation, exclusion, and estrangement posed a significant threat to others' sense of efficacy, sense of belonging, and their overall satisfaction and commitment to the role. The impact was even greater for those who already felt little purpose, significance, or success in their work. Participants' stories suggest that one's ability to

(re)negotiate their identity amidst the ever-changing dynamics of the position determines the extent to which one feels efficacious in the role and remains engaged in their work. This "dwelling aright within" difference and the ambivalence of the position is also what opens the possibility for creating and engaging with others in a third space (Aoki, 2004, 163).

Lack of Defined Roles, Responsibilities, or Expectations

Another challenge participants faced was not having defined roles, responsibilities, or expectations to guide their work. Their stories shed light on the ambiguous nature of the role, and confirmed the research that indicates that due to the lack of clearly defined roles or responsibilities, many specialists spend less than 25% of their time actively engaged with teachers (Knight, 2005). Participants acknowledged the freedom and flexibility they had in determining their work, and several admitted that the lack of boundaries and rigid expectations was the biggest draw in moving into the position as each envisioned tailoring the position according to their appraisal of needs and priorities for improvement. In fact, the fluidity and flexibility of the position is what gives it such potential for creating and sustaining third space conversations of change. However, participants found that the uncertainties and vagueness of the role often made it difficult to orient themselves in the conversations of change, and to determine the effects their work had on change efforts. As new specialists, this was particularly challenging for Lauren and Sophie, who both expressed a need for more direction and parameters for their work in order to move forward more productively and better assess their progress. Without clear guidelines, the obscurity of the curriculum specialist role further compounded the difficulties of getting teachers to work with her as teachers likely

received mixed messages about her role in their work, and perhaps felt it unnecessary to engage with or heed her recommendations altogether.

Because of the ambivalent and contextual nature of the role, participants' stories further highlight the need for curriculum specialists to have multi-layered systems of support and collaboration in order to manage the increased stress and complexities of the position. Participants indicated that they were involved in monthly meetings with the other specialists in their district, but those meetings were largely managerial or task-oriented and did not often allow for authentic dialogue, collaboration, or development regarding issues affecting their work. Several participants expressed a desire for more opportunities to discuss issues or concerns, and to get feedback and learn from the other specialists. However, some expressed concerns about feeling safe enough to do so. In order for curriculum specialists to engage with teachers and principals in third spaces of mutual vulnerability and exploration, it is critical that she, too, has such a space to work through the challenges she faces in her work. The findings of this study suggest that specialists would benefit greatly from the creation of collaborative spaces, in which she is able to engage with other specialists to interrogate other's expectations of their work, to explore critically the implications the calls for reform has not only on her work, but on life inside the classrooms in their particular school(s), and to map her own path forward in her work.

Resistance to Change Efforts

Other's hesitancy or unwillingness to engage with her was another challenge that impacted participants' work. Teacher resistance took many forms in participants' stories, from quiet passivism during meetings or other interactions, to apathetic grumbling or

protest of the demands or expectations placed on them. Teachers even avoided meetings or conversations altogether. For Leona, Sophie, and Katherine, it significantly hindered their ability to engage with teachers in authentic and productive ways as teachers resorted to more visible means of resistance. While undercurrents of resistance, or at least disengagement, minimized the impact Julie, Norrine, and Lauren could have on their school's change efforts. The causes of teacher resistance evidenced in participants' work were likely not the same for all teachers, but most seemed to result from conflict with the power dynamics of the superior/subordinate binary, particularly the mismatch in leader's demands or expectations and the teacher's desires or expectations for their work, teachers not seeing the value or relevance of the change effort, not understanding their or the specialist's role in the efforts, or mistrust or even suspicion for district leaders or the specialist, herself, or, a combination of these factors. Regardless of the cause, participants saw teacher resistance as a considerable barrier to conversations of change; however, teachers were not the only ones to resist imposed reforms.

Participants stories suggested that the curriculum specialists themselves avoided or resisted change efforts that did not align with their beliefs or understandings about what change needed to occur in the school, although this understanding went virtually unnoticed and unexplored by participants. Leona refused to do anything that might position her as evaluative. Katherine pushed back on several of the expectations for her work because she believed it was detrimental to improving the climate in her schools and the district as a whole, and only begrudgingly complied with some expectations for fear that her job would be on the line if she did not have documentation of such work. Sophie, too, resisted mandates coming from the new administrative teams at both the district and

school level because she did not believe they addressed the needs she saw as most pressing. In each of these cases, the curriculum specialist resisted reform mandates they believed would negatively impact teachers, and despite teachers' reluctance or refusal to work with them, each continued to advocate for teachers and work to create opportunities for authentic engagement with them.

Stories of resistance from principals also went largely unnoticed in participants'' stories. Although Leona's and Sophie's principals implemented change efforts that were mandated or promoted by district leaders, stories from both suggested the principals were lax in communicating their expectations, and delayed their engagement with teachers about issues related to the implementation. In a sense, they seemed to be going along to get along with seemingly little commitment to the work. This resistance likely stems from the power struggles within the superior/ subordinate binary for control of their own work. Katherine's story about the principal who categorized the district as a failing district, further suggested that the principal's level of buy in of the change efforts, and how that is communicated to teachers, determines the extent to which the change is implemented in the school.

As highlighted in chapter five, one's resistance to externally imposed change efforts is often displaced onto other members of the school staff. This was evidenced in teachers' suspicion of or refusal to work with the curriculum specialist, curriculum specialists blaming teachers' lack of commitment and implementation as the reason why change efforts failed, or principals and/or district leaders pinning the failure to meet change goals on curriculum specialists or teachers. It was clear that this displaced frustration and tension complicated the curriculum specialists work, and change efforts in

general, as it caused individuals to insulate within themselves, amongst their grade-level teams, or with trusted colleagues. This insulation no doubt eroded relationships, and undermined the culture of the schools. Both Sophie and Katherine acknowledged how these reform mandates (and normative discourses) stemmed from larger social and political pressures for schools to be the antidote for all of society's ails, and both were critically aware of the failures of these reforms to improve the circumstances and true needs of the teachers and students in their charge. Both also desired to work with teachers to overcome the difficulties imposed by such restrictive mandates. Although neither actively worked to engage with teachers in a third space of contestation, negotiation, or translation, their work does hold potential for creating such spaces if they become committed to getting members of the school staff to cross the borders that divide them in order to engage in collective efforts to contest misplaced or ill-informed reform mandates, and engage in the laborious work of determining and living out what it means to teach and to learn in their school (Pinar, 2012).

Research Sub Question 2

How do site-based curriculum specialists work with these challenges to engage others in curriculum conversations of change?

Even in the face of much adversity, participants in this study held on to an unyielding faith that they could get teachers onboard with change initiatives, and all expressed an ongoing commitment to do so, albeit to varying degrees. Although participants largely did not question the change mandates being imposed on teachers, each seemed to be most concerned and driven to support teachers to improve the learning environment for students rather than on ensuring adherence to specific reform

requirements. There were a number of ways participants attempted to work through challenges in order to engage with teachers in change efforts, and in doing so, opened up moments of third space.

Participants looked for creative ways to involve teachers in conversations about teaching and learning that built collegiality and rapport. First, participants planned meetings, like Julie's monthly "lunch bunches," that encouraged teachers to come together and discuss topics of interest or relevance to them. Second, participants made themselves available to help teachers with things that were important to the teacher(s) or to their work, but otherwise fell outside the specialists' duties. This included working outside normal school hours to help teachers with classroom projects or planning. They often offered to do the menial or less desirable tasks as a way to lighten teachers' loads or to position themselves as allies. They also coordinated, facilitated, or volunteered at classroom or school functions. And finally, participants used surveys and other feedback data to plan learning walks and coaching days based on teachers' collective needs or interests. Participants reported success in engaging teachers in areas of change relevant to their self-identified needs and interests; however, it was not as easy engaging teachers in matters that did not align, or even clashed with, the purpose and direction teachers had for their work which is often the case with mandated change.

Participants experienced greater difficulty and less success in getting teachers to participate in these more wide-scale curriculum change efforts. This is not surprising as these externally imposed mandates undermine teachers' pedagogical authority and acumen, rendering them laborers of standardized, sterilized knowledge rather than the knowledgeable, agentive professionals they are. It is impossible to imagine that change

efforts could be successful without the full support and participation of teachers in the process. Transformative change, the type of organic, local, and contextualized change that I advocate for in this study, cannot occur without all voices, but especially teachers' voices, playing an active role in the conversation. However, the curriculum specialists in this study were tasked with supporting teachers as they implemented mandated initiatives nonetheless, and they tried many strategies in an effort to achieve this goal.

One strategy participants used to get teachers more actively involved in the change efforts was to seek their input about implementation and to include them in the decisions being made (within the constraints) that affected their work. Julie especially did this when she knew a new expectation (i.e. procedure, instructional practice, content-area curriculum) was going to be introduced. She tried to stay abreast of new requirements coming, so that she could familiarize teachers with the new expectation to be added and allow them time and space to figure it out and make room for it in their teaching/ classroom. She also worked to get teachers' feedback, and to help mediate any issues, concerns, or questions they had in order to smooth out the implementation process and address teachers' needs to the best of her ability. Her willingness to "come alongside teachers" and to engage with them through a playful spirit of curiosity and exploration certainly opened up instances of third space engagement and transformation in their work.

The specialists also tried to encourage and motivate teachers who demonstrated frustration or apathy towards the efforts, and even offered to work side-by-side with teachers to carry out their tasks related to the change efforts, including revising curriculum, creating and teaching lessons, or creating and administering assessments.

This was evidenced in Leona's efforts to co-teach with the middle school teacher we interacted with during my first visit. She offered to teach the lesson, observe the teacher's lesson and provide feedback and answer the teacher's questions in order for the teacher to feel more confident in her instruction. Norrine, too, sought to sit with teachers in their frustrations, encourage them to try out the new initiative and report back the results, or seek needed resolutions in order to move teachers forward with the change efforts. Even Katherine, who struggled to harmonize her teacher-perspective and administrative-perspective in the role and work through her own resistance to change efforts, worked to imagine herself differently and indicated moments of third space interactions when she sought to find compromises between district expectations and what she or teachers were willing to do in their work. This interaction and negotiation within herself and with others no doubt led to hybrid outcomes in the conversations of change occurring in her school/district, although it may not have been to the extent or end result desired by the school or district leaders.

Despite the specialists' sincere efforts to realize the change goals, they were not always successful in doing so. However, the problem likely does not lie with the specialists, but rather, in the systemic way in which reform mandates are diffused across an entire district (i.e. state, nation) with little attention or concern for the unique contexts of individual schools or classrooms. Despite the complications of undertaking such work, participants' willingness to meet teachers' where they were, and their openness to creating opportunities for teachers to engage collaboratively through sites of difference and difficulty suggests that the potential exists for the creation of third spaces of mutual engagement and curriculum transformation.

This occurs by opening up the culture of schools to become communities without consensus (Miller, 2010) in which differences of opinion and approach are welcomed for the new insights and possibilities they bring to the (local and contextual) conversations of change taking place in the school. In such a space, teachers are not expected or required to conform to any one way of teaching, but are instead supported in their efforts to grow their professional and pedagogical understandings in ways they find meaningful for the work they are doing in their classrooms. As Leona and the other specialists contend, participation in the conversations of change must be voluntary, but it should also be driven by an ethical and collective responsibility to do what is best for students. This engagement depends on the ability to pose critical questions and to engage in conversations that challenge the norm, the dominant and taken-for-granted discourses that pervade educational institutions.

Acts of resistance are often the first site, the first break or fissure in the discourse where this disruption of the normative can occur (Serres, 1991/2006). Several participants expressed a desire to engage with teachers on a more authentic level, to get to the bottom of the issues they were having, and figure out a path forward; however, their actions were not always consistent with this desire. The fear of punitive repercussions from superiors immobilized some of the participants, and this anxiety manifested in their relations with teachers. For others, it was a hesitancy to give up the comforts of her safe space, but also the fear of losing what little traction or acceptance she had gained with teachers. And still yet, other participants did not recognize that not all teachers in their particular content area saw the field (or their work) in quite the same way as she.

It is often easier or more convenient to blame (i.e. minimize, exclude) others for their defiance towards reform mandates than to accept or give space for their dissonant ideas to gain relevance or traction. However, it would be far more fruitful to reframe sites of resistance as third spaces through which the cacophony of voices is embraced for the new possibilities each has to offer. There was limited evidence of this in participants' stories; however, moments were captured in which the possibility exists for such engagement. It would be helpful for curriculum specialists, and other school leaders, to be better equipped to initiate difficult conversations and to respond in loving, yet critical ways in order to open up spaces of collective curriculum negotiation and transformation.

Central Research Question

What do site-based curriculum specialists' stories reveal about their negotiation of their roles and identities in the school's curriculum conversation of change?

Through my analysis of participants' stories, I found that the successful negotiation of their roles and identities, and the challenges they face, is dependent upon the specialist's willingness and ability to (re)orient her identity to the contextual factors within which she finds herself, the acceptance of the position (and of her in the position), as well as the readiness for change within the school's culture.

The findings of this study confirm that the curriculum specialist's identity has a considerable impact on her work. Participants' stories revealed that all were keenly aware of themselves in relation to others and to the work they were doing. This awareness is likely due to the ambivalent and shifting nature of the position, and the feelings of uncertainty and exposure one experiences in the role. Their stories also revealed that they actively positioned themselves and their work based on their understanding of those

dynamics, whether or not it was in line with what was actually occurring in the school. In her stories, Norrine positioned herself as competent, confident, and unapologetic in tackling change goals for the sake of the students and the school as a whole. Leona positioned herself in much the same way, but was much more passive in engaging in change efforts. Both viewed issues of teacher resistance as problems or deficits to be resolved by the teacher(s), and neither questioned outright (to me) how their work was implicated in or could be leveraged to overcome those issues. Katherine and Sophie were much more critical of themselves and their work, and it was clear that both struggled with their identities due to their (perceived) inability to work through the challenges they faced. They too tended to place the blame and the agency for resolving the issues on others; however, with only a limited examination of how their subjectivity or positioning influenced others' engagement in their work.

Participants' stories revealed a compulsion to make sense of their work and to justify and feel good about that which they were doing; however, participants generally lacked reflexivity, or a willingness to interrogate the implications their positioning and their work had on the larger conversations of change occurring in the school. Participants seemed to be more concerned with projecting confidence, competence, and control of their work and its outcomes than exploring the effects they (or their work) had on the ongoing change efforts. This was evident in both their stories and their interactions with me and with each other during the focus group interview. Their disinclination to earnestly examine the ramifications of their work, or their positioning in that work, limits the impact they have on the educative processes in their school(s) and limits the potential for creating a third space of mutual engagement and transformation. The need for self-

promotion, or perhaps self-preservation, is surely a residual effect of the culture of accountability, performativity, and reform currently pervading education.

However, curriculum specialists need to both claim their identity as knowledgeable and effective leaders and simultaneously interrogate and disrupt those same notions of self in order to understand the ways in which their positioning in conversations of change affects others' engagement with them. There were instances in participants' stories where this did occur. Norrine, who otherwise communicated an unyielding confidence in and pragmatic approach to her work, also had moments where she recognized that she can be too harsh in her critique and come across too bluntly in her interactions with others. She also acknowledged that she can be quick to make assumptions, and she demonstrated a willingness to rethink her position on issues as demonstrated by her email to me about her change in perspective related to third space negotiations, a theory she previously dismissed as illogical and not indicative of her work as a curriculum specialist. As a new specialist, Sophie was well aware of her positioning in the school, and was working to merge her knowledge, experience, and reputation as a teacher leader with the roles and responsibilities of her new position. And Katherine, too, in the process of sharing with me about the complexities of her work began to open to the idea that her attitude and perspective in regards to change efforts, and to the district as a whole, no doubt influenced how she approached her work with teachers and likely how teachers engaged with her.

An awareness of one's changing subjectivity and an openness to be influenced by the interactions with others is critical for meeting others in a third space of translation and hybridity. This is complicated and disconcerting work, no doubt! However, without this

interrogation and (re)orientation of self, it is unlikely these specialists will be able to recognize and respond to others in ways that lead to more affirmative and productive collaboration, thus reducing the likelihood for realizing meaningful change.

The curriculum specialist's ability or willingness to negotiate her roles and identities is further dependent upon the conditions she experiences in the position. First, participant’s stories reveal that a specialist’s perceived (or demonstrated) success in the role affects how she carries out her work in the school, including her willingness to engage in the hard conversations that are often necessary to accomplish her work. Participants who felt successful in their roles demonstrated high levels of engagement with teachers during my time with them. They were able to articulate the goals they had for their work, and shared concrete plans for accomplishing those tasks. Second, when curriculum specialists feel supported and respected, they are much more likely to communicate excitement and commitment to their work. This is especially important when tasked with initiating or sustaining unpopular, difficult, or laborious change efforts. They were also more resilient when faced with adversity; they by and large remained positive, refused to give up, and communicated a responsibility to show that same level of respect and support in working with teachers to overcome problems. Finally, specialists were much more willing to engage in the complex and complicated negotiations of their role when they believed their work had purpose or was closely connected to conversations of change, even more so when they viewed those change efforts as relevant and worthwhile in improving the educative processes in the school.

Every participant communicated their desire to make a difference in teachers’ and students’ lives. They felt a sense of loyalty to the school community as a whole, and

believed they had the knowledge and ability to positively impact the educative processes occurring within. When they believed their work was important and meaningful, or could see the connections of their work to the larger conversations of change, they expressed enthusiasm. However, when these conditions did not exist, participants were much more likely to be skeptical, apathetic, or even resentful that they were denied the opportunity to do their job well.

These findings suggest that the specialist may be more likely to engage in the hard work of identity (re)negotiation and (re)orientation in a climate where they feel supported, respected, and connected to the day-to-day life in the school. This occurs when the position is situated in a school culture that recognizes the necessity and permanence of change in better meeting the needs of students and teachers, creates spaces for all (even dissonant) voices to become part of the conversation, and embraces the curriculum specialist position as a means of support in accomplishing organic notions of change. This culture is vital to the specialist's success as her sense of purpose, belonging, and success hinges on her acceptance into the school's culture and the ability for her work to gain traction in the school's conversations of change.

Implications for Practice

This study was conceived to explore the challenges site-based curriculum specialists face in navigating the day-to-day complexities of their work. It stemmed from the need for current research to explore the position at the local level to determine how we might better implement and support the role in conversations of curriculum change. This is critical work as Foltos (2015) claims "coaching is part of the DNA" that supports school improvement efforts (p. 51). Fullan & Knight (2011), too, contend that "without

coaching, many comprehensive reform efforts will fall short of real improvement" (p. 50). The findings of this study point to four key implications for future practice, including the need for: clarifying policies related to the role, preparing curriculum specialists for the complexities of the position, building a culture primed for change, and ongoing professional learning in communities of support.

Clarification of Policies Related to the Role

Leveraging the power of curriculum specialists as change agents must begin with the creation of a distinct and defined space for the curriculum specialist in the school's hierarchy. It is especially important for district leaders to understand the position, to articulate a vision for the position in relation to the conversations of change unique to the school, and to enact policies that clarify the curriculum specialist role in the school. This should include a detailed job description that sets the parameters and expectations for the specialist's work.

Every specialist in this study commented on the ambiguity of their role, and the consensus was that the lack of clearly defined roles and expectations led to confusion or misunderstandings about the specialist's role in change efforts, thereby limiting the impact they could have. Principals and teachers need to understand the specialist's role, and be given ample time and space to figure out how the specialist fits into their work as well. Sophie felt the ramifications of this lack of understanding for her role, while Julie credited her success in the role to the fact that her principals understood how the role fit into their vision for change. She felt they had taken the time to consider her strengths as an educator, and utilize her in ways that compliments their efforts. And Katherine commended the new assistant superintendent for her efforts to hold "high caliber"

meetings in which she communicated her expectations and desires for the curriculum specialists' work, and sought their input about that work as well.

Contemplation and exploration of how the role fits into the school should involve active engagement with the specialist and authentic conversations about this work as it unfolds. Growing the curriculum specialist position from such a space will minimize potential confusion or conflict as all members of the school community become involved in establishing these working relationships and creating a common vision for this work in the school. A consultant with knowledge of this process might prove useful in helping the district (or school) in this effort. However, the onus has to be on the principal, as the instructional leader of the school, to set the expectation and sustain the environment for this work to take root.

Preparing Curriculum Specialists for the Complexities of the Position

Research indicates that curriculum specialists are typically effective classroom teachers plucked from the classroom based on their teaching prowess; however, effective teaching alone cannot be the bulwark with which to determine one's suitability for the role. Principals and district leaders should be extra diligent in hiring for the position to ensure the candidate chosen has the knowledge, dispositions, and commitment necessary to handle the demands of the role. It is true that the individual who is to assume the curriculum specialist roll should be a master teacher who is comfortable and energetic about working with teachers in classroom settings, holds optimistic views of the processes of curriculum change; and maintains and communicates a deep, honest belief in teachers and the school(s) within which they work even in light of difficulties encountered. However, she or he also needs to be prepared and equipped to handle the

complexities of the role. This should include insight about the challenges she will likely face in her work as well as ongoing support for dealing with the negotiations necessary to navigate difficulties she encounters; training on how to initiate and respond to differences and difficult conversations with teachers and administrators; as well as knowledge related to the broader contexts of school reform and how the school's conversations of change are situated within that context.

This preparation should begin with opportunities for new curriculum specialists, and those desiring to take on more teacher leadership roles to complete advanced coursework or gain certification in areas of needed specialization or interest. School principals, district leaders, and others pursuing those positions should also be encouraged to participate in advanced study related to the role. Colleges of education should consider adding or expanding coursework related to the curriculum specialist role to advanced degrees such as school administration, curriculum and instruction, teacher leadership, and in content areas such as reading and math, in order to provide budding leaders with more in-depth experiences and understandings related to curriculum, pedagogy, and adult learners. Those in higher education should further consider adding shorter certification opportunities for curriculum specialists (i.e. instructional coaching, teacher leadership, content-area specializations). This coursework should be extended to teacher preparation programs as well, so that teachers enter the profession more knowledgeable about the role.

School districts should also collaborate with colleges of education to provide curriculum specialists (and other school and district leaders) with more in-depth support and ongoing opportunities to learn about historical perspectives and trends in education,

including the history of school reform; understandings of social, political, and cultural theories related to education, as well as other insights and understandings necessary for negotiating the pressures and politics inherent to the role. This is an important partnership because leaders cannot engage intelligently and critically in conversations of (organic) curriculum change without the requisite knowledge needed to understand the broader systems, institutionalized knowledge, and dynamics of power at play within education as well as in their particular locality.

Finally, curriculum specialists should be active and intentional in their work in the school, and should be given the freedom and space to do so. They need to be willing to live with the tension and challenges inherent to the role, to actively negotiate their roles and identities, and be continually in search of third space opportunities to engage with others through sites of difference, contestation, and translation. They must also be proactive in addressing their own learning needs, and be vocal about the support needed from school and district leaders. This collaboration with other specialists can provide the community and peer support needed to overcome the sense of isolation experienced by the participants in this study as well as the difficulties they encounter.

Building A Culture Primed for Organic Change

As the findings of this study suggest, the site-based curriculum specialist's work is dependent upon the willful engagement of other members of the school community. The successful functioning of the position, as change agent, hinges on the formation of interdependent relationships between the principal, teachers, and coach(es) as they work together to achieve a common vision in the school. This requires a culture in which all members participate see the value in the change efforts, play a key role in the decision

making related to those change efforts, take responsibility for working collaboratively to improve the learning environment. School and district leaders can build this culture by developing and articulating a vision for change that centers on the unique needs of the school or district, and prioritizes teacher agency and autonomy in building their pedagogical capacities and acumen, rather than on the implementation of educational trends (reified as best practices) or pre-packaged, scripted programs of reform.

Of course, this work will include the hashing out of differences and the working through of discord as the team comes together to create a culture around this common vision. District and school leaders may find it advantageous (even necessary) to acknowledge and come to terms with missteps and failures of past change initiatives or mandates in order to build trust and head off resistance or apathy towards new initiatives. The lasting effects of poorly implemented improvement mandates were evidenced in stories shared by both Katherine and Sophie. Each shared stories about the ramifications past mandates had on school staff, and both shed light on how the history of reforms continued to cloud efforts to revitalize the culture and improve their schools. It would serve leaders well to address past failures, and to take the steps necessary to ensure - and reassure teachers - that current change efforts account for teachers' voices in the process. This work may need to include restructuring or repositioning the curriculum specialist position as it may very well have been a reform that was implemented poorly, even harmfully, in the past. Not doing so, may mean that districts will continue to waste precious dollars on a defunct reform initiative that fails to improve student learning outcomes.

The Need for Ongoing Professional Learning in Communities of Support

The need for high-quality, professional learning for all members of the school community cannot be understated. Curriculum is (and should remain) complicated conversation (Pinar, 2011), and educators at all levels need to be well equipped and encouraged to engage in "spirited and informed communication," (p.1) "with others that portends the social reconstruction of the public sphere" (p. 47). This occurs in spaces of mutual collaboration, experimentation, and even contestation as the team works toward more productive and creative modes of education. Rather than squelching disagreements or personal agency for the sake of unity and fidelity to the prescribed curriculum, school and district leaders need to make professional knowledge and acumen the foundation of the school culture so that teachers take more *responsible accountability* for the improvement process (Knight, 2019), and for the choices they make in their work. The same is true for principals and curriculum specialists alike. This work should take place in communities of support in which the fear, shame, guilt, and anxiety of the current climate of standardization and accountability are replaced with trust, vulnerability, and an openness towards risk-taking, problem-solving, and authentic inquiry alongside others in joint efforts to meet students' learning needs.

In such a mode of operandi, non-punitive collegial critique becomes the norm, and the curriculum specialist is positioned as a knowledgeable other that can provide insight into the blind spots in one's classroom - or approaches to leadership in the case of principals - in order to open up sites for reflection and response. Professional development is also reframed as opportunities for professional learning in which teachers become active agents in the construction of their professional knowledge and decision

making regarding curricular implementation rather than passive recipients of one-size-fits-all workshops or training days. Mandated curriculum and instructional practices, when necessary, should leave space for teachers to adapt it to their teaching style and to the unique personality and needs of their students.

Furthermore, curriculum specialists, principals, and district leaders often enter those positions with limited knowledge of curriculum matters (e.g. planning or development, content knowledge, historical perspectives), or leading wide-scale change efforts. For this reason, it is critical for these leaders to engage in ongoing professional learning specific to their roles and responsibilities as well as the unique needs and dynamics of the school/district in order to proficiently lead and support change efforts. Principals and district leaders may even be the first people the curriculum specialist coaches on change initiatives, especially in areas of her (or his) expertise. This learning can also consist of a combination of peer coaching scenarios in which the focus is on sustained professional capacity building and growth. Lastly, these instructional leaders would benefit from coursework related to adult learning in order to understand and better manage processes of change. Partnerships with colleges of education, coaching consultants, state departments of education, or consortiums with other school districts can provide professional learning opportunities for the curriculum specialist or other instructional leaders.

In closing, curriculum conversations of change involve a multi-layered approach to tackling the complex issues that arise in the educative process. Policy makers can aid these efforts by reconsidering lifeless reform mandates that dehumanize teachers and students into codified objects for analysis, and instead enact policies that recognize the

inherently individual, local, and contextual processes of becoming that constitute education. They should also focus on policies that increase funding for education, so that opportunities for professional learning and collaboration do not take a backseat to other more pressing needs in the face of ever-increasing budget cuts. School and district leaders need to create and sustain the conditions in which teachers and other staff members can come together and engage in the difficult work of curriculum planning and making, that not only does not diminish differences but encourages the polyphony of voices for the generative possibilities they have to offer. And lastly, teachers must strive to enact a stimulating and just curriculum that enables and empowers students to take full advantage of learning opportunities offered in the classroom. Curriculum specialists should be prepared to instigate, encourage, and contribute to this work.

Researcher Reflection

This research endeavor emerged from my interest in better understanding and navigating the complexities of my work as a site-based curriculum specialist. The choices made in designing the study directly related to my goals and interests for this inquiry. In reflecting on what I have learned through this process, two areas stand out most. The philosophical underpinnings of both third space theory and narrative inquiry are at the heart of my beliefs about what it means to live, learn, and engage as humans. I outlined both in chapter one and in greater detail in chapter three, but provide more insight here into how these choices impacted my growth as both a researcher and educator.

On Third Space Theory

Third space theory found me early on in my doctoral work. I was a curriculum specialist struggling in the role, and as Jackson (2017) contends, I found that the words of

the third space "were my words...already in my bones...giving me a way...to articulate a world that [had] not already been articulated." It gave me the language and understanding to come to terms with the complicated and complicating relationships I struggled to navigate in the role, and I became interested in exploring the work of other specialists through this lens with the hopes that the research could provide an alternate way of viewing (i.e. utilizing, supporting) this role in education.

I anticipated this would be a challenging endeavor given the techno-rational landscape of today's educational institutions, and the understanding that the theory was not widely utilized or even commensurate with dominant discourses (e.g. technicization, standardization, and accountability) of the field. This was to be expected. However, I was most surprised by the difficulty I had using the theory with my habitual modes of thinking and participating as a practitioner in the field. It was one thing to play with these ideas in an academic setting, but much more difficult to think through this lens while engaging with participants and analyzing stories in settings similar to my everyday world.

During data collection, I found it difficult to switch to the theoretician lens when engaging with participants as I had to consciously disrupt thought patterns that normalized the narratives that comprise modern education (i.e. best practices, standards-based teaching, teacher resistance, PLCs, etc.) in order to capture and respond to moments of third space negotiation in the real-time storytelling and interactions of participants. Still yet, I missed opportunities to explore instances with participants, only catching them later during the transcription and analysis processes. When I did pick up on an opening, I struggled with how to press participants to delve more deeply into those understandings without contaminating the data collected. I found that I often left

questions unasked rather than probing further on areas that were of particular interest to the study for fear of imposing my perspectives to participants or unintentionally influencing the stories they told. I recall one instance when I struggled to sit silently with Leona in her cave as she answered emails on her computer. Our conversation had ended with her appearing frustrated and troubled about teachers' unwillingness to engage with her, while seemingly relieved to be returning to administrative tasks. I hoped to get her to examine this contradiction; however, I was unsuccessful in my attempts. Rather than push further, I chose instead to allow the situation to unfold naturally (to no avail). However, it felt like a missed opportunity to gain more insight into her negotiation (or lack thereof) of her work with teachers. I grew more intentional in my framing of questions in the moment as the study progressed, and believe I improved in my ability to do so.

Another point I want to be sure to make is the difference between my expectations of third space as a naturally occurring phenomena in the work of curriculum specialists, and what was actually evidenced in participants' stories. My own inclination to view curriculum specialists work through a third space lens was due to the connections I made to my own work as a curriculum specialist throughout my doctoral studies. I was quickly reminded that the third space is not a given; that it must be created and maintained, and that others may not see it as relevant or applicable to their work. This limited the insight I could draw from their work as it related to third space theory; however, I believe the theory is still useful for rethinking and reframing the curriculum specialist's role in conversations of change. In light of this new understanding, I adapted this study to search

for moments of third space negotiation and instances that held possibility for the creation of a third space in the work of the participants in this study.

My entanglement with third space theory in this study "opened up that with which [I] can [now] not think without" (Jackson, 2017). It has shifted my understanding of the educative process in profound ways, and I now think and perceive through the lens of the third much more readily. This has led to a re-envisioning of my work (as a faculty member in higher education) with teachers, both pre-service and those in the field. This remains a disruptive and unsettling endeavor as my work is still very much situated in the normative discourses and bureaucratic constraints that comprise (teacher) education. However, I continue to search for ways to engage my students in conversations about the social, political, cultural, and historical dimensions of education. Third space theory will continue to inform my work as I look forward to exploring areas of teacher education, including teacher preparation, agency, and resiliency, through the lens of the third in future research.

On Narrative Inquiry

Positioning the work of site-based curriculum specialists as *complicated conversations* (Pinar, 2011) in the context of curriculum change, I sought to gain entry into their everyday worlds as they engaged with others to improve teaching and learning within their schools. Narrative inquiry became the conduit through which I could gain access to their lived experiences and the meanings they make of their work: engaging with them in allegorical, and at times polemical, conversations as we narrated stories and contemplated paths forward in our work as curriculum specialists (Pinar, 2011). This was an enriching experience although I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the

awkwardness and friction caused at times by the “gaps, silences, and white spaces” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 208) that occurred as participants’ stories exposed the “bumping places” of theirs or my unexplored histories (Clandinin, 2013, p. 85). Some things went unsaid, unexplored, or unresolved as we worked to move the conversation forward.

The process of transcribing and analyzing the data brought many of these white spaces to light, and it felt overwhelming at times as I struggled to form a coherent research story. I was troubled by the limitless worlds that could be created based on how I read, highlighted, or organized participants’ stories. The weight of telling participants’ stories well, as fully and richly as I had experienced, was something I had not anticipated. Pulling apart and reorganizing the “data" felt like a “dissection” or “disassembling” of the individuals I had come to know (Clandinin, 2013, p. 47). I continued working with the data until I was satisfied with the presentation, but in some ways, still feel like much was left unsaid or unexplored in the stories they told. Perhaps this feeling is inevitable in narrative inquiry as we enter and exit in the midst of their living (Clandinin, 2013), catching only glimpses of their world for a moment in time. Nonetheless, I have found that participants’ stories have become a part of my story, and will remain with me indelibly, as I continue to explore the potential of the site-based curriculum specialist role in curriculum conversations of change.

Finding A Balance Between Lived Experiences and Third Space Theorizing

In closing, it is important to reiterate here that there was often tension between participants’ lived experiences and my interpretations of those stories through the third space lens. The two did not always match which was to be expected as participants had never before considered themselves or their work through such a lens. However,

participants naturally used phrases such as “a bridge between” and “an in-between space” and words such as “negotiate” in referencing their work in relation to that of teachers and principals. And when I shared a brief overview of third space theory during the focus group interview, all but one readily made connections to their work. Although, the one did email me a month or so after the interview to tell me that she was beginning to see how it related to her work. This suggested to me that the theory was relevant for further exploring the complex negotiations inherent to the curriculum specialist role. It further suggested that had participants had knowledge of third space theory prior to their participation in this study, they might have been able to identify instances of third space negotiation in their work or provided more insight and reflexivity about their negotiations of the challenges they faced.

Nonetheless, I did my best to keep participants’ lived experiences at the forefront of my analysis as I worked to make sense of the unsaid, hidden, or unexplored tension in their stories. When the two diverged, I spent considerable time reflecting on their stories and reviewing my observational notes to ensure I was recollecting the context as accurately as possible. Doing so enabled me to honor participants’ experiences while also finding connections and commonalities across participants’ individual experiences. Through this endeavor, I learned there are key challenges curriculum specialists face. I also learned that educators, regardless of position, tend to operate (e.g. think, act, relate) within the rigid constraints imposed by normative discourses in education. This shapes how one perceives of themselves and participates in that social world. Bhabha (1994) posits third space theory as a way for the colonized to make spaces within oppressive environments to demonstrate autonomy and agency and to disrupt dominant discourses of

the colonizer through hybrid interactions and engagement in the social sphere. It is my belief that if curriculum specialists and other educators had the language (and understandings) of third space theory, they would be better equipped to engage in complicated conversations (negotiations) that transform the learning environment for students and teachers alike.

Limitations of the Study

As with any research, there are limitations to this study. The study is grounded in the experiences of six site-based curriculum specialists from two school districts in a Midwestern state. Despite the researcher's attempts to recruit participants from diverse backgrounds, participant selection was limited to the three school districts who approved the research request. The small sample size and lack of diversity among participants limits the generalizability of this study as the findings reflect contextual factors within individual schools and districts as observed by the researcher or conveyed through participants' stories of particular moments in time. As such, the particularities of any given context are unique to the milieu of that lived moment, and may not be the same for others in similar situations.

In qualitative research, subjectivity contributes to the research process. In chapter one, I positioned myself as an interpretive *bricoleur* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), and acknowledged my analysis and interpretation as a piecing together of individual realities, shared through fragmented recollections and layers of meaning, in order to arrive at an informed understanding of the plight of the site-based curriculum specialist. The resulting bricolage is "a series of choices [made by researcher and participants], inspired by purposes that are shaped by past experience, undertaken through time, and [that] trace the

consequence of these choices in the whole of an individual or community's lived experiences" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007 as cited in Clandinin, 2013, p. 15). I used sustained engagement, member checks, and careful reflection to ensure the restorying of participants' experiences remained true to the commonplaces of narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and place outlined by Clandinin (2013); however, I recognize that participants' self-reporting and storying of experiences may not provide the full account of the actual occurrence. The study also provides only brief glimpses into participants' worlds, and cannot possibly capture the fullness of their reality. Others may draw different conclusions based on their lived experiences and understandings of the topic under study. It is likely, however, that readers will find coherence and resonance in participants' stories (as well as in the researcher's interpretations of those stories).

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research could improve or expand upon the findings of this study. Longitudinal studies, case studies or ethnographic studies that allow for more time in the field could provide a more holistic understanding of school culture, curriculum conversations of change unfolding therein, and the daily lives of curriculum specialists within that context. These studies could focus on curriculum specialists across an entire district in order to provide a comprehensive view of the unique challenges and dynamics to better inform system-wide change efforts. It may also prove useful to do comparative studies to focus on the specific challenges, negotiations, and identities of experienced (or efficacious, whether perceived or documented) specialists compared to that of new (or struggling, whether perceived or documented) specialists. This could allow for more specificity in understanding the unique needs of these specialists. Also, focusing on

factors related to the specialist's entrance into the role, including whether she or he comes from inside or outside the school/district, prior experience and knowledge base, the purpose of her work or position, or the history, buy-in, or support for his/her work prior to his/her entrance into the role, and how these dynamics affect sense of belonging, self-efficacy, or agency. Comparing these populations across districts could expand the conversation as well.

The findings of this study could further be expanded through research that includes administrator and/or teacher perspectives of the conversations of change as well as the curriculum specialist's work. Both teacher and administrator resistance created significant hurdles for participants. More research is needed to better understand the causes of resistance at the local level, its connection to the curriculum specialist position, and how we might come to terms with and work through issues of resistance in order to realize more organic and agentive conversations of change. In unison with or as an extension to this work, the position would greatly benefit from exploratory research looking at how specialists actively engage within sites of teacher or administrator resistance and the effects this has on trust, relationship-building, and school culture. It is also important to explore classroom settings to better understand the impact (if any) the curriculum specialist's work has on teacher practices, even in sites of resistance.

Lastly, I urge school leaders and policymakers to acknowledge and address ongoing traumas and failures related to the technocratic march toward standardized performativity (of teaching, learning, and leading) and external regulation of today's schools, including the ongoing flight both from the profession and from public education, as well as the psychological impact on those who remain and other yet unforeseen implications. More

research is needed on transformational conversations of change that account for the voices of students, teachers, and other stakeholders at the local level. This effort could be greatly expanded by inquiry that explores curriculum issues through the third space in order to open up sites of possibility for living and doing curriculum in new ways.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Initial Survey & Scenario-Response Questions

Name: ____
Age: ________________
Ethnicity: ____
Gender: ____
Official position/title: ____
District: ____
School(s): ____
Current grade level(s)/Subject area(s) served: __________________________________
____
Highest degree held: ____
Areas of Certifications held: ____
____
Teaching Experience (including grade level(s)/subject area(s):
____
____
Briefly describe the general demographics of your school(s):
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____
____

The following questions are possible scenarios that may arise in the curriculum specialist's (coach's, etc.) work in the school. Please answer each scenario as honestly and realistically as possible.

Scenario #1: This year, the district has implemented an intervention and enrichment (I & E) period in the daily schedule of the school. Teachers were asked to work within their grade-level teams to develop a systematic format and process for student placement during the twenty-minute I & E period. You have spent the last month working with the A Team to develop their plan, and the team is now ready to begin their first cycle. At the final meeting the day before the cycle begins, all participants seem to
express their approval for the plan and for their particular role in the upcoming I & E cycle. The following morning, on your usual walk through the building, you stop by

Teacher Qs room and notice that she is not engaging students in the identified intervention lesson. She tells you she had a hectic morning, and just did not have time to prepare. A couple of days later, you check in with her and notice that her students are still not engaged in the learning plan created for the intervention students. You have a conversation with her and she hints at her displeasure with her assignment of students and does not believe the learning plan is going to work for these students.

How would you respond to this situation?

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Scenario #2: The week before school starts, your principal asks you to coordinate implementation of a new benchmark assessment program the district wants her (teachers) to pilot for the upcoming school year. After spending significant time learning about the program and analyzing the data gained from the assessments, you and several teachers realize the program does not assess skills in the same way that is needed for students to master identified learning objectives. Additionally, the amount of time required to complete the biweekly assessments will force teachers to reduce the number of formative assessments they can give. Although the school has consistently performed below state averages on standardized measures of achievement, teachers had worked the prior year developing formative assessments they believed addressed student learning needs in relation to their grade-level objectives. Preliminary reports had demonstrated an increase in student achievement on the standardized tests given at the end of the year, and teachers were optimistic that this gain was due to the organized effort to develop better assessment methods. Before your next meeting with teachers, one of the more veteran and vocal, teachers of the group had already gone to the principal with his concerns about the pilot assessment program, but was told they would at least pilot it for the first semester to "see how it goes." Upon hearing this, the other teachers are furious, and you spend the better part of the meeting trying to refocus their attention to the task at hand. You can clearly see this is becoming a major issue that must be addressed.

How would you respond to this situation?

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Scenario #3: The beginning of May your principal approaches you about developing a school-wide professional development plan for next school year. He wants you to come up with a central focus, and to identify specific training targets for each of the three professional development days. He will also dedicate time during staff meetings for any additional training or follow-up activities you might need to include.

How would you approach this task?

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APPENDIX B

Initial Interview Questions

1. Describe a typical day in your role as a site-based curriculum specialist?

2. What made you want to become a site-based curriculum specialist?

3. What are the most memorable stories from when you first became a curriculum specialist?

4. How have you worked to create your role/place in the school?

5. Tell me a time when you faced a challenge in getting to know the staff? How did you deal with it?

6. Tell me about a time when a teacher sought out your advice. What was the outcome?

7. Tell me about a time when a teacher sought out your advice. What was the outcome?

8. Tell me a story of how you have handled differences (of opinion, miscommunication, or misdirection) between teachers and principals?

9. Could you describe an occasion when you felt accomplished in getting multiple parties on board to work together?

10. Could you describe an occasion when you felt you failed to reach the goal? What did you learn from it?

11. Reflecting on your years in the role of curriculum specialist, could you tell me about a crucial moment that you recognize has changed or challenged your professional identity (as an educator)? What do you believe contributed to that change?

12. What is your approach to understanding the opinions or perspectives of others coming in to work with you?

13. Tell me about a time when your perception of another's opinion or stance on an issue affected how you approached your work together?

14. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me today?

APPENDIX C

Focus Group Questions

The following questions will serve as tentative questions for the focus group; however, the researcher will adapt questions accordingly as the focus group conversation unfolds.

1. What do you find meaningful about your work as a curriculum specialist?

2. What does success mean for you in your role as an instructional coach?

3. How do you determine that you have been successful?

4. What metaphor do you think best epitomizes the curriculum specialist's role/work in the school? Can you elaborate on that?

5. What role does negotiation play in your work?

6. What is a strategy you find most effective when first engaging teachers in change efforts?

7. What has been a significant challenge you have faced in your role as a curriculum specialist?

10. What is one thing you wished teachers could know about your work in the school?

11. What is one thing you wished your principal/administration could know about your work in the school?

12. What advice would you give someone just coming in to the role of a site-based curriculum specialist?

13. What do you feel, if anything, would have better prepared you for the role?

14. Have you ever been asked by a principal to do something you are uncomfortable with?

15. What are your current professional development needs?

16. What are you most proud of in your work as a specialist?

APPENDIX D

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Wednesday, January 3, 2018
IRB Application No	ED17153
Proposal Title:	Curriculum Specialists in the Conversation of Curriculum Change: A Third Space Approach
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 1/2/2021

Principal Investigator(s):

Kimberly Church	Hongyu Wang
	OSU Tulsa 2444A Main Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078	Tulsa, OK 74106

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☐ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Scott Hall (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Hugh Crethar, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Kimberly Jean Church

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: CURRICULUM SPECIALISTS IN THE CONVERSATION OF CHANGE: A THIRD SPACE APPROACH

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Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2021.

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Experience:

Northeastern State University – Assistant Professor
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